

### C8303 Individual Differences

**Semester 1**                      **20 credits**

**Class Leader:**                Dr Susan Rasmussen

**Teaching staff:**              Dr Susan Rasmussen  
   Dr Jim Baxter  
   Dr Allan McGroarty

**Lectures:**                      Tuesdays 11-1 (Room: CV330)  
   Thursdays 1-2 (Room: CV330)

**Aims:**

- To consider the origins of the study of differences between people in their intellectual abilities, and in their personalities.
- To examine definitions of personality and intelligence by looking at the historic background to individual differences research and considering both current and historic methods that have been devised for measuring and studying these characteristics.
- To consider different theories of intelligence and personality and what these imply about the causes of individual differences.

**Learning outcomes:**

On completion of this class students will have gained an understanding of the history of individual differences research, and will have acquired the necessary tools to evaluate information on human variations and its measurement. Students will be able to 1) evaluate critically the existing theories and research in the field of individual differences, 2) demonstrate knowledge about the genetic and environmental factors that influence human variations, 3) identify characteristics of intelligence and personality that differ across individuals and understand how these differences change over time.

In particular, students will be encouraged to think scientifically about conceptual and practical issues related to the study of individual differences, and will gain the chance to put this knowledge into practice by designing their own measurement instrument. This task will form part of the coursework component of this class.

**Topics covered in the class:**

The course will provide a historical and conceptual overview of the main classic and contemporary theoretical approaches to intelligence and personality. The use of established intelligence and personality tests will be demonstrated, and problems of test construction discussed.

The section on intelligence will cover the following issues: 1) what is intelligence and how do we measure it, 2) what determines intelligence and why are there differences between different groups, 3) cultural differences, 4) the stability of intelligence and 5) health, mortality and intelligence. The second part of the course will then

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turn to the study of human personality in terms of 1) how we understand personality, 2) biological typology and behavioural genetics, 3) the Big Five, 4) evolutionary psychology, and 5) interactionism.

***Place in course:***

Psychology has traditionally adopted two contrasting approaches to the study of human behaviour: a) examining what people have in common and how this is affected by different circumstances (the experimental approach); and b) investigating the ways in which people consistently differ from each other (the individual differences approach). This class, building on elements of **C8105 and C8106 Basic Psychology**, provides a comprehensive introduction to both the theoretical and the practical sides of the individual differences approach.

***Methods of teaching and teaching hours:***

Up to three hours per week, divided between lectures, practical sessions and labs.

***Assessment:***

1. Final examination (worth 2/3 of overall mark). The paper will consist of two sections which correspond to the first (intelligence) and second (personality) parts of the course. Candidates will be asked to answer two questions in two hours, choosing one question from each section. Questions will address themes mentioned in lectures, but evidence of further background reading will be expected.
2. Report (worth 1/3 of overall mark). Each student will write a 2500 report on the topic of heritability estimates of intelligence. Students will be given a data set to analyse for the report and guidance on the report will be given in Lecture 1. **Report to be submitted 19th November 2014 (1pm Deadline).**

The University and the School of Psychological Sciences and Health require students to attend lectures, seminars, tutorials, and practicals regularly and to perform satisfactorily in the associated work. Students who fail to attend, or who have not submitted the essay by two weeks following the deadline may be excluded from the degree examination. Any student with coursework outstanding at the time of the examination will receive a Fail for the examination performance and will not be able to obtain a pass at the re-sit examination unless the outstanding work completed to a satisfactory standard has been submitted.

***Employability:***

C8303 provides students with a number of skills which are valued outside of the undergraduate context. These include: the ability to understand and translate research findings into plain English; an understanding of how we measure individual differences and behaviour; engaging directly with questions and presenting independent opinions about them in arguments that are well-written, clearly expressed, coherently organised and effectively supported by relevant evidence; gaining the confidence to undertake self-directed learning, making the most effective use of time and resources, and increasingly defining one's own questions and goals; and the ability to work effectively in a group context.

***Feedback:***

Students will receive detailed, written feedback on the report. Generic feedback will also be provided upon completion of the end of year exam.

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Feedback, however, comes in many forms and at various points: when a discussion post is responded to, this is feedback; when you email a member of staff and they reply, this is feedback; a response to a question before, after, or during a lecture, is feedback. If any feedback is unclear, given the opportunity staff will be happy to clarify it.

**References:**

There is an abundance of texts available on individual differences. The short list below represents some which might be of interest. Further, more specific texts and selected papers may be suggested during the course.

**Main references:**

Maltby, J. Day, I., & Macaskill, A. (2013). *Personality, Individual Differences and Intelligence*. Pearson - Prentice Hall.

Larsen, R.J. & Buss, D.M. (2010). *Personality Psychology: Domains of Knowledge about Human Nature*. McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

**Possible further reading:**

- Anastasi, A. & Urbina, S. (1997). *Psychological Testing*. Prentice Hall.  
Carver, C. & Scheier, M. (1992). *Perspectives on Personality*. Allyn & Bacon.  
Cooper, C. (1999). *Intelligence and abilities*. Routledge.  
Cooper, C. (2001). *Individual Differences*. Arnold.  
Haslam N. (2007). *Introduction to Personality and Intelligence*. Sage.  
Howe, M. (1997). *Q in question: the truth about intelligence*. Sage.  
Kail, R. & Pellegrino, J. (1985). *Human Intelligence: perspectives and prospects*. Freeman.  
Kline, P. (1993). *Handbook of Psychological Testing*. Routledge  
Loewenthal K.M. (1996). *An Introduction to Psychological Tests and Scales*. UCL Press.  
Matthews, G. & Deary, I. (1998). *Personality Traits*. Cambridge University Press.  
Murphy, K.R. & Davidshofer, C.O. (2001). *Psychological Testing*. Prentice Hall.  
Pervin, L.A. (2003). *The Science of Personality (2nd edition)*. OUP.  
Richardson, K. (1991). *Understanding intelligence*. Open University Press.  
Swami, V. (2010). *Evolutionary psychology : a critical introduction*. Wiley.

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