

The History of Psychology

Although a relatively young practice in its own right, humans have speculated over the nature of the mind for thousands of years. Here's a timeline of some of the key developments which have brought psychology to where it is today:



Edwin Smith Papyrus

1500 BC

Ancient Egyptian medical text, Edwin Smith Papyrus, contains some speculation on the brain's function.

550 BC

Ancient Greek philosophers develop theory termed the psuchē. From which the word psychology is derived.

323–30 BC

Later Greek philosophers differ from earlier ones in that they question the physiological basis of the mind.

850–934

Muslim physicians begin to recognise and discuss disorders related to the body and mind, Ahmed Ibn Salhl al Bakhi being the first of his tradition.

1590–1800

The term psychology is first used.

Rene Descartes develops psychology with *Passions of the Soul* and *Treatise on Man* which influence the philosophical form of psychology today.

19th century

No longer just a branch of philosophy, psychology becomes recognised as an independent scientific discipline.

Neurophysiology sees some of its most significant discoveries; distinction between sensory and motor nerves; identification of areas of brain responsible for language comprehension; speed of neural transmission.

1878

G. Stanley Hall becomes the first person to be awarded with a Ph.D in Psychology, at Harvard University, USA.



Wundt Research Group

1879

The first ever dedicated psychology laboratory is opened at the **University of Leipzig** in Germany, establishing the topic as its own practice, separate from both philosophy and physiology. German doctor **Wilhelm Wundt** is the man responsible.

1883

Experimental psychology labs make their way across the Atlantic Ocean with the US' first lab established at John Hopkins University.

1888

James Cattell becomes the first Professor of Psychology serving at the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University.

1890s

Sigmund Freud formulates his theory of **psychoanalysis**.

Psychology is divided into three main schools:

- **Functionalism** – focuses on the functions of the mind as oppose to its internal contents.
- **Psychoanalysis** – Sigmund Freud coined the term. Asserts that a person's personality is linked to events in childhood, human attitude influenced by irrational drives, awareness of such drives is met by psychological resistance, these conflicts form emotional disturbances which are treated by therapeutic intervention.
- **Structuralism** – focuses on introspection in order to gain an understanding of conscious experience.

1905

Russian physiologist Dr. Ivan Pavlov develops his theory of classical conditioning.

1910

Melanie Klein pioneers a method of child psychoanalysis.

1913

Behaviourism established – asserts that humans have no free will and that a person's environment determines their behaviour.

1921

Carl Jung introduces the concepts of introversion and extraversion.

1935

Gestalt psychology founded – asserts that the mind perceives objects as a whole before their individual parts. The whole is distinct from the parts.

1942

Karen Horney publishes her theory of neurosis.

1951

Solomon Asch conducts his famous conformity experiments.

Initial studies suggest the drug imipramine is able to lessen the effects of depression. Becomes FDA approved eight years later.

1960s

Stanley Milgram begins his infamous obedience experiments at Yale University, USA.

1967

Cognitive psychology established – focuses on the internal processes which control how people react to stimuli. By 1970 it became the dominant approach in experimental psychology.

1971

Phillip Zimbardo conducts the hugely controversial Stanford University Prison Experiment.



1973

Jean Piaget develops a systematic study of cognitive development in children.

1976

Dawkins publishes *The Selfish Gene* popularising evolutionary psychology — applies principles of evolution to function of the brain. Provides an alternative way of looking at certain human behaviours e.g. aggression and risk-taking.