

AAMC'S COMPLETE LIST OF PSY/SOC/TOPICS FOR MCAT

These topics were compiled from the AAMC website. The order and grouping is almost identical to the AAMC's lists. Concepts have been formatted and color coded by Kat Thomson.

- **BLUE** = Areas that emphasize general psychology and biopsychology
- **PINK** = Areas that emphasize the overlapping areas of sociology and psychology
- **YELLOW** = Areas that emphasize general sociology and epidemiology

6A. SENSING THE ENVIRONMENT

Sensory Processing

Threshold

Weber's Law

Signal detection theory

Sensory adaptation

Psychophysics

Sensory pathways

Types of sensory receptor

Structure and function of the eye

Visual pathways, parallel processing, feature detection

Structure and function of the ear

Auditory processing

Sensory reception by hair cells

Somatosensation

Taste, taste buds, chemoreceptors

Olfactory cells/chemoreceptors

Pheromones

Olfactory pathways in the brain

Kinesthetic sense

Vestibular sense

Bottom-up/Top-down processing

Perceptual organization (depth, form, motion, constancy)

Gestalt principles

6B. MAKING SENSING OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Selective attention, Divided attention

Information-processing model

Piaget's stages of cognitive development

Cognitive changes in late adulthood

Role of culture in cognitive development

Influence of heredity and environment on cognitive development

Biological factors that affect cognition

Types of problem solving

Barriers and approaches to effective problem solving

Heuristics and biases (e.g., overconfidence, belief perseverance)

Theories of intelligence

Influence of heredity and environment on intelligence, variations in intellectual ability

States of consciousness

Stages of sleep, sleep cycles, circadian rhythms, dreaming

Sleep-wake disorders

Hypnosis and meditation

Consciousness-altering drugs (types of, effects on nervous system)

Drug addiction and the reward pathway in the brain Memory

Encoding Process of encoding information

Storage Types of memory storage (e.g., sensory, working, long-term)

Semantic networks and spreading activation

Recall, recognition, and relearning, retrieval cues

The role of emotion in retrieving memories (PSY, BIO)

Aging and memory

Memory dysfunctions (e.g., Alzheimer's disease, Korsakoff's syndrome)

Decay Interference

Memory construction and source monitoring

Changes in synaptic connections underlie memory and learning

Neural plasticity

Long-term potentiation

Theories of language development (e.g., learning, Nativist, Interactionist)

Influence of language on cognition

Brain areas that control language and speech

6C. RESPONDING TO THE WORLD

Three components of emotion (cognitive, physiological, behavioral)

Universal emotions (fear, anger, happiness, surprise, disgust, and sadness)

Adaptive role of emotion

Theories of emotion James–Lange theory Cannon–Bard theory Schachter–Singer theory

The role of biological processes in perceiving emotion

Brain regions involved in the generation and experience of emotions

The role of the limbic system in emotion

Emotion and the autonomic nervous system

Physiological markers of emotion (signatures of emotion)

The nature of stress

Appraisal Different types of stressors (e.g., cataclysmic events, personal)

Effects of stress on psychological functions

Stress outcomes/response to stressors

Emotional Behavioral Managing stress (e.g., exercise, relaxation, spirituality)

7A. INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCES ON BEHAVIOR

Neurons (e.g., the reflex arc)

Neurotransmitters and their influence on behavior

Structure and function of the peripheral and central nervous system

Forebrain, Midbrain, Hindbrain, Lateralization of cortical functions

Methods used in studying the brain

The spinal cord

Components of the endocrine system

Effects of the endocrine system on behavior

Genes, temperament, and heredity

Adaptive value of traits and behaviors

Interaction between heredity and environmental influences

Influence of genetic and environmental factors on the development of behaviors

Regulatory genes and behavior

Genetically based behavioral variation in natural populations

Prenatal development

Motor development

Developmental changes in adolescence

Theories of personality (psychoanalytic, humanistic, trait, social/cognitive, behaviorism)

Situational approach to explaining behavior

Biomedical versus biopsychosocial approaches to understanding behavior

Types of psych disorders, rates, and classification

Anxiety disorders Obsessive–compulsive disorder Trauma- and stressor-related disorders

Somatic symptom and related disorders

Depressive disorders, Bipolar and related disorders

Schizophrenia

Dissociative disorders, Personality disorders

Biological bases of: schizophrenia, depression, alzheimer's, parkinson's

Stem cell-based therapy

Factors that influence motivation (instinct, arousal, drives, needs)

Theories (Drive reduction, incentive, cognitive, need-based)

Biological and social motivators that regulate behavior (e.g., hunger, sex drive)

Motivation, behavior, and substance addiction

Components of attitudes (i.e., cognitive, affective, and behavioral)

How behavior influences attitudes (e.g., foot-in-the door phenomenon, role-playing effects)

Cognitive dissonance theory

7B. SOCIAL PROCESSES THAT INFLUENCE SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

How the Presence of Others Affects Individual Behavior

Social facilitation

Deindividuation

Bystander effect

Social loafing

Social control

Peer pressure

Conformity

Obedience

Group Decision-making Processes

Group polarization

Groupthink

Normative and Deviant Behavior

Social norms

Sanctions

Folkways, mores, and taboos

Anomie

Deviance

Perspectives on deviance (e.g., differential association, labeling theory, strain theory)

Aspects of collective behavior (e.g., fads, mass hysteria, riots)

Socialization

Agents of socialization (e.g., the family, mass media, peers, workplace)

7C. ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Habituation and Dishabituation

Associative Learning

Classical conditioning

Neutral, conditioned, and unconditioned stimuli

Conditioned and unconditioned response

Processes: acquisition, extinction, spontaneous recovery, generalization, discrimination

Operant conditioning

Processes of shaping and extinction

Types of reinforcement: positive, negative, primary, conditional

Reinforcement schedules: fixed-ratio, variable-ratio, fixed-interval, variable-interval

Punishment

Escape and avoidance learning

The role of cognitive processes in associative learning

Biological processes that affect associative learning

Observational Learning

Modeling Biological processes that affect observational learning

Mirror neurons

Role of the brain in experiencing vicarious emotions

Applications of observational learning to explain individual behavior

Theories of Attitude and Behavior Change

Elaboration likelihood model

Social cognitive theory

Factors that affect attitude change (e.g., changing behavior, message and target, social factors)

8A. SELF-IDENTITY

Self-concept, self-identity, and social identity

self-esteem, self-efficacy, and locus of control

Different types of identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, class)

Formation of Identity

Theories of identity development (e.g., gender, moral, psychosexual, social)

Influence of social factors on identity formation

Influence of individuals (e.g., imitation, looking-glass self, role-taking)

Influence of groups (e.g., reference group)

Influence of culture and socialization on identity formation

8B. SOCIAL THINKING

Attributional processes (e.g., fundamental attribution error, role of culture in attributions)

How self-perceptions shape our perceptions of others

How perceptions of the environment shape our perceptions of others

Prejudice and Bias

Processes that contribute to prejudice

Power, prestige, and class

The role of emotion in prejudice

The role of cognition in prejudice

Stereotypes Stigma

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism vs. cultural relativism

Processes Related to Stereotypes

Self-fulfilling prophecy

Stereotype threat

8C. SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Elements of Social Interaction

Types of status (e.g., achieved, ascribed)

Role, role conflict, role strain, role exit

Primary and secondary groups

In-group vs. out-group

Group size (e.g., dyads, triads)

Networks

Organizations

Formal organization

Bureaucracy and characteristics of an ideal bureaucracy

Perspectives on bureaucracy (e.g., iron law of oligarchy, McDonaldization)

Expressing and detecting emotion

The role of gender in the expression and detection of emotion

The role of culture in the expression and detection of emotion

Presentation of self

Impression management

Front stage versus back stage self (Dramaturgical approach)

Verbal and nonverbal communication

Animal signals and communication

Attraction, aggression, and attachment

Social support

Biological explanations of social behavior in animals

Foraging behavior

Mating behavior and mate choice

Applying game theory

Altruism

Inclusive fitness

Discrimination

Individual versus institutional discrimination

Relationship between prejudice and discrimination

How power, prestige, and class facilitate discrimination

9A. UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Sociological theories and perspectives

Microsociology vs. macrosociology

Functionalism

Conflict theory

Symbolic interactionism

Social constructionist perspective

Exchange-rational choice theory

Feminist theory

Social Institutions

Educational institution

Hidden curriculum

Teacher expectancy

Educational segregation and stratification

Institution of the family

Forms of kinship

Diversity in family forms

Marriage and divorce

Violence in the family (e.g., child abuse, elder abuse, spousal abuse)

Religion Religiosity

Types of religious organizations

Religion and social change (e.g., modernization, secularization, fundamentalism)

Government and economy

Power and authority

Comparative economic and political systems

Division of labor

Health and medicine

Medicalization

The sick role

Delivery of health care

Illness experience

Social epidemiology

Elements of culture (e.g., beliefs, language, rituals, symbols, values)

Material versus symbolic culture

Culture lag and culture shock

Assimilation and multiculturalism

Subcultures and countercultures

Mass media and popular culture

Evolution and human culture

Transmission and diffusion of culture

9B. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND PROCESSES

Demographic structure of society

Aging and the life course

Age cohorts

Social significance of aging

Sex versus gender

The social construction of gender

Gender segregation

Race and ethnicity

The social construction of race

Racialization Racial formation

Immigration status

Patterns of immigration and intersections with race and ethnicity

Sexual orientation

Demographic shifts and social change

Theories of demographic change (i.e., Malthusian theory and demographic transition)

Population growth and decline (e.g., population projections, population pyramids)

Fertility, migration, and mortality

Fertility and mortality rates (e.g., total, crude, age-specific)

Patterns in fertility and mortality

Push and pull factors in migration

Social movements

Relative deprivation

Organization of social movements

Movement strategies and tactics

Globalization

Factors contributing to globalization (e.g., technology, economic interdependence)

Perspectives on globalization

Social changes in globalization (e.g., civil unrest, terrorism)

Industrialization and urban growth

Suburbanization and urban decline

Gentrification and urban renewal

10A. SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Spatial Inequality

Residential segregation

Neighborhood safety and violence

Environmental justice (location and exposure to health risks)

Social class

Aspects of social stratification

Social class and socioeconomic status

Class consciousness and false consciousness

Cultural capital and social capital

Social reproduction

Power, privilege, and prestige

Intersectionality (e.g., race, gender, age)

Socioeconomic gradient in health

Global inequalities

Patterns of social mobility

Intergenerational and intragenerational mobility

Vertical and horizontal mobility

Meritocracy

Poverty

Relative and absolute poverty

Social exclusion

Health disparities (e.g., class, gender, and race inequalities in health)

Healthcare disparities (e.g., class, gender, and race inequalities in health care)