

## Interpersonal Models in Psychology (H002097)

Course size (nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)

Credits 4.0 Study time 120 h Contact hrs 45.0 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2018-2019

A (semester 1)	Dutch	lecture: response	40.0 h
		lecture	5.0 h
		lecture	

Lecturers in academic year 2018-2019

Buysse, Ann	PP05	lecturer-in-charge
Verhofstadt, Lesley	PP05	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2018-2019

	crdts	offering
<a href="#">Bachelor of Science in Psychology (main subject Clinical Psychology)</a>	4	A
<a href="#">Linking Course Master of Science in Psychology (main subject Clinical Psychology)</a>	4	A
<a href="#">Linking Course Master of Science in Psychology (main subject Teacher Education and Training)</a>	4	A
<a href="#">Preparatory Course Master of Science in Psychology (main subject Clinical Psychology)</a>	4	A
<a href="#">Preparatory Course Master of Science in Psychology (main subject Teacher Education and Training)</a>	4	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Person-context interactions, cognitive-dialectical model.

Position of the course

Interpersonal models in psychology is a bachelor course within the program Clinical psychology, which is situated in Block 2: Models in psychology. Block 2 focusses on understanding, explaining and predicting people. The course zooms in on the interpersonal processes and the interaction between person and context.

Contents

This course covers the following topics:

- Introduction. An overview of the domain of interpersonal processes - within as well as between persons - to get insight into the complex interplay of bio-psycho-social variables in the interpersonal world of humans of all ages and all cultures. Seven questions structure this course (see further).
- Development. Overview of the historical and socio-cultural context in which interpersonal models developed. With Sullivan (introduction of idea that psychological processes are inherently interpersonal), Mead (communication within the context of sociocultural rules and norms), Lewin en Heider (the psychology of interpersonal relations, 1958, social perception and attribution), Leary (taxonomy of normal and abnormal behaviour understood within an interpersonal context), Bowlby (attachment and mental representations of interactions) and Bandura (2002, social-cognitive theory and agency). Attention is also given to communication and systems theory based on Mead to understand behaviour within a complex system of shared cultural norms that resonate in language and nonverbal behaviour (Watzlavick et al.).
- Contemporary theories and their relation to other models in psychology. *Dialectical causality* and *mutual influence* between persons is central within the social and cultural *context*. Mutual influence (bidirectionality) is discussed from a behavioristic

perspective (Patterson & Fisher, 2002, an action-reaction model with predictability) and from a *cognitive-dialectical perspective* (Valsiner e.a., 1997). In the latter, bidirectionality is considered a dialectical process of meaning construction between persons in which processes and outcomes of change are not predictable.

- Key concepts.
  - Persons and behaviour are always considered within context. Behaviour is a characteristic of relations between persons and their context in the here and now. Behaviour is present because it is meaningful. Normal and adaptive behaviour are context dependent. We start from the work of Hinde (1997) in which the way people construct interactions and relations is studied, as well as how interactions are imbedded in relationships, and how relationships are imbedded in context and culture, with bidirectional influence between all these levels.
  - The interplay between persons and context cannot be understood by studying the person nor the context. Persons are influenced by context, yet not determined. Context does not determine, it is constructed. Everything that is meaningful is context, including biological and social aspects of context.
  - The interplay between persons and context is complex. In order to understand behaviour, complexity is necessary and cannot be reduced. The exchange of information between persons and context - feedback - is crucial to understand stability and evolution. Feedback mechanisms are circular processes.
  - The psychologist is part of the context.
  - Change is dialectical and cannot be predicted.
  - The focus is on processes and not on (behavioural) outcomes of interpersonal relations. Interpersonal processes include intimacy, empathy, support, conflict, trust, attachment, social identity, (nonverbal) communication, social motivation, social cognition, social perception, ...
  - Agency is central to the cognitive-dialectical perspective. It refers to the human capacity to (purposefully) influence other persons and to give meaning to interpersonal influence (Huston, 2002; De Mol & Buysse, 2007). Persons construct relationships in a meaningful way. Meaningful does not exclude conflict. Difference is necessary to evolve.
- The empirical base and the role of research. The contemporary perspectives described result from a combination of creative theories and empirical research (Buysse, De Mol, & Verhofstadt, 2008). Innovative research designs are required to study persons in context, e.g., qualitative research for meaning construction, observational research for communication and feedback, round-robin designs and Social Relations Model analyses for individual, relational and group effects, ...
- Applications within the socio-cultural context. What are meaning constructions of donor parenting, biological and social parenting, family transitions, gender roles, gender identity, ... and what social processes are key to intimate relationships (stability and growth, support, conflict, empathy, attachment, attributions, sexuality, (nonverbal) communication, ...) and to family relationships (social perspectives, agency, circularity, feedback, doing family, ...). The focus is on processes and on the interplay between persons and context.
- Interpersonal processes, psychopathology and health. How can psychopathology (anxiety and mood disorders, aggression, addiction, ...) and health be understood from an interpersonal, cognitive-dialectical model in which behaviour is understood as a relational characteristic in context. We discuss issues relevant for adults (e.g., stalking, trauma, anxiety), elderly (depression, health), children and adolescents (bidirectionality, agency, cancer) within a socio-cultural Western context (e.g., guilt and shame as interpersonal emotions, intimacy, social perspectives, gender roles, ...). The interaction with biological and social factors is also considered (e.g., epigenetics).
- Concluding: the 7 questions.
  - Human beings and human behaviour: all persons are capable of (intentionally and non-intentionally) influencing other people and give meaning to this influence. Human beings are meaningfully constructing relationships. Meaningful does not exclude conflict: in a dialectical model difference is required to evolve.
  - Normality and abnormality: behaviour is a characteristic of relationships between persons and their context in the here and now. Behaviour occurs because it is meaningful. Normal and adaptive behaviour are context dependent. People give meaning to interactions embedded in relationships, embedded in context and culture, with bidirectional influence between all these levels. Normal and adaptive behaviour are context dependent. There is also conceptual continuity between normality and abnormality.
  - Etiology and resilience: (mal)adjustment can be understood within the complex interplay of persons and context
  - Key-concepts: bidirectionality, context, agency, processes, feedback, information, (nonverbal) interaction.
  - Factors that help/hinder change (moderators): In the cognitive-dialectical perspective bidirectionality is a between-person dialectical process of meaning construction. Processes as well as outcomes of change cannot be predicted.

- Change occurs in the interaction between person and context.
- Processes of change (mediators): Change is possible through context (meaning construction, social perspectives), relationships (information, feedback, agency) or individuals (social cognition, attribution, social motivation, competencies, social perception, ...).
- Context: everything that renders meaning is context, including biological and social aspects of context

#### Initial competences

#### Final competences

- 1 Know and use key concepts (bidirectionality, context, agency, feedback, information and interpersonal processes), theories (cognitive-dialectic theory), theoretical frames of reference (social cognition, attribution, social motivation, social perception, communication theory, systems theory), explanatory models (interpersonal models within a bio-psycho-social frame), methods and techniques (qualitative research, round-robin designs, Social Relations Model, observational research) of interpersonal models in psychological science.
- 2 Have insight into the specific nature of interpersonal models in psychological science (interplay between person and context in within-person and between-person phenomena) and insight into scientific practice (basic theories, recent interpretations and empirical evidence, applications to psychopathology and health).
- 3 Be aware of the (historical) evolution of psychological research within interpersonal models in psychology. That is, the development of the scientific domain starting with Sullivan's work till the recent interpretations with focus on the cognitive-dialectical model.
- 4 Appreciate uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge of interpersonal models. On the one hand related to the role of the complexity of the relationship between persons and context. Complexity is necessary, cannot be reduced and implies uncertainty and ambiguity. On the other hand related to the relationship of interpersonal models with other models in psychology.
- 5 Creatively discover relationships between psychological concepts and discover novel points of view. Appreciation of complexity in the interaction between persons and context and the basic underpinning of the cognitive-dialectical perspective that change cannot be predicted, allow different perspectives on specific problems related to psychopathology and health.

#### Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

#### Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

#### Teaching methods

Lecture, lecture: response lecture

#### Extra information on the teaching methods

Response lecture: Content is provided through blended learning/flipped classroom. Students are required to study the content in advance (through reading, watching recordings of classes and films, online-exercises via Minerva) so that lecture time can be devoted to demonstration, reflection and practice.

#### Learning materials and price

Handbook, Learning paths, powerpoint presentation  
Cost: 25 euro

#### References

Horowitz, L.M., & Strack, S. (2011). Handbook of Interpersonal Psychology: Theory, Research, Assessment, and Therapeutic Interventions. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

#### Course content-related study coaching

#### Evaluation methods

end-of-term evaluation and continuous assessment

#### Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the first examination period

Written examination with open questions, participation, assignment

#### Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the second examination period

Written examination with open questions, assignment

#### Examination methods in case of permanent evaluation

#### Possibilities of retake in case of permanent evaluation

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

#### Extra information on the examination methods

The 7 questions on which this class is based (see content and see also other classes on models in psychology) are the basis for the written exam.

#### Calculation of the examination mark

A combination of end-of-term assessment (75%) and continuous evaluation (25%). Participation in all parts of the evaluation is compulsory.

In order to pass the course students have to obtain a final score of at least 10/20 and have to obtain at least the equivalent of 8/20 on all parts of the evaluation. In that case, final scores of 10/20 and above will be reduced to the highest fail quotation (9/20).

Students will not be deliberated if they obtain an equivalent of 8/20 on at least one part of the evaluation. In that case final scores of 8/20 and above will be reduced to the highest non-deliberative quotation (7/20).