A Very Brief History of Psychology
Objectives

- Definition of psychology
- Major players, time periods, ideas, and issues in historical development of psychology
What is Psychology?

- **Psychology**
  - Psyche: Mind
  - Logos: Knowledge or study

- **Definition:** The scientific study of behavior and mental processes
  - Behavior: “Overt” - can be directly observed (e.g., crying)
  - Mental Processes: “Covert” - cannot be directly observed (e.g., remembering)

(Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001)
Early Basis

Physiology + Philosophy → Psychology

(Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001)
Wundt

- Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920)
- University of Leipzig, Germany
- 1879 - Established first laboratory for study of psychology
- Established first “psychology” journal
- G. Stanley Hall - first psych lab in the U.S. in 1883 – Johns Hopkins University

(Cengage Learning, 2019)
And so, Psychology was “born”

Wundt’s grads set up new labs across Europe and North America (24 in U.S. 1883-1893)
Early Psychology Labs in U.S.

- Cornell University 1891
- Clark University 1889
- Harvard University 1892
- Wellesley College 1891
- Brown University 1892
- Yale University 1892
- Columbia University 1890
- Princeton University 1893
- Trenton State College 1892
- University of Pennsylvania 1887
- Johns Hopkins University 1883
- Catholic University 1891
- Randolph Macon Women’s College 1893
Very soon, a debate began that continues until the present:

1. What should we study?

2. How should we study it?

Note as well that all behavior occurs within a context; this context can impact what we study and how we study it.
The Battle of the “Schools” in the U.S.: Titchener vs. James

Two initial approaches in U.S. regarding how the “science” of psychology should operate:

- **Structuralism** – led by Edward Titchener
  Task of psychology is to analyze consciousness into its basic elements and investigate how these elements are related

- **Functionalism** – led by William James
  Psychology should investigate the function or purpose of consciousness, rather than its structure
Structuralism

- Used **Introspection** – careful, systematic observations of one’s own conscious experience

- Approach also emphasized using controlled conditions in a lab to try to discover basic principles governing behavior (“Science”)

(Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001)
Purpose of consciousness

This approach wanted to go beyond the lab to apply psychological research to solve “real world” problems (“Application”)

Example: Munsterberg study to select trolley-car operators

(Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001)
So even from the very beginning, we have the beginnings of the “Scientific Psychology” versus “Applied Psychology” split, and debate over emphases with the scientist-practitioner model.
Then another approach emerges – Behaviorism

- John B. Watson (1878-1958)
- Argued that psychology should only be the scientific study of overt or directly observable responses or activities

(Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001)
This approach wanted to move psychology away from research on consciousness or “cognitive” elements, in part by declaring such research to be “unscientific.”

Behaviorists emphasized the environment (nurture) over internal components of behavior and minimized impact of genetics.

Focused on stimulus-response relationships – sometimes called “S-R psychology.”
Meanwhile in Europe, two additional alternatives appear: **Gestalt** and **Psychoanalytic**

- **Gestalt Psychology** – begins in field of sensation and perception
- Study the “whole”, not just the parts
- **Key Names:**  
  - **Max Wertheimer**  
  - Fritz Perls (clinical uses)
Freud and the Beginnings of Psychoanalytic Approaches

- Sigmund Freud (1856-1939): Vienna, Austria

- Emphasis on unconscious processes influencing behavior

- Unconscious = outside awareness; note the contrast with the Behaviorists!

- Cultural context is also very important to origins of psychoanalytic approach
Example of the role of the context in Europe at the time:

- Freud’s theory originally based on the “neuroses” he perceived in many of his female clients.

- Argued unconscious conflict related to sexuality plays a central role in behavior & disorders.
Meanwhile, in the U.S., Behaviorism continues as the dominant approach and expands its toolbox by including the consequences of behavior (S – R – C psychology).

**B.F. Skinner** (1904-1990)

- Environmental factors determine behavior
  - Responses that lead to positive outcomes are repeated
  - Responses that lead to negative outcomes are not repeated

- Wrote several popular books. One arguing that “free will” did not exist – (“Beyond Freedom and Dignity”) and advocating a “behaviorally engineered” society – (“Walden Two”)
1950’s: Opposition to Psychoanalytic Theory & Behaviorism Grows

- Charges that both the Behaviorism and Psychoanalytic approaches were dehumanizing
- Diverse opposition groups got together to form a loose alliance
- **Humanism** was born
- Led by Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) and Carl Rogers (1902-1987)
- Emphasis on the unique qualities of humans: freedom and personal growth

(Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001)
And then the Return of Cognition

- **Cognition** = mental processes involved in behavior and reacting to the environment; going inside the “black box”

- 1950’s and 1960’s – Piaget (Child Development), Chomsky (Language Acquisition), and Simon (Decision Making)

- Argued that it was possible to study internal mental events in a scientific manner
But weren’t there Female Psychologists?

They all faced various forms of discrimination from the cultural context of the time.
A personal favorite, and someone who impacts your life everyday: Lillian Gilbreth (1878 – 1972)

Trained as a psychologist (and also with a degree in English), she helped create the fields of industrial engineering, “time and motion” studies, “scientific management” and ergonomics. She was the first female professor appointed to the Purdue University School of Engineering as well as one of the first Ph.D.s in Industrial Psychology.
Among many other accomplishments, she influenced the beginnings of “scientific” kitchen design.