

KAREN FOLEY: Welcome back to Student Hub Live. Well, we've been having a wonderful discussion so far. HJ, how's everyone doing at home?

HJ: Loved that session introducing arts and humanities. And I know a lot of people, including Peter and Christina, saying it's going to be really hard, or it has been hard, choosing between revolutions and the cultures module. And I can completely understand why, after that session.

And I know everyone starting A111 is in for a massive treat because there's lots of good feedback on the module. [INAUDIBLE] said there's loads of great advice and guidance, when you start in the module, about how to study. John says it's just absolutely amazing. You think you know the subject, but then it opens your eyes even more. And Olga said that after studying A112, I looked at my own culture and identity in a different way.

So lots of positivity for these modules. And I know everyone who's going to be studying them is really excited. But as with the last session, we had a great discussion. And I know, for this session, our wonderful guests would love you to put your thoughts, comments, and questions to them. And we're going to get a lovely introduction to psychology.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And if you're just joining us, a big, warm welcome. Chat as you will. HJ will fill you in on the various things. And we've also got some word clouds for you to fill in at home. Remember, if you can only think of one or two things, just remember to put a full stop or a cross in the other boxes so that your results can feed into that discussion.

So when I did some of my OU psychology degrees, I wanted to be a criminal-- sorry, a clinical psychologist, not a criminal psychologist. That would be not very good at all. And I know a lot of you out there are doing psychology right now. So I'm joined by Lee and Hayley. Lee and Hayley, did you always want to be doing the job you're doing now?

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

LEE CURLEY: I'll let you go first, Haley.

HAYLEY NESS: No, I took quite a long, convoluted way to psychology. So when I left school, I was a hairdresser. I trained as a hairdresser. Always wanted to go to university, but I don't think I really knew what I wanted to do, and I think I would have chosen the wrong subject.

So I was a hairdresser. I married young. I lived in America. And then I woke up one day and thought, oh, I think I want to be a psychologist, but didn't really know anything about it. So I went to the library, looked it up, and thought, oh, there are lots of different types, and then basically had to change my life around a little bit to come back to the UK and study. And yeah, so I'm in the right job now. But I didn't always want to be a psychologist.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. And you've just trained as a counsellor as well. So that's excellent to see you taking that further. Lee, what about you? How was your journey into psychology?

LEE CURLEY: Yeah, so for me, at school, I was always really interested in biology and sociology. And psychology, I met in the middle. And I chose my degree based on that, and ever since, fell in love with psychology and kept going with it, and yeah, never lost that love for it, I suppose.

KAREN FOLEY: Brilliant. Excellent.

HAYLEY NESS: Yeah, I think once--

KAREN FOLEY: That's really exciting. Hayley?

HAYLEY NESS: So I was just going to say, once you've got the love for psychology, it never really loses you, does it? You just--

LEE CURLEY: Oh, totally. Yeah.

HAYLEY NESS: --keep going.

LEE CURLEY: It changes your life. Yeah.

HAYLEY NESS: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Absolutely. So this is the first time that many of our students who are studying DE100 will actually get to have a module that's entirely focused on various aspects of psychology. So let's start by telling our students at home what sort of things the module has got in store for them in terms of the content that they're going to meet.

LEE CURLEY: Yeah, course. So the students-- you're going to have an amazing time learning about a vast number of areas within psychology. You're going to learn about some early theories on intelligence and kind of some of the problems in relation to that.

You're going to hear some of the classical theories in psychology in relation to obedience. You're going to hear about eyewitness testimony, which is something that both me and Hayley have researched as well as taught. And yeah, you're going to hear fascinating stuff from a number of different areas in psychology, both forensic, social theory, individual differences. Yeah.

HAYLEY NESS: Yeah. Yeah, the module-- the main textbook of the module is split into three parts. So the first part is looking at things like what makes people do harm to other people. So that's where the obedience comes in, and learning from watching and things to do with authority. The second part is about what determines human behaviour. So how do we learn? How do we change? How do we make friends?

The third part is focusing more on those psychological processes that we can't see. So as Lee said, memory. And we do that in a very applied way, looking at eyewitness memory, look at language, look at how we pay attention or how we don't pay attention to things. So yeah, really, really interesting topics.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. And it's such an evolving discipline, psychology. When we think about it in the context of other, I guess, more long-standing traditions, it is very, very new and constantly developing all the time.

LEE CURLEY: No, totally.

HAYLEY NESS: Totally.

LEE CURLEY: I think the interesting thing about psychology is that psychology both changes society, but is then also changed by society. And there is always that circular progress in psychology and how it evolves throughout the time. Even from when I did my undergrad, which wasn't that long ago in the scheme of things, psychologists changed from then totally. So yeah. Yeah, it's always evolving.

HAYLEY NESS: And that's one of the good things about D100. That progress is fed into the module. So we look at those key studies, those early studies from, like, the '70s and the '80s. But also, students are then introduced to how that has changed over the years. There's more recent research, abstracts from papers.

So looking at ethical issues, so things that were perhaps done in the '70s are considered now to be unethical. So how has that changed and developed, and how has our way of thinking changed? And as Lee says, sometimes that's a result of societal changes that impact on what we can and can't do.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. So there's some really amazing key theories and topics that, as you say, perhaps couldn't be done today but really helped us understand things like how we're able to harm other people in the wars, for example. But it's not just about that. It's about our skills and about how we change our ways of thinking.

So in addition to learning about the content, D100 is something that's going to teach students to be able to critically evaluate and to use different skills and to be able to think like a psychologist, which is quite a different way of thinking about things. So I wonder if we can talk a little bit about that. What are some of the skills that the students are going to acquire right now?

LEE CURLEY: No, totally. So yeah, I totally agree. And if anything, what we would like you to take away from the module would be more based on the research methods and critical evaluation and stuff like that. This module will very much set you up so many [INAUDIBLE] that even if you don't want to be a psychologist, it will set you up for your own career paths. It'll teach you how to write. It'll teach you how to correctly think. It'll teach you how to understand basic statistics and evaluate the world.

Me and Hayley had a chat prior to us coming on. And we thought, yeah, it changes the way you view the world. It changes the way that you read data in the newspaper and how you evaluate and process information. Yeah, I think it very much changes the way you perceive the world.

HAYLEY NESS: Totally. Yeah, when I studied psychology, I became a total pain because I would watch the news and think, where's the evidence for that? When you start to understand about evidence and what makes good evidence and not-so-good evidence, you do start to critique everything. And that's where we want students to get. And this is just the start of the journey on D100. So it's a very gentle introduction to becoming an academic, to thinking critically, to evaluating.

And as Lee says, we do introduce students to statistics. But that's a very gentle journey. So the module starts off, why would we want to look at data? What is the point? And then starts to look at the very basics of data. What is a variable? How would you describe it with a graph? So it's all written in really nice ways. And the good thing about the module is that it doesn't teach this in isolation. It teaches it in relation to the other theories and research that you get. So everything is tied together really well.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Well, let's take a look at that notion of statistics. We've asked you at home how you use statistics in everyday life. And I think-- well, certainly, I've noticed that since the pandemic, there have been so many statistics bandied around. And I think when-- the threat can be real and individual, and sometimes you have to make choices, you certainly look at those stats in quite a different way.

So tell us, at home, how you've used statistics, because Lee and Hayley, I think it's one of those things-- certainly in my experience, so many students meet psychology with a genuine interest in understanding how people feel, how they behave towards other people. But then they're met with other things because, of course, psychology was born out of the scientific approach. So things like reports, for example. And statistics can be quite scary. Can you tell us about why they're so important in the discipline, and also perhaps reassure students about how we teach statistics and what we do with them?

LEE CURLEY: No, totally. I would say statistics are very important because it allows you to quantify and capture psychological phenomenon or behaviour. And from that, it allows us to compare across groups or across an individual. And the way it's taught in D100 very much steps you through the basics. It'll start off with averages, what an average means. And then we build up a little bit more, and we use maybe a little bit more complicated stats than you used previously. But by the time you get to that point, we've really much stepped you through that process.

In the same way as writing a report, we don't just go, OK, here you go. Write this 1,000-word report. It will be built in with other assessments that-- first, you learn how we do our methodology. And then we'll show you do your results. And then we'll build on how we do that academic report after that. So you won't be thrown in the deep end. We'll step you through every process to learn how we do the basic elements to then do the bigger elements later on.

HAYLEY NESS: Yeah, and please, please don't be frightened of statistics. You don't need to understand maths. I'm going to admit here to everybody that's live, I failed my Maths o-level. And I'm an experimental psychologist, by training. So you have to understand stats.

I think the thing to understand is that you don't need to do the maths. We're not teaching you. We're not statisticians. We're not teaching you how to do the maths. If you can understand them, great. If you don't, we use them to interpret. Or, we interpret statistics. And we use them to find out if our great research, our experiment, our questionnaire is significant, if there's a significant difference, if we found something interesting, basically, and important. They're just a tool--

KAREN FOLEY: [INAUDIBLE]

HAYLEY NESS: --for us.

KAREN FOLEY: So it's more, Hayley, I guess, about the interpretation and how we use things. So we're able to talk with confidence about what that might mean, and I guess whether it's a good thing, and as you say, whether it's significant. And significance has quite a distinct use in statistics than it does in other ways where we go, yeah, it's really significant because I think that.

HAYLEY NESS: Yeah.

KAREN FOLEY: So--

HAYLEY NESS: Certainly.

KAREN FOLEY: --it's about proof, I guess, and about our confidence in being able to say, well, this is a thing, or that's not a thing, or that may have happened just because you've got that bunch of people. So it's about those notions, really.

HAYLEY NESS: Yeah, and I think--

LEE CURLEY: [INAUDIBLE]

HAYLEY NESS: --the important thing to understand in psychology is that what we call this approach is a quantitative approach. But that's not the only approach in psychology. We use what we call qualitative methods. And it can be text based. It can be about understanding experience, understanding the way people talk to each other. So it's not all about numbers. But for us--

KAREN FOLEY: [INAUDIBLE]

HAYLEY NESS: --obviously, numbers are important. But yeah, please don't be scared. [CHUCKLES]

KAREN FOLEY: No, absolutely.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

KAREN FOLEY: Sorry, Lee.

LEE CURLEY: Sorry, sorry. I was just going to say, as Hayley said, I was the same. I was really bad at maths in school. And then you end up using it because it's practical maths. It's applied maths. It's not just Pythagoras, that's a bit boring. I probably offended 1,000 mathematicians there. But yeah.

HAYLEY NESS: [CHUCKLES]

KAREN FOLEY: No, brilliant. Well, we've asked people at home what sort of stats they use in everyday life. And there have been some really interesting things. Sometimes-- you were talking about transferable skills earlier before. And we, of course, can take stuff we do in everyday into our studies. And these were some of the things that you said at home that you're already familiar with.

So there are things like the COVID rates and reports in the news, even things like football stats, budgeting and reviews, working data, sales for business, buying things online, medicine, vaccines, traffic to websites, crime levels, choosing lottery numbers, COVID deaths, COVID papers, et cetera, and sports. So lots of common uses of statistics and numbers. And you mentioned even things like averages technically one form of statistic.

LEE CURLEY: Yeah. Yeah, Totally. Totally. So yeah, yeah. It's used in your daily life every day. And we're just going to be doing the same thing but applying it in science to compare across groups, really. So yeah.

HAYLEY NESS: Totally.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

HAYLEY NESS: I really like the fact that people have put COVID rates up there, because having an understanding of data, of statistics, of evidence, can really help you to make important decisions in life. So even the MMR debate, whether to get your children vaccinated or not, comes from evidence and statistics. And COVID-- there were some pretty shoddy graphs bandied about, I think, during the COVID debate. So yeah, having that understanding allows you to unpick and make your own decisions.

LEE CURLEY: No, totally.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. Absolutely. Now, we asked people earlier what psychology means to them. So let's end with this because people have put some really interesting things that I think showcase the diversity of the topic.

So there are all sorts of things, from things like developmental psychology to understanding the brain to looking at behaviours and patterns. But also think about understanding the world, helping people, communication, behaviours, resilience and study resilience, fascinating, digging deeper, language, experimentation.

Understanding the brain, I think I've mentioned before. Intelligence, Aristotle, theories, how people interact with each other and understanding human behaviour, and exploration.

So lots of really interesting things there that show that it's not just about understanding feelings. It's also not just about stats. But there's a whole wealth of information. So I might invite both of you to comment on what people have said at home in terms of those themes?

LEE CURLEY: Yeah. So yeah, I totally agree. I think that everything that the students have mentioned there is what psychology is, because psychology is such a broad, broad discipline. And it's different things to different people. And I think you can see understanding come in there, delving in deeper. And I think that is-- and also Aristotle. I think psychology has this very broad thing from early philosophy. And that is what it's about. It's about gaining more knowledge in the human brain and behaviour.

HAYLEY NESS: Yeah. No, totally. I think it was great to see such a diverse range of terms there. And also, it was great to see understanding as being one of the key ones, because it is all about understanding. And as Lee said, there are so many different types of psychologists. You said, at the beginning, Karen, that you thought about being a clinical psychologist. There's clinical psychologists, educational, forensic, counselling psychologists, criminal psychologists. And psychologists work in-- they can work in almost every workplace.

LEE CURLEY: Totally.

HAYLEY NESS: There's such a diverse range.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. And I think one of the things that I really enjoy about some of these things is that when we sometimes go into psychology, like myself, we've got quite a fixed idea. But then you start doing different things and thinking, actually, could I make everyone turn off their computer or use less energy? You've got all these different psychologists trying to help the world--

HAYLEY NESS: Totally.

KAREN FOLEY: --ultimately be a better place, things like eyewitness testimony and working with the police. There's just so much out there. And it does really shift the way you're thinking. And I think one of the lovely things about level one is that you can be introduced to this broad spectrum of areas.

And you've got that flexibility to end up using your qualification, as I have done, but perhaps in a slightly different way than I intended. And I think, for all of us, we've muddled along. By paying attention and being reflective, we've been able to think about the stuff we like doing, the people we like doing it with, and the ways in which we want to impact on the world.

HAYLEY NESS: Totally.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

HAYLEY NESS: --that describes my journey as a student as well. So as I said earlier, I wasn't sure which area I wanted to do and what type of psychology. And I just kept an open mind.

And as I studied each module, I thought, oh, I'm really interested in that. That's fascinating. And I remember learning that we don't all perceive colour in the same way. And when I learned that in terms of memory, what we remember is really what actually happened, that just blew my mind. So there are some real things in psychology that can change your life.

LEE CURLEY: No, totally.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely.

LEE CURLEY: And can we-- you said there, Karen, a bit like changing behaviours in relation to how you use lights and stuff like that. Everybody thinks that it's going to be physicists that will save the world from global warming. And I think it will be psychologists. So I think it shows how--

HAYLEY NESS: Totally.

LEE CURLEY: --important psychology is in society.

KAREN FOLEY: Absolutely. And this is why you've got really interesting assessments on the module, from things like doing a blog, because psychologists do this sort of thing in terms of impacting on people. So there's a lot to learn. And Lee and Hayley, thank you so much for giving us a wonderful introduction. That's unfortunately all we've got time for right now.

We started today's session with one of our word clouds about stories. And now we have a quick video for you which is about how stories shape our minds, so broadening those two things together. And then we'll be back next for our introduction to social sciences and global studies. So stay tuned, and I'll see you in just a moment after this break.

[MUSIC PLAYING]