ESSAY EXAM #1: Choose ONE of the following topics*

1. Plato famously described the Allegory of the Cave to describe man’s relationship to Truth. Explain and affirm the allegory. Thinking of ideas that were later shown to be limited or false, use a few examples from the history of psychology studied so far to illustrate the truth of Plato’s allegory. Be sure and include your own reactions to the relevance of the Allegory of the Cave. Feel free to use contemporary examples, too.

2. Choose and discuss 2 significant extra-biblical influences (from the Greeks to the Renaissance period) that had a definite impact on the progression of Christian “psychological” thought (for instance, about man, the soul, the body, faith, happiness, or any other such topics). You may choose influences that preceded and/or that followed the New Testament era. Be sure and include your personal evaluation as to whether the influence was positive or negative in its impact on Christianity.

3. The Renaissance was a time of change, with regard to ideas, new discoveries or inventions, historical events, and general attitudes. Identify 3 significant persons from that period who characterize these dramatic changes. Be sure and choose 3 individuals who represent relatively distinctive contributions to change (rather than 3 individuals who essentially represent the same change or area of change). Comment briefly on how these changes have fared in history since then; what has endured, what has not? Make your answer personal.

4. Biological psychology is one of the dominant schools of thought today. Trace the history of biological/physiological psychology from the Greeks to the Renaissance Period (i.e., the time periods covered so far in class). What were some of the prominent views during the Greek, Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance periods? Who do you think were significant persons and what noteworthy ideas and/or events stand out to you?

ESSAY EXAM #2: Choose ONE of the following topics*

1. Compare and contrast (a) Kierkegaard’s 3 stages of the individual towards personal freedom and (b) Auguste Comte’s 3 stages of understanding that societies (and its members) go through. Your answer should include your personal reaction to each viewpoint. Be sure to comment briefly on factors that may have influenced each man’s perspective (e.g., what might they be reacting “to”?)

2. Write a description and a critical analysis of evolutionary psychology as a model for understanding human behavior. Briefly review the progression of the concept; your review need not be comprehensive but simply illustrative. Minimally, mention one strength and one weakness of this model/theory.

3. In the history of psychology (philosophy), many (but not all) of the theorists of the post-Renaissance and pre-modern era were actually believers. However, a number of developments in thinking and research laid the groundwork for a gradually increasing gap between faith and psychological science. Provide a selective, critical review of the people and ideas that contributed to the de-emphasis of God and the spiritual.

4. Defend the notion that William James is properly viewed as the quintessential American psychologist. Include in your response the following 3 elements: (a) aspects of James’ psychological thinking/theories, (b) biographical information about James, and (c) your own reaction to James’ views.
ESSAY EXAM #3: Choose ONE of the following topics*

1. Compare and contrast E.L. Thorndike’s theory of learning (Functionalism-early Behaviorism), based on animal experimentation, to Wolfgang Köhler’s (Gestalt Psychology) theory of learning. Provide a brief personal analysis or critique as a conclusion to your answer.

2. Both J.B. Watson and Abraham Maslow believed that the environment was a powerful influence on the individual’s development. Compare and contrast Watson’s S-R psychology to Maslow’s self-actualization psychology with regard to the impact of environmental factors. Be sure and include a personal critique.

3. Write a brief “Christian” critique of Carl Rogers’ client-centered theory. What aspects of his theory might fit a Christian perspective and which might differ? Be sure and include a personal opinion regarding the impact of Rogerian theory/therapy.

4. Imagine yourself as a practicing therapist, pastoral counselor, minister or schoolteacher. Write a short essay explaining ONE concept you borrow from EACH of the major 20th century schools of psychology: Behaviorism (e.g., Watson, Pavlov, Skinner), Psychoanalysis (e.g., Freud, Adler, Jung), and Humanistic-Existential (e.g., Frankl, Rogers, Maslow, May) that you find of great usefulness in your work. For each concept, briefly explain what it means and provide an illustration of how you apply it in your work.

* Additional question options may be added at a later date