**Special Topics in Health Psychology: PSYCH 590**

**Instructor: Jessica Williamson, Ph.D.**

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**Classroom:** Bluemont Hall 487

**Day(s): MWF**

**Time: 9:30 – 10:20**

**Office:** Bluemont Hall 472

**Office hours:** Tuesday, Thursday, Friday – 11:00 am – 12:00 pm, or by appointment

**Contact hours:** My availability via e mail is 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on business days. Students can expect a response within 48 hours.

When e mailing me, make sure to identify which course you are in as I teach four different courses.

There is no required text – readings will be provided on Canvas.

**Objectives of the Course**

Special topics in Health Psychology is an advanced survey course designed to introduce students to various topics and aspects of health psychology research and theory. We will discuss topics of health including causal and mediating psychosocial factors, diseases and disorders, as well as social determinants of health (e.g., health disparities influenced by race, sex, socioeconomic status, etc.).

The course is a hybrid course, meaning that there will be some days of instructor lectures and some days of class discussion (headed by students).

The course is also designed as a preparation course for graduate studies. Students will be given assignments designed to increase critical thinking skills as well as improve analysis of scientific literature in preparation for graduate and professional studies.

An additional goal of this course is to familiarize students

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| **Review paper** | **40%** |
| *Topic assignment* | *5%* |
| *Review paper analyses* | *10%* |
| *Final draft* | *20%* |
| *Presentation* | *5%* |
| **Discussion** | **20%** |
| **Article analyses** | **30%** |
| **Assignments** | **10%** |

**Late Policy**

Turning in any assignment late will result in a 20% deduction of assignment points per day late. No exceptions.

# Class Discussion and Discussion Leaders

Students are expected to both lead and participate in class discussions.

Students will sign up to lead multiple days of discussion (depending on how many students are enrolled).

## Discussion Leaders

Discussion leaders should:

1) Prepare an agenda outlining class activities that will be announced to students the day of the discussion. This simply means outlining the order in which readings will be covered (if there are multiple readings) and any activities planned.

2) Prepare a summary of each reading. Leaders will go over major highlights of each reading before we start to discuss readings.

E.g. what was the overall message of the reading?

3) Submit a list of their discussion questions to the instructor the day of their discussion.

***ANY VIDEOS OR ACTIVITIES LASTING LONGER THAN A TOTAL OF 10 MINUTES OF CLASS TIME MUST BE APPROVED BY THE INSTRUCTOR BEFOREHAND.***

Students not leading discussion are expected to:

Write at least ***two*** discussion questions for **each reading**. Questions are submitted to designated discussion boards created for each week. NOTE: In addition to posting questions on the board, you are also expected to discuss them in class. Students are expected to actively engage in discussion.

These should be analytical questions that delve into the meat of concepts presenting in the readings, not questions asking for clarification or definitions.

# Article Analyses

Students will write 1-2 pages of reflections for these articles each week. Note, this is 1-2 pages for the entire week – not for each individual reading. This particular assignment serves several functions. First, it allows me as an instructor to gauge student understanding of the materials covered. Second, summarizing/critiquing articles helps students understand material better. Third, you will become more adept at reading scientific research literature – a skill that is integral for graduate school. Most graduate courses are discussion-based and students are generally expected

***Audio upload option (in lieu of written summaries of weekly summaries and critiques*)**

I have enabled the ability to post media uploads for weekly summaries based on readings. Students are able to upload audio recordings for their summaries and critiques. If choosing the audio upload option, students are expected to spend at least 5 minutes on their summary and description (and no more than 15 minutes).

Students should note that their audio recordings are held to the same standards as written assignments. I expect thoughtful and well-articulated comments (no rambling, getting side-tracked, etc.).

If you choose this option, directions can be found from Canvas creators here: <https://guides.instructure.com/m/4212/l/54356-how-do-i-add-media-to-my-assignment-submission>

Examples of things students might talk about would be what they learned from these readings. Did you learn anything you didn't know before? Did you disagree with anything said in these readings?

These are due 11:59 PM on Friday night the week the articles are assigned.

**Readings will be provided on the discussion board. Students post their questions on the discussion board for the topic (the day before the reading is due).**

**Students will post their reflections in the Assignments section (with a dropbox and assignment created for each week at the end of each week).**

**Submit both questions and reflections as a single post rather than uploading a document. Enter your questions for all readings at the top of the post and then enter your reflection.**

Students will receive an overall grade of 0-3 for their weekly contribution (0 = fail, 1 = needs a great deal of improvement [i.e., lacks thoughtfulness, insight, clear student did not read material], 2 = satisfactory, 3 = excellent). – This same grading rubric applies to reflection papers.

**Students missing class without a doctor’s excuse or notification of a school-related activity will automatically be deducted 50% of their daily discussion grade.**

Discussion questions will be posted on a discussion board on the course website. All questions/comments are due by 11:59 PM the night before we cover the topics.

# Assignments

Assignments will be given randomly throughout the semester. Due dates for assignments will be given when they are assigned.

# Research Review

Students will write a review encompassing several empirical research papers covering a single area in health psychology. The review can cover any area in health psychology, including causal and mediating psychosocial factors (e.g. how a personality factor affects health) as well as social determinants of health (e.g., health disparities influenced by race, sex, socioeconomic status, etc.). Students will review and integrate information from at least 10 articles. A review is not just describing each article one-by-one, but instead introduces a topic and overarching question related to the topic (e.g., does income predict obesity?). You should be able to relate the 10 articles you choose back to one another. Did any articles contradict the others? Did the support one another? Did they have differences in strengths and weaknesses of study design (e.g. random assignment vs. self-selection, control groups, correlation vs. true experiment?).

***The research proposal should be no longer than 12 pages. This includes title page, abstract, actual paper, and references.***

## Proposal of Topic

We will spend a class period talking about topic ideas. This is expected to be a collaborative process with class members helping each other to refine ideas. Students must also turn in an electronic version of the topic proposal.

## Review paper analyses

Starting during Week 6, students will fill out and turn in summary sheets (provided on Canvas) for 2 of their 10 articles a week for the next 5 weeks. The goal of these analyses is to help students summarize and organize their information. This is similar to an annotated bibliography and is an extremely helpful practice to familiarize yourself with if you want to go to grad school. Theses, preliminary projects, and dissertations are beasts to write. You should have an in-depth and thorough understanding of each article you cite in these projects. Being able to attest to information covering the same aspects of each research article will help you write strong backgrounds for future graduate school projects.

These are provided as untimed short essay “quizzes” in canvas with feedback being given later manually.

## Presentation

During the last week of class, students will give a powerpoint presentation of their paper. We will discuss presentation order and time limits later on in the semester.

**Course Schedule (readings provided on Canvas)**

**We will have multiple readings per class. Whether we get to each reading depends on student level of engagement, meaning we may not get to discuss every single reading assigned.**

**Week 1:**1/18 – 1/20

**Monday –** No class because it’s a holiday.

**Wednesday** – Syllabus day

**Friday** – No class – I will be at a conference

**Week 2:** 1/23 – 1/27

Defining Health

**Monday**

What Is “Health”? How Should We Define It?

**Wednesday**

Illness Cognitions

**Friday**

Redefining Health Psychology

**Week 3:** 1/30 – 2/3

The Biopsychosocial Model

**Monday**

Background on why we need a BPS model

**Wednesday**

Is the BPS model really that great, though?

**Friday**

Implementing the BPS model

**Week 4:** 2/6 – 2/10 – Instructor Week

**Monday**

Lecture day - Doing a literature search and review (no readings)

**Wednesday**

Discuss potential topics (no readings)

**Friday**

Watch “Stress: Portrait of a Killer” documentary (no readings)

**Week 5:** 2/13 – 2/17 – Instructor week

Personality

**Monday**

Lecture – Personality’s relationship with health background (Readings on canvas)

**Wednesday**

Lecture – Continuing on Monday’s topic (Readings on canvas)

**Friday**

Review of Type D research – talk about readings from M W

Topic assignment due

**Week 6:** 2/20 – 2/24

Personality

**Monday**

**Does how you express anger affect your health?**

**Wednesday**

Is there more to anger expression in how anger affects health?

**Friday**

Neuroanatomy and depression/suicide

\*\*Review paper analyses 1 and 2 are due.

**Week 7:** 2/27 – 3/3

Personality

**Monday**

Type C – is there a deadly trait-cocktail that leads to cancer?

**Wednesday**

Optimism

**Friday**

Self-compassion

\*\*Review paper analyses 3 & 4 are due.

**Week 8:** 3/6 – 3/10

Personality

**Monday**

Mindfulness

**Wednesday**

Self-efficacy

**Friday**

Happiness

\*\*Review paper analyses 5 & 6 are due.

**Week 9:** 3/13 – 3/17

Social Determinants of Health

**Monday**

In Sickness and In Wealth Documentary

**Wednesday**

Social determinants background readings

**Friday**

Unemployment and health

Documentary AND reading

\*\*Review paper analyses 7 & 8 are due.

**Week 10: SPRING BREAK**

**Week 11:** 3/27 – 3/31

Food Insecurity

**Monday**

Food insecurity – Bad Sugar documentary

Also a reading on Canvas

**Wednesday**

Obesity

**Friday**

Diabetes

\*\*Review paper analyses 9 & 10 are due.

**Week 12:** 4/3 – 4/7

Minority and Women’s Health

**Monday**

“When the Bough Breaks”

“Becoming American”

**Wednesday**

Minority utilization of healthcare; Racism and doctors

**Friday**

Gender and health

**Week 13:** 4/10 – 4/14

Culture and Health

**Monday**

Culture affects mental illness – case of schizophrenia and individualistic vs. collectivistic cultures

**Wednesday**

Globalization of the American psyche

**Friday**

Globalization – the wave that brought PTSD to Sri Lanka

**Week 14:** 4/17 – 4/21

Culture and Health

**Monday**

Walkin over medicine

**Wednesday**

Walkin over medicine

**Friday**

Not just minority sub cultures – majority groups hold untrue beliefs, too – war against vaccines documentary

**Week 15:** 4/24 – 4/28

Complementary and Alternative Techniques

We can change these topics based on things students might be interested in

**Monday**

Complementary and alternative medicine - yoga

**Wednesday**

Complementary and alternative medicine – herbal remedies

**Friday**

Complementary and alternative medicine – aroma therapy

**Week 16:** 5/1 – 5/5

**Monday**

Student work day

**Wednesday** - Presentations

**Friday** - Presentations

**Week 17: Final Paper Due – No exam**