**Health Psychology: Individual, Social, and Cultural Factors in Health**



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

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**Classroom:** Bluemont Hall 487

**Day(s): Tuesday, Thursday**

**Time: 3:55 – 5:10**

**Office:** Bluemont Hall 472

**Student hours:**

**Monday: 12:20-1:20**

**Tuesday and Thursday: 2:00-3:00**

**Or by appointment**

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

**Objectives of the Course**

Health Psychology is a 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.).

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Item | | % of grade | |
| **Research Proposal** | | **50%** | |
| *Topic assignment and presentation* | | *10% of proposal grade (or 20% if no one else adds)* | |
| *Draft* | | *20% of proposal grade* | |
| *Peer Review of Proposal* | | *10% of proposal grade (or 0 % if no one else adds)* | |
| *Final Paper* | | *40% of proposal grade* | |
| *Final Presentation* | | *20% of proposal grade* | |
| **Discussion Questions, Reaction Papers, and Moderation** | | **50%** | |

# 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).

Students will be randomly paired each week to lead the following week’s discussion.

## Discussion Leaders (look on the last page of the syllabus for discussion leader tips)

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 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.

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 15 MINUTES OF CLASS TIME MUST BE APPROVED BY THE INSTRUCTOR BEFOREHAND.***

## Reaction Papers - For students not leading discussion.

Students not leading discussion are expected to:

**(1)** Write at least ***one*** 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.

These are due 11:59 PM the night before class.

**(2)** Turn in a reflection paper: Students will write 1-2 pages of reflections for the week’s readings (note, this is 1-2 pages for the entire week – not for each individual reading). 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? Each week’s readings are provided in the assignments section – this is also where students will turn in their reflection papers.

These are due 11:59 PM on Thursdays.

**Readings will be provided on the discussion board. Students post their questions and reflections on the discussion board for the topic. 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 weekly discussion grade. As this class only meets one day a week, missing a single class is a big deal. Attendance is half the weekly grade.

Readings will be made available on course website.

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.

# Research Proposal

A major component of the current course is to write a research proposal. The paper should address an area of research in Health Psychology, 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 research proposal should be no longer than 15 pages. This includes title page, abstract, actual paper, and references. Students will be deducted 2.5% of their paper grade for each page they go over 15.***

## 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. This includes: goals of the proposed research, hypotheses, list of IV(s) and DV(s), and proposed statistical test.

## Proposal Draft and Peer Reviews

Students must turn in a draft of their proposal. This must be as complete as possible (treat the draft as though it is the final product).

## 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.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Topic |  |
| **Week 1**  8/23- 8/25 | **Introduction**  Syllabus day; What is health? |  |
| **Week 2**  8/30 - 9/1 | **A(n Ambiguous) Field Divided**  The medical model, biopsychosocial model, and social cognitive models: Criticisms and proposals |  |
| **Week 3**  9/6 -9/8 | **An ambiguous field continued**  Health and Illness Behavior (and Health Deteriorating Behavior)  **Personality and Health** |  |
| **Week 4**  9/13 -9/15 | **Personality Continued** |  |
| Week 5  9/20 -9/22 | Vicious Cycle: Stress, Cardiovascular issues, Psychoneuroimmunology  (Watch Portrait of a Killer documentary) |  |
| Week 6  9/27 -9/29 | Cancer |  |
| Week 7  10/4 -10/6 | Obesity  Diabetes |  |
| Week 8  10/11 -10/13 | **Social determinants of health - introduction**  In Sickness and in Wealth documentary – take notes for discussion |  |
| Week 9  10/18 - 10/20 | **Social determinants - Food insecurity**  Bad Sugar documentaries – take notes for discussion | **Topic proposal – in-class discussion of potential topics – 10/18** |
| Week 10  10/25 -10/27 | **Social determinants – Continuing with food insecurity**  **Social determinants - Race and health outcomes**  When the Bough Breaks & Becoming American documentaries – take notes for discussion |  |
| Week 11  11/1 -11/3 | **Continuing with race and health outcomes** | **Topic Assignment Due – 11/1** |
| Week 12  11/8 - 11/10 | **Social determinants – Health and Gender** |  |
| Week 13  11/15 - 11/17 | **Whose Health? Sensitivity to Cultural Differences**  The Globalization of the American Psyche  Culture-Specific Illness and Beliefs | **Rough draft due 11/18** |
| Week 14  11/22 -11/24 | THANKSGIVING BREAK |  |
| Week 15  11/29 -12/1 | Student pick: Pets, stress reduction, and mental health |  |
| Week 16  12/6 -12/8 | Student pick: Physician assisted suicide and ethics  Final presentations |  |
| Week 17 | Final Paper Due |  |

***\*I reserve the right to change the syllabus/schedule during the semester. Students will be notified of changes and a revised syllabus will be uploaded on the course website.***

**Discussion Leader Tips:** Each of you will be responsible for leading class discussions for about least six classes during the semester. You will be graded on your organization, on your presentation of material, and on your ability to lead discussion. You should view this as an opportunity to be creative. Feel free to do demonstrations, organize a debate, show brief videos, assign additional readings, etc. At the very least, you should prepare an outline (you don't need to turn this in - it's for your use) of how and where you want the discussion to proceed as well as a list of issues or questions you want the class to discuss.

* Being a discussion leader requires being extremely prepared in advance. It is not something people can “wing.”
* I am willing to meet with you to help you prepare your discussion. However, you must arrive prepared for the meeting. After all, YOU are responsible for preparing the discussion. Thus, I will make suggestions regarding your ideas for your discussion. This means that you need to read the articles and prepare an outline of what you plan to cover BEFORE we meet. Coming to our meeting unprepared makes a bad impression and I am very likely to cancel the meeting. We should meet no fewer than 2 days before you are discussion leader.
* The best way to lead a discussion is to know in advance the topics you want to cover, the responses you want to elicit, and the discussion questions that specifically elicit those responses. You don’t need to know the answers to the questions you ask, but you should have thought about the answer. Questions like, “What did you think about the article by Baumeister and Leary?” are poor discussion questions and tend to elicit blank stares or brief, uninformative responses. Your discussion questions should be brief and stated in your own words.
* One of the toughest things about being a discussion leader is the pause that follows the question. It can take up to 10 seconds between when you ask a question and receive a response. People must digest what you said, think about it, formulate a response, and then speak. Typically, however, the 10 seconds seems like several minutes. Be patient. If there is a problem with the question, people will ask you to repeat it or I will ask you to reword the question.
* There is a tendency for discussion leaders to dominate the discussion. This is not surprising. As a discussion leader you probably know the topic better than any other student in the class. You have thought about it more and probably have the answer written down in front of you. Avoid the temptation to dominate discussion. The best discussion leaders pull the answers from others in the class.
* As noted earlier, this is an opportunity for you to be creative. Feel free to do demonstrations, organize a debate, show brief videos, assign additional readings, develop and administer a questionnaire, etc.