

Health Psychology Course Outline  
Psychology 314, Section 004  
Winter 07, Term 2

**Instructor:** Melady Preece, Ph.D.

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**Office Hours:** 5pm Tuesday

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**Class Times:** Tuesday 3:30pm to 5:00pm

**Location:** Buchanan A104

**Teaching Assistant:** Amy Zwicker

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**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Required Reading:** Brannon, L., & Feist, J. (2007). Health Psychology: An introduction to behavior and health, 6e. Toronto: Thompson Wadsworth.

**Course Description:** The focus of this course is on the application of psychological principles to all areas of health and well-being. Topics include research methods in health psychology, psychoneuroimmunology, stress and coping, eating disorders, smoking, substance abuse, pain, chronic illness, alternative medicine, and health promotion.

**Format:** Lectures, videos, discussion.

**Contacting Me:** If you wish to email questions related to the course that are relevant to everyone, please send the questions to the group email. I will make sure that the question is answered appropriately. You will receive an email inviting you to Psyc 314 on Google groups. I will not answer questions about the course material if they are sent to my personal email. My personal account is for you to use if you have issues of a more individual or personal nature. However, to ensure a prompt response, please be sure to put "Psych 314" in the heading of any personal email.

**Student Presentations:** Many of you likely have personal knowledge regarding some of the topics we will be studying. I would like to offer you the opportunity to share your experiences/knowledge with the class. A bonus mark of 1-2% will be awarded for good quality presentations. This will be added to your final grade. If you would like to present, Please contact me at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled presentation dates, so that I can help you with the length/breadth/scope of the presentation.

**Evaluation:**

1. Midterm exam (35%)
2. Health Psychology in the Media – written assignment (15%)
3. Health Behavior Diary (5%)
4. Final exam (45%)

**Examinations:**

- Midterm: Multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer. 1.5 hours allowed.
- Final exam: Multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer. 2 hours allowed.
- Exams will be based on lecture and assigned reading as outlined in the course schedule.
- The final exam will be based only on material presented after the midterm.
- If you miss the midterm due to illness, you will be given the opportunity to take the midterm exam at the final exam sitting, after you have completed the final exam. The Psychology Department requires a written medical explanation.
- If you miss the final exam due to illness, you must contact Arts Advising to arrange completion of the course at another time, usually the end of the next term.

- Exams will be based on lecture, assigned readings, and any videos shown. Please note that lecture topics are subject to revision, although assigned textbook readings will not change.
- Examinations will cover both text and lecture material, so attendance at lectures is important for any student who wishes to do well. I will use the lecture time to focus on topics that I feel are particularly important or interesting. Sometimes I will summarize, review, or expand on material that is in the text, and other times I will present additional material. However, not all text material will be covered in lecture, and not all lecture material will be included in the assigned text material. Nonetheless, you are responsible for all assigned text material and all lecture material.

### Written assignment #1, "Health Psychology in the News"

An important objective of this course is to improve your ability to critically examine health research, particularly as it relates to health behaviors. As an assignment, you will identify a news article on a topic related to health behaviors. Then find at least three research articles from peer-reviewed journals on this topic. Avoid purely medical research, and look for research that has a psychological component. From this background reading you should have obtained enough knowledge to critically evaluate the way the information is presented in the media. Consider the following issues:

- Is the information presented in the media consistent with the perspective of other researchers?
- How likely is it that someone might make changes in their life based on this article, and is there any possibility that these changes might not be beneficial, or even harmful?
- Does the media article clearly explain where the information comes from, or discuss any other possible interpretations?
- Discuss any other criticisms that seem relevant, with particular focus on how the average person obtains health information.
- **Cite your sources using APA style (same as your text book).**
- Attach the media article to your paper.
- Your paper should be between 3 and 5 pages double-spaced.
- Newspaper or magazine articles are preferred. However, a "news" article from an online news report, such as MSN, is also acceptable.

Your paper will be graded from the following aspects:

**Conceptual Focus:** well-defined focus on aspect of health from a psychological perspective;

**Literature:** correct number of articles; relevance of articles to topic chosen; don't just describe studies, point out strengths and weaknesses, contribution of the studies

**Analysis of Issues:** focused, well-developed argument; analysis of literature

**Conclusions:** cohesive and thoughtful; clear point of view on the current state of the literature, pulling together various perspectives

**Recommendations:** what issues remain to be addressed?

### Written assignment #2: Health behavior diary

The purpose of this assignment is to increase your understanding of health behaviors by using yourself

as a subject. You will select a health behavior that you would like to improve, e.g., exercise, diet, smoking, drinking, etc., and record that health behavior in a diary format for one week. You will submit your record along with a one to two page double-spaced discussion of what you learned from this exercise. Use any of the Health Behavior Models discussed in your textbook to analyze the behavior you have chosen.

#### Final exams:

The exam period is from Wednesday, April 15 through April 29, inclusive.

Saturdays are included in the exam schedule. Please do not make travel plans during this time, as you will not be accommodated.

#### How your final grade is determined:

- Grading systems are always scaled in a way that indicates a student's performance *relative* to others in the class. The absolute value of a score is often subjective and may offer little assessment of a student's performance in the absence of comparisons with other students' scores.
- In order to make your grade reflect your standing relative to others in the class (and to other classes in Psychology), your raw scores are transformed to derived scores with a standard average and a standard distribution. You may be reassured to know that these same transformations are used by many national testing services, such as the GRE, SAT, MCAT, LSAT etc.

The Psychology Department's recommended guidelines for 300 level courses are shown below.

#### Psyc 300 and 400 level courses

Class Performance	Mean	SD	% A	%A+B %	Fail
Good	70	13	22	56	6
Average	68	13	18	50	8
Weak	66	13	14	44	11

## Lecture Schedule and Readings

Date	Lecture, Video	Required Reading, Assignments Due
8-Jan		Syllabus
10-Jan	The Field of Health Psychology	Chapter 1, Introducing Health Psychology
15-Jan	Research Methods in Health Psychology	Chapter 2, Conducting Health Research
17-Jan	Epidemiology, Special Topics in Health Research	
22-Jan	Stress	Chapter 5, Defining and Measuring Stress
24-Jan	Coping with Stress	
29-Jan	Psychoneuroimmunology	Chapter 6, Stress & Disease
31-Jan	Pain	Chapter 7, Understanding Pain
5-Feb		Chapter 8, Managing Stress & Pain
7-Feb	Health Behaviors	Chapter 3, Seeking Health Care
12-Feb	Hypochondriasis Video - <i>Bitter Medicine</i>	
14-Feb	Medical Systems	Chapter 4, Adhering to Medical Advice
19-Feb	Midterm Break	
21-Feb	Midterm Break	
26-Feb	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	<b>Chapters 1 - 8</b>
28-Feb	Preventing Injuries	Chapter 12
4-Mar	Smoking	Chapter 13, Smoking Tobacco
6-Mar	Drinking	Chapter 14, Alcohol and Other Drugs
11-Mar	Harm Reduction	
13-Mar	Video - Fix	<b>Written Assignment #1 Due</b>
18-Mar	Eating and Obesity	Chapter 15, Eating and Weight
20-Mar	Exercising	Chapter 16, Exercising
25-Mar	Cardiovascular Disease	Chapter 9, Behavioral Factors in Cardiovascular Disease
27-Mar	Cancer	Chapter 10, Behavioral Factors in Cancer
1-Apr	Video: In My Own Time	<b>Written Assignment #2 Due</b>
3-Apr	Coping with Chronic Illness	Chapter 11, Living with Chronic Illness
8-Apr	Death & Dying, Video - Tibetan Book of the Dead	
10-Apr	Death & Dying, Student Presentations	
	<b>FINAL EXAM TBA</b>	<b>Chapters 9-16</b>