

# The Psychology of Health and Illness

PSY8810 – Spring 2008

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Office Hours: 1:00 - 2:00 Tuesday and Thursday, or by appointment

Class: 2:00 – 3:15 Tuesday and Thursday, PSY507A

## Course Objectives

The biggest industry in the United States, as well as in the majority of other westernized countries, is health care. There are a number of reasons that the costs of health care have skyrocketed -- e.g., (a) the population is aging, and older people are those most likely to develop chronic conditions that require expensive medical treatment, (b) new medical technology is expensive, and (c) people may simply use too many unnecessary medical services. Health psychology is, by definition, a multidisciplinary field, operating both within and ancillary to the formal medical system. Broadly defined, health psychology is at the interface of psychology and medicine. The study of health and behavior has, in recent years, broadened beyond the emphasis formerly placed on psychological processes (e.g., coping with stress) and personality factors (e.g., Type A personality). Current health psychology extends far beyond the individual -- primarily because researchers and practitioners have come to realize that the problems are complicated and often, most productively approached from several different perspectives.

This is an upper-level graduate seminar. We will examine the field of health and human behavior broadly by including a wide variety of topics and perspectives. Readings, lectures, and discussions will draw from several related fields -- e.g., epidemiology, psychology, medicine, and psychosomatics. The definition of health offered by the World Health Organization (1948) - - "a complete state of physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" -- will serve as the basis for topics to be explored.

## Text

There is no required textbook for this class, but if you feel you need a basic foundation, I would recommend:

Taylor, S. E. (2006). *Health psychology* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

## Grades

Grades will be based on four factors:

Participation in class discussions	25%
Reading comments	25%
First draft of grant proposal	25%
Final version of grant proposal	25%

Optimal performance in each of these areas is described in more detail below.

## CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

				Readings	Comments Due
Tu	Jan	8	Class overview, organization, & introduction	A.	Jan. 15
Th		10	“		
Tu		15	“		
Th		17	Class discussion of A. readings led by Cook & Shovali		
Tu		22	Health psychology research & epidemiology	B.	Jan. 29
Th		24	“		
Tu		29	“		
Th		31	Class discussion of B. readings led by Teems & Sellers		
Tu	Feb	5	The health care system (Pre-draft of grant due)	C.	Feb. 12
Th		7	“		
Tu		12	“		
Th		14	Class discussion of C. readings led by Buhrman & Johnson		
Tu		19	Compliance with medical regimens	D.	Feb. 26
Th		21	“		
Tu		26	“ (Draft of grant proposal due)		
Th		28	Class discussion of D. readings led by Christie & Bengle		
Tu	Mar	4	Stress and coping	E.	Mar. 18
Th		6	“		
Tu		11	SPRING BREAK		
Th		13	SPRING BREAK		
Tu		18	Stress and coping (cont.)		
Th		20	Class discussion of E. readings led by Best & Clune		
Tu		25	Social support	F.	Apr. 1
Th		27	“		
Tu	Apr	1	“		
Th		3	Class discussion of F. readings led by Smith & Mueller		
Tu		8	Person factors and health	G.	Apr. 15
Th		10	“		
Tu		15	“		
Th		17	Class discussion of G. readings led by Sinnett & Evans		
Tu		22	Changing health-related behavior – open discussion led by		
Th		24	Jamison, Lin, & Phillips (Final grant proposal due) Course evaluations		

NOTE: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

## Participation in Class Discussions

This is an upper-level graduate seminar. There are no formal exams. For definitional purposes, a seminar involves discussion. Although some class periods will be devoted to lectures, raising interesting issues is entirely appropriate during these classes. Some lectures will be followed by discussion periods. Other classes will be devoted entirely to discussion of assigned readings. You are expected to actively participate in each and every class discussion.

Attendance at all class meetings is expected, and your course grade will suffer if you do not attend class.

## Reading Commentaries

There are seven sections of assigned readings (A. through G.). You are required to write short commentaries for every assigned paper (forms provided separately). One point will be deducted for every commentary not turned in (or not turned in on time) from the total of 25 possible points for this requirement.

## Grant Proposal

The major project in this course is the development of your own grant proposal. More information will be provided in class about exact requirements. First, however, check out this webpage. [http://www.uga.edu/psychology/resources/grad\\_fellowships.pdf](http://www.uga.edu/psychology/resources/grad_fellowships.pdf)

If you do not yet have your master's degree, you should focus on a pre-dissertation award (F31). If you already have your master's degree, you may do either a pre- or post-doctoral (F32) proposal.

In addition to writing your proposal in a format acceptable to NIH, you should use APA style as specified in the 2001 *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed) for references, etc. **PROOFREAD!** I will deduct points for spelling errors. I also deduct points for bad grammar and incorrect punctuation – pay particular attention to the last page of this syllabus for examples.

## Other Matters

Instances of cheating and/or plagiarism, although rare, do occasionally occur. Any such instances in this class will be dealt with in accordance with policies established by The University of Georgia. All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. For this particular class, it is especially important that you correctly cite the work you are reviewing or quoting (APA style takes care of this as long as you follow the guidelines).

If at any time, you are concerned about your progress, please arrange a time to come in and talk to me. It is to your advantage to take action early rather than waiting until late in the semester.

## Examples of Frequent Grammar and Punctuation Errors

Below are some common (but, by no means, all of the) errors that will result in lower grades on your papers. You can be assured that if your papers contain these particular errors, points will be deducted.

1.     INCORRECT:                     A parent should control their child's eating habits.  
       CORRECT:                     A parent should control his or her child's eating habits.  
       EVEN BETTER:                 Parents should control their children's eating habits.
  
2.     In general, don't use "which" when "that" works just as well.  
       INCORRECT:                   A medicine which has unpleasant side effects will promote non-compliance.  
       CORRECT:                     A medicine that has unpleasant side effects will promote non-compliance.
  
3.     Singular verbs with plural nouns...and vice versa.
  
4.     It's = It is  
       Its = belonging to it
  
5.     Misuse of commas. For example,  
       INCORRECT:                   People with disabilities also are subject to social, financial and psychological problems.  
       CORRECT:                     People with disabilities also are subject to social, financial, and psychological problems.  
  
       INCORRECT:                   Social support is related to psychological adjustment, and also may influence physical health.  
       CORRECT:                     Social support is related to psychological adjustment and also may influence physical health.  
  
       INCORRECT:                   Coping strategies can vary according to the situation but some coping patterns are dispositional.  
       CORRECT:                     Coping strategies can vary according to the situation, but some coping patterns are dispositional.
  
6.     Incomplete sentences, run-on sentences, poor sentence structure, and one-sentence paragraphs.