

Health Psychology

Instructor:	Jaine Strauss Olin 326 651.696.6114	Psychology 272 Fall 2017
Office Hours:	Wednesdays, 1:30 – 2:50 pm Thursdays, 8:15 – 9:15 am Fridays, 2:00 – 3:00 pm By appointment	

Course overview:

This course examines the complex and fascinating ways psychology and behavior interact with health. We will study and critique what psychological scholarship suggests about how best to promote and maintain health, prevent and treat illness, and adapt and thrive in the context of chronic illness. Key topics include the roles of stress, coping, immune response, social relationships, personality, and culture in the progression and prevention of disease, behaviors (e.g., physical activity, nutrition, sleep) that contribute to wellbeing or sickness, as well as the psychological dimensions of medical decision-making, provider-consumer relationships, and health promotion campaigns. The course features two assignments that apply health psychological principles to health behavior change at the personal and community-wide level.

Course objectives:

- 1) to introduce key topics within the field of health psychology
- 2) to apply psychological principles to behavior change

Readings:

Gawande, A. (2014). *Being mortal: Medicine and what matters in the end*. NY: Metropolitan.

Additional articles posted to Moodle.

Requirements:

- Reflections, discussion questions, in-class writing, participation, and attendance (15%)
- *Health behavior change project (40%)
 - Topic proposal (5%)
 - Baseline monitoring and initial wellbeing assessment (P/F)
 - Behavior change plan (15%)

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- Behavior monitoring and second wellbeing assessment (P/F)
- Final paper (20%)
- Health promotion campaign
 - Option A: Health Communications (45%)
 - Action plan (10%)
 - Campaign posters (10%)
 - Paper (15%)
 - Group meeting with Morgen Sedlacek (P/F)
 - Group meeting with Jaine Strauss (P/F)
 - Group evaluation form (P/F)
 - Institutional Change Project (10%)
 - Option B: Curriculum Project (45%)
 - Action plan (10%)
 - Campaign posters (5%)
 - Paper (10%)
 - Group meeting with Morgen Sedlacek (P/F)
 - Group meeting with Jaine Strauss (P/F)
 - Group evaluation form (P/F)
 - Curriculum Project (20%)

*If you wish, you can extend your Health Behavior Change project. The details of this version of the assignment are in a handout on Moodle.

Reflections, discussion questions, and in-class writing

Throughout the semester, we will read scholarly and popular press articles relevant to health psychology. Reading these materials carefully before class will enhance your engagement with class conversation and elevate our discussion. Two times during the term, I will ask you to prepare for class in an even more focused way. You will read the article(s) in advance of class, write a brief (2-3 page, double-spaced) reflection, and generate two or three discussion questions. The discussion questions should reveal and build upon your and your classmates' thoughtful analysis of the readings. The readings cover topics about which you may have strong opinions, and those are warmly welcomed in our conversation, but the goal of the discussion questions – and class in general – is to have those opinions be informed by critical analysis of evidence.

The reflections and questions are due at **6 pm the night before** we'll discuss the article(s) in class; given the nature of these assignments, no late submissions will be accepted, and you must be in class to lead discussion. I will assign you to your dates early in the term. If you know in advance that the date to which you've been assigned won't work for you or that you're more interested in a different topic, I will

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gladly switch your assignment date. Assignments will be graded on a 10-point scale; the rubric for this scale appears at the end of this syllabus.

I will occasionally ask you to respond to a brief in-class writing prompt. These writing assignments are intended to focus our discussion and to strengthen your grasp of key concepts; they also serve as confirmation that you are prepared for class. Thoughtful and accurate responses will receive a check; vague, inaccurate, or incomplete responses will receive a zero. If, despite being prepared for class, you receive a zero, please come see me so we can discuss the relevant course concepts.

Participation and attendance

You will get more out of this class if you attend regularly, prepare fully for each day's topic, and actively engage in class. On several occasions, your attendance will be crucial (e.g., group meeting days for the health promotion campaign; days when you've written discussion questions); these dates will be clearly indicated on Moodle. In addition, I will periodically assign in-class activities. These activities will not be formally graded, but missing class or demonstrating lack of preparation during these activities will adversely affect your grade. If you have accommodations regarding class attendance, please talk with me as soon as possible so that we can determine how best to ensure your learning in the course in light of your accommodations.

Health behavior change project

Most college students – especially those choosing to enroll in a health psychology class – have an excellent understanding of the behaviors most conducive to their wellbeing. Despite this knowledge, most of us don't quite live up to our highest ideals; we know what we should do, but our actions are often at odds with our best intentions. Understanding why this is the case is fundamental to the field of health psychology, and using yourself as a test case is one of the best ways to learn about the processes that lead us astray as well as those that can get us back on track. You will select a behavior you'd like to change, and you will use the material presented in this course to monitor that behavior, strategize about how best to improve it, and reflect on your progress toward your goals. You will present parts of this project to me and to your classmates, so please choose a behavior you feel comfortable disclosing to others. A detailed description of this assignment is available on Moodle.

Health promotion campaign

The burgeoning field of social marketing provides important insights into how best to nudge people toward healthier behaviors. In collaboration with the Hamre Center for Health and Wellness's health promotion team, you will develop a brief

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campaign to improve some aspect of behavioral health among your fellow Macalester students. As part of a small group, you will develop an understanding of the current status of your specific behavioral domain on campus. You will then scour the scholarly literature for information relevant to improving that behavior, apply “best practices” from the field of social marketing, and develop either a series of infographics or posters OR a 45-minute workshop curriculum. A detailed description of this assignment is available on Moodle.

Alternative assignment

You may have a deep and abiding interest in a topic that you hoped to explore in this course but that does not fit well within the two major assignments outlined above. If this is the case, please see me early in the semester, and we’ll figure out a meaningful way for you to explore that topic through these assignments or an alternative assignment focused on your hoped-for topic.

Important policies:

- ◆ I am committed to the success of all students, and therefore I am eager to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Please consult with the Disability Services staff in the Dean of Students office as soon as possible. They will send me a confidential letter detailing the appropriate accommodations for this course.
- ◆ Late assignments will be accepted, but your grade will drop by a grade interval for each day between the official due date and the date I receive your paper. I define "day" as a 24-hour interval. For instance, if a paper is due on Friday at 6:00 pm and you turn it in on Sunday at 10:30 am, your grade would drop from, for example, a B+ to a B-. I recognize that sometimes life interferes with academic work. If you believe mitigating circumstances precluded your completing your work by the due date, please come talk to me and we will discuss whether a grade penalty is warranted.
- ◆ All assignments are due at 6 pm via Moodle in .doc/.docx format. Monitoring data can be submitted in .xls/.xlsx, .doc/.docx, or .pdf formats. Failure to complete P/F components of the HBC and HPC projects will decrease your grade for the project by a minimum of one interval.
- ◆ Any evidence of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism on papers) will, in accordance with college guidelines, be reported to the Director of Academic Programs and will result in a grade of "0" on the assignment. Under certain circumstances, it may result in your failing the course. If you have a question about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please consult with me.
- ◆ Incompletes will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances. Being busy at the end of the term is not an extraordinary circumstance.

Important Dates

This course has two major assignments, reflected in the color-coding below. Although the list of assignments may seem daunting, most are relatively small assignments; the sequence and timing are designed to optimize your learning and keep your projects on track. You will notice that the two major projects overlap in time. I will talk about this in class, as I know it is not ideal. I've bolded and underlined the biggest assignments below.

- September 15: Topic proposal for Health Behavior Change project due
- September 18-24: Baseline monitoring and initial wellbeing measure
- September 25: Baseline monitoring and initial wellbeing assessment due
- *September 29: Behavior change plan due**
- September 25-October 8: Behavioral monitoring
- October 4: Lisa Broek (Director, Health Promotions at the HWC) presents four HPC topic areas
- October 9: Behavioral monitoring and second wellbeing assessment due; Deadline for deciding about extended HBC
- October 16: Assignment to health promotion campaign topic and HPC group meeting in class
- *October 20: Final Health Behavior Change paper due**
- November 3: Deadline for group meetings with Morgen Sedlacek at Hamre Center and with me
- November 6: Action plan due
- *November 16: HPC posters: first version due**
- November 20: HPC group meeting in class
- *December 4: OPTION A: Final version of health promotion posters, HPC paper, and group evaluation forms due**
- *December 18: OPTION A: Institutional Change Project due**
OPTION B: HPC posters, workshop materials, HPC paper, and group evaluation forms due

Introduction
Health behavior models
Health promotion and behavioral health: Nutrition and obesity Exercise Sleep Smoking Sexual decision-making Accidents and injury
Health communications and social marketing
Stress and self-regulation
Personality, emotion, motivation and health
Social and interpersonal aspects of health
Psychology in health care settings: Medical decision-making Treatment adherence Patient-provider relationships
Pain and placebos
Chronic illness, life-threatening illness, and palliative care

Grading Guidelines for Major Assignments

Below are the principles I follow when assigning grades to papers. I have sketched out the qualities associated with each grade interval; I use pluses and minuses when papers fall in between categories or when they have qualities associated with several grade categories. You will notice that the grades reflect my evaluation of both the content and style of your paper. If you anticipate problems with either of these domains, please seek assistance from me, the Macalester Academic Excellent (MAX) Center, or any other reliable resource. Please acknowledge resources you use in a footnote.

The grade of "A" is reserved for papers that demonstrate unusual mastery of the course material in tandem with original, insightful, and persuasive analysis. These papers present sophisticated arguments in a style that is compelling and readable. Ideas are expressed with attention to detail; the logic of the paper is carefully supported by adequate documentation and examples. The writer anticipates a skeptical reader's critique and manages to short-circuit rebuttals. The paper fully addresses the requirements spelled out in the assignment. Finally, "A" papers are a delight to read because of their careful attention to clear communication and the rules of grammar.

The grade of "B" is awarded to papers that demonstrate clear mastery of the course material along with some originality and insight. These papers present their arguments effectively with few logical flaws, failures of documentation, or grammatical errors. In my experience, this grade is given most frequently in two cases: for papers that begin with the germ of a great idea but do not sustain the argument with maximal effectiveness and for papers that respond to the assignment accurately but without significant innovations.

The grade of "C" is given to papers that indicate a less-than-adequate grasp of the course material or a flawed writing style. These papers may be erratic (excellent material mixed with misinformed analysis) or may be consistently lackluster. This grade, in my experience, co-occurs with greatest frequency in papers that were done in a hurry without careful attention to argument or writing style.

The grade of "D" is assigned to papers in which there is a serious problem with the course material or with the writer's analysis. These papers seem to be those in which the writer has either not read the relevant material carefully or has misunderstood fundamental elements. These papers are often marred by significant stylistic problems. I consider this grade very worrisome and urge anyone who receives this grade to see me as soon as possible.

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The grade of "NC" is reserved for papers that are totally off-base. Rarely does a student receive this grade after devoting even modest energy to the course material. A failing grade indicates an inability to express or apply the course concepts in accord with the assignment. A student who receives this grade should speak with me as soon as possible.

Grading Rubric:
Reflections and Discussion Questions

- 9-10 points: These assignments demonstrate full understanding of the reading, keen critical insights, and thoughtful probes to elicit high-level, well-informed discussion among your classmates. These assignments are well-crafted, original, and engaging.
- 8 points: These assignments are strong in some ways but fall short in other ways. The most common reasons for receiving 8 points are that you a) summarized the readings well but did not apply sufficient originality or analysis; b) offered interesting insights but missed some key points; c) summarized the articles well and offered excellent insights but did not generate thoughtful discussion questions; or d) wrote the assignment in a slapdash manner, with grammar mistakes, typos, etc.
- 7 points: These assignments suggest gaps in your understanding of the material. They often summarize the paper at a superficial level and offer questions unlikely to spur meaningful discussion. They are most common among students who did not read the articles carefully and rushed to turn the assignment in. This is also the highest grade you can receive if you miss class on a day when you're in charge of discussion (unless significant extenuating factors precluded your attendance).
- 4-6 points: These assignments indicate major problems. The most common reason for this grade is that you did not read the article at all, relying only on the abstract. If you receive this grade despite even the most modest effort to complete the assignment in earnest, we should talk as soon as possible.
- 1-3 points: These grades are rare. They are reserved for papers where there's some evidence that you tried to complete the assignment, but it is so far off the mark that awarding more points is impossible.
- 0 points: This grade is for assignments that are late or not turned in. As noted in the syllabus, these assignments must be turned in on time because they are crucial to the next day's discussion. If an extenuating factor interfered with your ability to turn in the paper on time, please see me and we will discuss whether another grade (or the opportunity to prepare an assignment for a different topic) is warranted.