

Clinical Science Capstone

Course summary

This class provides a hands-on introduction to clinical science. Psychology majors sometimes see clinical work as disconnected from, or even at odds with, research. By the end of this semester, I hope you will see that the research and data analysis skills you've learned in the RIP sequence – and in your other psychology courses – are fundamental to ethical and effective practice in the social services, including mental health counseling. Although you may never need to compute another t-test again, you will be faced with situations where you need to formulate crucial questions, evaluate evidence and reach conclusions. This is the essence of clinical work – and the essence of research.

Course objectives

- 1) To introduce theory, research, and praxis relevant to social service careers, with a particular focus on mental health counseling
- 2) To provide opportunities to think about how your psychology major relates to your long-term career goals
- 3) To undertake the process of crafting a thoughtful and comprehensive capstone paper

Class time

We will typically meet as a group once or twice a week – always on Mondays, often on Wednesdays, and on rare occasions, on Fridays; I'll also meet with each of you individually for 20 minutes weekly. Our class time will include discussions of relevant readings and concepts in clinical science, information about the next steps for your capstone paper, conversations about your civic engagement experiences, career exploration activities, and visits by guest speakers.

Content warning

This course will inevitably include content that is painful for all of us and particularly challenging for some of us. Such is the nature of clinical science. I cannot forecast the specific topics you and your classmates will consider for your projects or encounter at your sites, but exploring the consequences of trauma is inevitable in this class. I encourage you to engage in self-care as specific topics arise in class; trust your judgment about when you need to skip part of a reading, step out of class, etc.

Instructor



Jaine Strauss

Please call me Jaine (the "i" is silent; my name is pronounced just like "Jane"). You may also call me Professor Strauss, if you prefer. My pronouns are she/her.

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Drop-in hours: You can come to my office without an appointment on **Mondays from 3:30-4:30 pm** and **Thursdays from 2:00-3:30 pm**.

I'm also very happy to set up meetings outside of drop-in hours at your convenience.

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Course activities

Capstone paper (70%)

This is a capstone course, and one of its key features is the crafting of a high quality, research-based paper. You have already learned how to synthesize past scholarly works in your other courses, and you will build on that foundation here. You will embark on a stepwise process of asking a question, gathering relevant information, and then reaching evidence-based conclusions. You are expected to write a comprehensive literature review summarizing and extending work presented in a minimum of 25 high quality, peer-reviewed articles. Throughout the semester, you will turn in incrementally more detailed assignments that will culminate in your final paper. The final products will be an APA-style written document that summarizes your work and a conference-ready poster that you will present at our departmental poster session in December and at the Minnesota Undergraduate Psychology Conference in the Spring. **Additional details about the paper are posted to Moodle.**

Civic engagement (20%)

You and your classmates will spend a minimum of three hours each week partnering with a social service agency. Some of you have already volunteered, worked, or interned within the mental health field, whereas others are about to embark on a first foray into partnerships with people experiencing challenges in their lives. No matter where you are starting out, you will cultivate new capacities and, almost certainly, recognize new limitations. To learn as much as possible from your civic engagement hours, you will engage in periodic reflections as well as in-class discussions. These activities will help you identify more clearly your interests – as a student, as a scholar, and potentially as a practitioner. **More information about journaling is posted to Moodle.**

Class engagement and individual meetings (10%)

Active engagement in our class meetings will benefit everyone; we will learn from and with each other, and coming to class with an open mind and with adequate preparation will facilitate our work together. We'll ease into most class meetings with a positive psychology demonstration.

Individual meetings

These meetings are designed to help advance your specific projects. Sometimes, we'll find that 20 minutes is ample time – and we even have extra time to talk about your civic engagement experience, career plans, or life in general. Other times, we'll find ourselves scrambling to fit everything into the allotted time. Please try to show up on time for your meeting so that we can maximize the time available. Please also know that I am eager to meet with you at other times if you encounter a roadblock, a particularly exciting idea, or any issues that are time-sensitive.



Attendance

I hope you will be able to attend every class session and individual meeting. I realize this may not be possible. If you miss class, you will engage with the concepts and practices from that day by writing a short reflection (1-2 pages) on the material we covered. These reflections will typically be due within 48 hours of the missed class, although if you need more time, please let me know and we can work out a timeline that fits your circumstances. **More information about attendance and absences is available on Moodle.**

Grading philosophy and practices

Last year, I began experimenting with a different approach to grading that focuses on your engagement with the course materials and concepts and on your commitment to learning and improving. In keeping with the core values of clinical psychology, I seek to enhance your wellbeing and to decrease your stress. Although I will provide feedback to you about your work in this course, you will be responsible for assessing your progress and accomplishments. If your and my assessments diverge, we'll have the chance to talk through our perceptions. I do not expect this course to be "easy" - I hope we will challenge ourselves and learn a lot with and from each other - but I hope that getting the grade you want will not be hard.

Flexibility on deadlines: I recognize that you are balancing many competing demands on your time and attention, and I want you to prioritize your wellbeing. You will start the term with **three** "flexibility tokens" that allow you to stay on track even if you miss a deadline. One token may be redeemed for a 24-hour extension for an assignment (e.g., your conceptual outline) or to compensate for a missed class. The tokens are your safety net, but you need not use them.

The flexibility tokens are meant to help you manage your workload for this course under "typical" circumstances, which include assignments from other courses, personal commitments, employment, sports practice and games, concerts and play rehearsals, etc. If you're dealing with extenuating circumstances, you and I will work together to figure out a strategy to complete this course. Similarly, if you have accommodations that call for flexibility in turning in assignments, we will customize your contract accordingly. Please talk to me about this as soon as possible. ***I am committed to your success in this course – and beyond.***



Tips for optimizing your experience in this course

- View feedback as an opportunity for growth – because that is its intent.
- Approach your capstone project with curiosity and open-mindedness. I hope you will learn some very cool, very new things through your work.
- Make time to reflect – on what you're learning, on how this course can help prepare you for whatever's next, and on how your psychology major overall equips you for the life you want to lead.
- Be patient with yourself, with your classmates, and with me. We are all finding our way during an extraordinary time, and we can use all of the compassion that comes our way.

Drop-in hours

You don't need an appointment for drop-in hours, and you don't need a reason to stop by. When you stop by, I might be meeting with someone else. Please be sure to let me know you're waiting, and I'll get to you as soon as I can. Drop-in hours work well if you have a relatively quick (5-10 minute) topic you'd like to discuss or if you just want to say "hi." We will have weekly 20-minute meetings to talk about your projects, but I also welcome the opportunity to talk with you about other topics either during drop-in hours or by appointment.

Land acknowledgement

Please take a moment to acknowledge the fact that Macalester College is built on the ancestral homeland of the Dakota people – forcibly exiled from the land because of aggressive and persistent settler colonialism. Our campus sits near Bdote, the sacred meeting point of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. In the words of Reverend Jim Bear Jacobs, Bdote is a place of genesis and genocide, both realities alive in the land at once.

This acknowledgment strives to honor the Dakota people, ancestors, and descendants, as well as the land itself. This acknowledgement itself is not enough; it only serves as a first step towards decolonization and justice.



Guiding principles and policies

- I encourage you to make your overall wellbeing a priority during your time at Macalester and in your life more generally. Taking care of yourself will not only ensure your physical and emotional health but will also help you engage more fully in your academics. I value, and I hope you also value, the wisdom of your experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities. This wisdom will guide how you handle the stressors you encounter. In this class, please trust your wisdom and care for yourself. If you need to step away from a class meeting – to go to the restroom, to get a drink of water, to take a moment to process thoughts or feelings that arise during our discussions – please do so. If you'd like help working through any particularly challenging experiences, feel free to talk to me or to seek support through campus resources (e.g., the Hamre Center for Health and Wellness; the Department of Multicultural Life; the Office of Student Affairs; the Center for Religious and Spiritual Life).
- 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 (disabilityservices@macalester.edu) *as soon as possible*. You can schedule an appointment using [this link](#). The DS staff will send me a confidential letter detailing the appropriate accommodations for this course, and then you and I can discuss how those accommodations apply to this course.
- Macalester has many resources (e.g., the Hamre Center; the MAX Center; Department of Multicultural Life; Open Pantry) to support students, and we also have a number of policies (e.g., Title IX; academic integrity; COVID protocols) meant to safeguard the community and promote wellbeing. Links to these resources and policies are in the top box on Moodle.



Important dates

Class will always meet on Mondays, often on Wednesdays, and on rare occasions, on Fridays; assignments will often be due on Fridays at 6 pm via Moodle or a shared GoogleDoc.

Wednesday, August 31	First class meeting
Friday, September 2	Individual weekly meetings (20 minutes) begin
Wednesday, September 7	Second class meeting; individual meetings
Friday, September 9	Identify a general topic for your paper
Monday, September 12	Class meeting and individual meetings (every Monday/Tuesday for the rest of the semester):
Friday, September 16	List of recent articles with open questions; civic engagement goals
Friday, September 30	Annotated bibliography; last day to meet with reference librarian
Friday, October 7	Conceptual outline
Friday, October 14	Introductory paragraph; self-assessment of class engagement
Wednesday, October 19	Revised conceptual outline with 25 articles; civic engagement self-assessment
Friday, October 28	Half of capstone paper due
Monday, November 7	Discuss innovation in class; mid-semester self-assessment of capstone work
Friday, November 11	Remaining half of capstone paper due
Sunday, November 20	Provide a full draft of your paper to your peer reviewer
Monday, November 21	Peer review during class time
Friday, December 2	Poster drafts due; poster peer-review in class
Monday, December 5	Poster peer-review in class continues
Tuesday, December 6	Final posters due in .pdf format by noon
Friday, December 9	Department poster session at 4:45 pm
Tuesday, December 13	Final version of paper (with all required components); self-assessment of project, civic engagement, and class engagement

