

Health Psychology

Course Number: PSYC 3009
CRN: 95190

Semester: Fall 2026
Format: Asynchronous/online

Instructor: Dr. Stephanie Stern (she/her)
Academic Professional

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Office: J.S Coon Building, 220E

Office Hours:

Tuesdays – 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Thursdays – 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

*You can attend office hours in person or via Teams. You can access the Teams meeting on our course home page in Canvas.

My office hours are dedicated time to meet with students, but I am happy to meet with you outside of those times. Please email me to schedule an appointment.

Teaching Assistants: TBD

Please check your GT email and Canvas page at least once a day for important communications.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to give you a broad overview of the field of health psychology. Health psychology is a young and exciting field of study that examines the bi-directional relationship between psychology and health. In this course, we will learn (among other topics) about the physiological and psychological factors that influence perceptions of stress, the links between stress and illness, the psychosocial influences on health enhancing and health compromising behaviors, adjustment to illness and coping, pain, sociocultural factors and health, personality and health, and patient-doctor communication. During the course, we will try to answer such questions as: Are certain personality types more likely to get sick, or to get certain illnesses? What does stress do to your health? What psychological and social factors cause people to behave in unhealthy ways? What helps people adjust to illness? Does having a lot of friends affect your health? What can psychologists do to help cure illness? Who is healthier, men or women? Are there ethnic variations in health? How can we help people who are in pain without getting them addicted to pain-killers? Does it matter how your doctor talks to you? Does being bereaved make you ill? Does dieting work?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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1. Develop an understanding and appreciation of the complex interplay between one's physical well-being and a variety of biological, psychological, and social factors.
2. Learn how psychological research methods, theories, and principles can be applied to enhance biomedical approaches for promoting health and treating illness.
3. Learn the nature of the stress response and its impact in the etiology and course of many health problems.
4. Discover how behavioral and cognitive methods can help individuals cope with stress.
5. Develop skills for designing programs to improve one's own and others' personal health habits and lifestyles.
6. Acquire an understanding of the difficulty patients experience in deciding whether or when to seek treatment for disturbing symptoms.
7. Become aware of the experiences of patients in the hospital setting, factors that affect adherence to medical regimens, and sources of problems in patient/practitioner relationships.
8. Determine how psychological and medical methods for relieving pain differ and are often combined to enhance treatment effectiveness.
9. Become aware of the impact that disabling or life-threatening illnesses have on patients and their families.
10. Discover how psychological methods and principles can be applied to help patients manage and cope with chronic illness.

TEXTBOOK

Stangor, C. (2015). Principles of social psychology. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.24926/8668.2001>

*You will access your textbook through Perusall (see information below)

PERUSALL

This course uses Perusall, an interactive social learning platform designed to support active reading, engagement, and discussion. Students will annotate assigned readings and other course materials directly within Perusall.

As you read and watch lecture videos, you will be expected to highlight passages, ask questions, respond to classmates, and contribute thoughtful comments about the material. These collaborative annotations help deepen understanding, encourage critical thinking, and create opportunities for discussion.

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Perusall assignments are graded based on the quality and consistency of your engagement with the content and with your classmates' contributions. More detailed instructions and grading criteria will be provided in Canvas.

Students are expected to complete Perusall assignments by the end of the day each Sunday.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Exams (3 exams, 100 points each)

There will be three cumulative exams. All exams will include a combination of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short answer questions. Exams will be proctored using Honorlock. No materials will be permitted. Each exam can be taken any time during the exam window outlined in the course calendar.

Since exams are open for an extended period, no late exams will be permitted. I recommend taking each exam well in advance of the due date. This will allow you time to troubleshoot any problems that emerge (i.e. wifi problems).

2. Pre-Discussion Activities and Discussion Boards (7 discussions, 25 points each)

You will have seven activities that you will complete on your own throughout the semester. Once you have completed the activity, you will post a corresponding deliverable to the unit's discussion board. You will then make three follow-up posts, reacting to your classmates.

Your original post is worth 10 points. Each follow-up post is worth 5 points. Follow-up posts must be a minimum of 100 words.

Your original post for each discussion is **due on the Thursday of the corresponding week**. Canvas will not remind you to do this. Last original posts will result in a 5-point deduction. All follow-up posts are due on Sunday. The due date set in Canvas corresponds to the follow-up posts.

Since discussions require collaboration between classmates, no extensions will be given for discussion posts.

3. Portfolios (5 assignments, 70 points each)

Students will work with a partner throughout the semester to complete five portfolios. Each assignment will have its own requirements and deliverable. See Canvas for details.

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See Canvas for more information.

Portfolios will be accepted up to 48-hours late, with a 10% per day deduction.

4. Perusall (150 total points)

You will complete assigned readings, videos, and other course materials through Perusall. While engaging with the material, you will annotate the content by highlighting passages, asking questions, responding to classmates, and contributing thoughtful comments and insight. All Perusall contributions are due on Sunday of each week, unless otherwise noted.

There is no fixed number of annotations required because Perusall evaluates the overall quality of your engagement. As a guideline, students who receive full credit typically make **6–8 meaningful annotations** distributed across the reading, including a mix of original comments and replies to classmates.

Late Perusall contributions will not be accepted.

COURSE POLICIES

Extra Credit: Students may earn up to 20 points of extra credit in the course. Opportunities will be announced throughout the semester.

Make Up Work: In the event of extreme circumstances impacting your performance in the course (e.g. ongoing illness, loss of a loved one), please notify me within 24 hours of due dates. We will work together to develop a plan, when appropriate.

If a scheduled exam falls on a religious holiday or if you are traveling/participating in a school sponsored activity that interferes with a due date, please let me know **at least one week prior to the due date**. With the exception of exams where the entirety of the exam period falls within the period you will be absent, you are expected to make up work ahead of travel or holidays. In cases where the exam window does fall entirely within the period you will be absent, you may be permitted to take the exam when you return.

Use of Artificial Intelligence: In this class we treat AI-based assistance, such as ChatGPT, the same way we treat collaboration with other people: you are welcome to talk about your ideas and work with other people, both inside and outside the class, as well as with AI-based assistants.

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However, all work you submit must be your own. You should never include anything that was not written directly by you in an assignment without proper citation (including quotation marks and in-line citation for direct quotes).

Including anything you did not write in your assignment without proper citation will be treated as an academic misconduct case. If you are unsure where the line is between collaborating with AI and copying AI, we recommend the following heuristics:

Heuristic 1: Never hit “Copy” within your conversation with an AI assistant. You can copy your own work into your own conversation, but do not copy anything from the conversation back into your assignment. Instead, use your interaction with the AI assistant as a learning experience, then let your assignment reflect your improved understanding.

Heuristic 2: Do not have your assignment and the AI agent open at the same time. Similar to the above, use your conversation with the AI as a learning experience, then close the interaction down, open your assignment, and let your assignment reflect your revised knowledge. This heuristic includes avoiding using AI directly integrated into your composition environment: just as you should not let a classmate write content directly into your submission, so also you should avoid using tools that directly add content to your submission.

Deviating from these heuristics does not automatically qualify as academic misconduct; however, following these heuristics essentially guarantees your collaboration will not cross the line into misconduct.

Academic Integrity: Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>. Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Syllabus Change Policy: This syllabus should be viewed as a guide. While every attempt is made to provide an accurate overview of the course, circumstances and events may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes to the syllabus are at the discretion of the instructor and will be made with clear notice.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Assignment	Points
Exams	300 (100 each)

Letter Grade	Point Range
A	895 or higher

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Discussions	175 (25 each)	B	894-795
Portfolios	375 (75 each)	C	794-695
Perusall	150	D	694-595
Total Points	1000	F	594 or lower

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COURSE CALENDAR

*Dates and assignments are subject to change at the instructor's discretion

*Unless otherwise noted, all work is due at 11:59 p.m. on the assigned day. *Weekly Perusal contributions are due each Sunday at 11:59 p.m.			
Week	Topics	Assignments	Due Dates
Module 1: Foundations of Health Psychology			
1 (8/24 - 8/30)	Introduction to Health Psychology	Perusal Introduction	8/30
		Discussion 1	
2 (8/31-9/6)	Biological Systems	Discussion 2	9/6
3 (9/8 - 9/13)	Health Behaviors	Portfolio 1	9/13
Module 2: Heath Behaviors and Lifestyle			
4	Health-Promoting Behaviors	Portfolio 2	9/20

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(9/14-9/20)			
5 (9/21-9/27)	Health Compromising Behaviors	Discussion 3	(opens 9/25) 9/27
		Exam 1	
Module 3: Stress and Adaptation			
6 (9/28-10/4)	Stress		10/4
Fall Break – October 5 and 6			
7 (10/7-10/11)	Coping, Resilience, and Social Support	Discussion 4	10/11
8 (10/12-10/18)	Psychoneuroimmunology	Portfolio 3	10/18
Module 4: Healthcare and Clinical Practice			
9 (10/19-10/25)	Using Health Systems	Discussion 5	10/25

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10 (10/26-11/1)	Patient, Provider, and Treatment	Discussion 6	11/1
11 (11/2-11/8)	Pain and Discomfort	Portfolio 4	(exam opens 11/6) 11/8
		Exam 2	
Module 5: Health Psychology in Chronis and Serious Illness			
12 (11/9-11/15)	Chronis Health Disorders		11/15
13 (11/16-11/22)	Heart Disease, Stroke, and Type II Diabetes	Portfolio 5	11/22
14 (11/22-11/24)	Terminal Illness, Death, and Dying	Discussion 7	12/2
Thanksgiving Break – November 25 - 27			
15 (11/30-12/8)	The Future of Health Psychology		
Final Exams		Exam 3	12/10 - 12/17

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OTHER KEY DATES

1. August 28 — Last day to add classes (phase II registration closes at 11:59 p.m. EST)
2. August 31 — Payment deadline (4:00 p.m. EST)
3. October 31— Withdrawal deadline (11:59 p.m. EST)
4. November 2 —last day to change to pass/fail or grade substitute (4:00 p.m. EST)