

Health Psychology (PSC 126)

Winter Quarter, 2008
MW 2:10 - 4:00 66 Roessler

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Course Goals: Health Psychology focuses on the role of psychosocial processes in health promotion and maintenance, illness prevention and treatment, and the relationship between psychosocial factors and physiological processes involved in health and disease. This course will familiarize you with 1) psychological theory (e.g., pertaining to stress, coping, personality, cognition) and physiological knowledge (e.g., in areas of genetics, immunology, and endocrinology) relevant to health psychology; 2) research methods employed in the field; and 3) the research database in the field. I hope that you will come away from this course with a better appreciation of your own (and others') health, as well as an understanding of the importance of examining issues of health and disease from a biopsychosocial perspective.

Text: The text we are using is **Health Psychology, 6th Edition**, by Shelley Taylor, McGraw-Hill, 2006. There is one additional article required (see below) on genetics, a topic that the book does not cover well enough. I will also provide handouts for material that I cover in class that the text does not cover in sufficient detail. There will be a text on reserve in the library, and any other material will be available on the class web page.

Format: Class will meet on Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:10 to 4:00 PM in 66 Roessler. Classes will typically be of lecture format, with an occasional video; however, questions and discussion are always welcome. Please note that you are responsible for all material and announcements made in class, whether you are present or not.

Attendance: Attendance is, of course, your choice. You should be aware, however, that in one of my recent classes, the correlation between 'total points for exams 1 & 2' and 'number of classes missed' was $-.46$, a highly significant result statistically. This means that people who missed more classes got fewer points on the exams, which is not surprising, since about half of my exams are based on lecture material, and a lot of what I lecture on is not covered in the book. If you miss class, you should arrange to borrow someone's notes, as mine will not be available. If you do come to class, however, please observe the courtesy of at least feigning attentiveness; save chatting, The Aggie, and sleeping for elsewhere.

Exams: There will be three 50-point exams given during the quarter. Each exam will be mostly multiple choice, though there could be some fill-ins, true-false, short answers, and/or definitions -- and will cover only the material (lecture and reading) since the last exam. There will also be a final exam, also 50 points, given during our regularly scheduled exam period, which is Saturday, 22 March, 2008, 3:30-5:30, 66 Roessler. (Yes, that's right, the last time slot on the last day of finals, lucky us!) It will cover lecture and reading material from the entire course. This final must be taken if you miss one of the exams, since there will be no make-ups exams. If you do not miss any of the three exams, you have the option of taking the final, if you wish. In any event, your final grade will be based upon

your three highest exam scores. **Please note that there will be no early or late midterms or finals!!** If you cannot take the final at its scheduled time, you should study hard for the three midterms, or not enroll in the class. I strongly suggest that you not skip any of the early exams – that is, “bank” that one exam you can miss. You never know when your car might break down, your dog might get sick, your team might make it into the playoffs, etc.

On each exam day, exams will be given out ONLY until the first person finishes the exam and leaves the room. After that point, you will not be able to take the exam. **DO NOT BE LATE ON EXAM DAY!!** Exams will be the first hour of the two-hour class period, and there *will* be class afterwards. You will need a Scantron (Form UCD2000) for each exam.

Exams from the last few times I taught this class are available on the class web site. These are invaluable for use as study aids! Note, however, that there aren't any answer keys posted for the exams, nor are there any answers posted for the study guides. I've found that providing answers (either to study guides or to old exams) does not promote learning the material, but rather memorizing answers, which is a very different (and undesired, at least from my perspective) outcome. The best way to use the old exams is to try to test yourself, then search for the answers in your notes or in the text -- the same strategy you should use with the study guides. Searching for an answer will lead to greater understanding.

Finally, a note about my exams. As you can see from the old exams, the questions tend to focus on broad concepts, novel terms (definitions), and some (seemingly picky) details. Students often get frustrated by the “detail” questions, but I strive to use questions that focus on details that I believe are important to understanding the field. The “detail” questions from the book do not form a huge portion of the exam. My suggestion for success is to keep up with the reading, using good study techniques like the SQ3R method (<http://www.studyqs.net/texred2.htm>). Also, on any given exam, most of my questions are re-used from past exams, based on the questions' psychometric properties, like whether they are good discriminators. So if you use old exams to study from, and don't wait until the last minute to study for the exams, you will do better!

Question Review Form: A few years ago I started implementing a Question Review Form, and will use it again this year, since students really like it. Once an exam is handed back, look over the corrections and consult your notes and text to understand why your answers were marked wrong. If you are *really and truly* convinced that the answer you marked as incorrect should be considered correct AND if you can provide evidence, either from lecture or the book to back up your argument, then you have one week to submit the information using the QRF. We will evaluate your answer, and provide feedback. We can (and will) give you the point if your argument is valid.

Study Guides: A study guide will be handed out prior to each exam. The study guide will contain questions from the lecture material only, indicating the most important (but not necessarily the only) information, concepts, and definitions on which to focus your studying for the lecture portion of the exams. Your text contains summaries and keywords to assist you with the text portion of the material, and you have access to a variety of learning aids on the textbook's web page (www.mhhe.com/taylor6). (Choose “student edition” in the “online learning center” box, then choose a chapter. Many options will be available, including a glossary, practice quizzes, etc.). You can also look at the old exams on the web page for some idea of what I consider to be the important text material. Be aware, however, that some of the exams that are available on the web page from past quarters are based on an earlier edition of this text, so some text questions from may not be relevant any longer.

Grading: Final grades will be based on straight percentages as follows (total possible points are 150 -- 3 x 50 for exams):

A = 90% - 100%	(135 - 150 pts.)	C = 70% - 75%	(105 - 112.5 pts.)
B+ = 85% - 90%	(127.5 - 135 pts.)	D+ = 65% to 70%	(97.5 - 105 pts.)
B = 80% - 85%	(120 - 127.5 pts.)	D = 60% to 65%	(90 - 97.5 pts.)
C+ = 75% - 80%	(112.5 - 120 pts.)	F = below 60%	(<90 pts.)

Please note that grading by straight percentages rather than on a curve minimizes competition. You are encouraged to cooperate in studying, sharing notes, discussion, etc. On a straight percentage system, everyone can potentially earn an A grade.

Extra Credit: You have an opportunity to earn 3 points of extra credit by assessing your blood pressure and by filling out some questionnaires on the web. The questionnaires pertain to your physical health, amount of stress in your lives, and how you cope with stress. For the last lecture of the quarter, I will use the information from these questionnaires to examine some of the issues that we've been discussing in the class (e.g., stress and health), but the data will pertain to you all! No information about any individuals will be shared, only data from the group as a whole. There will be a handout with more detail on this later in the quarter.

The Fudge Factor Essay: All assessment involves error, so before the quarter ends, you will have the option of doing a brief assignment, the famous Fudge Factor Essay. I will provide the topic. These essays will only be read if, at the end of the quarter, your final grade is within 1 point of the next higher grade. For example, if your final point total is 119 points, you would normally receive a C+. If you did the extra credit essay, though, and it was excellent, you would be given the next higher grade of B. You are encouraged to do this essay, though it is not required. It cannot hurt your grade in any way -- it can only help, maybe. Remember, too, that if you have taken all 3 midterm exams during the quarter, you have the option of taking the cumulative final. If you do so, your lowest score of the three exams will be dropped. This is another way to earn "extra credit."

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Important dates: The following are important dates for the course, including approximate exam dates. Any changes to these dates will be announced at least 1 week in advance in class.

Mon	7 Jan	First day of class
Mon	21 Jan	Martin Luther King holiday, no class
Wed	30 Jan	First exam
Mon	18 Feb	Presidents' Day holiday no class
Mon	25 Feb	Second exam
Mon	17 Mar	Third exam, last day of class
Sat	22 Mar	Final exam, 3:30-5:30 PM

Lecture topics, reading assignments

Text: Shelley Taylor, Health Psychology, 6th Edition, McGraw-Hill, 2006.

Topic:	Reading:
Introduction to Health Psychology	Chs. 1, 15
Biological factors in health and disease genetics immune system	Ch. 14 (pp. 400-411); Web article Ch. 2 (pp. 36-40)
Psychological factors in health and disease placebo effects stress and neuroendocrinology psychoneuroimmunology coping	Ch. 9 Ch. 6; Ch 2 (pp. 16-22) Ch. 14 (pp. 378-388) Ch. 7
Social factors in health and disease social support cultural influences	Ch. 11
Health behaviors	Ch. 3, 4
Smoking	Ch. 2 (pp. 26-29); Ch. 5
AIDS	Ch. 14 (pp. 388-400)
Cardiovascular disease (time permitting)	Ch. 2 (pp. 22-26); Ch. 13
Student health	