

Preliminary Syllabus Subject to Change: Check Periodically

Health Psychology: Advanced Topics in Clinical and Abnormal Psychology (01:830:451)

Day/time: Thursday 1:10 to 4:10 (periods 4 and 5)
Location: Health Institute (112 Paterson St., New Brunswick) Room 120
Instructor: Richard J. Contrada (contrada@rci.rutgers.edu) (office hours by appointment)
Prerequisites: Open to Psychology majors who have completed all 4 psychology core courses

To see and download this syllabus: Sign in to the class website on Sakai. Sakai will contain course materials including this syllabus and readings. Students should check Sakai at least twice a week for changes and announcements.

Main Sakai portal: <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal>

Preliminary considerations: Is this course for you?

- This course will examine psychological aspects of physical health and disease.
- It is listed under “Advanced Topics in Clinical and Abnormal Psychology” because most Health Psychologists are either Clinical or Social Psychologists; it could just as easily been listed as “Advanced Topics in Social Psychology” and eventually will be listed under “Health Psychology”.
- This is not a course on approaches to psychotherapy or how to do psychotherapy. The focus is on scientific research.
- Among the topic areas are theory and research on: health-promoting and health damaging behaviors; how people perceive and think about health and illness; deciding to use health care and interacting with the health care system; stress, coping, emotion, and emotion regulation; pain; psychosocial risk and vulnerability factors such as personality, social networks/support, sex/gender, socio-economic status, and social group membership; psychological adjustment to chronic disease and chronic disease management.
- No prior exposure to/knowledge of Health Psychology is required.
- Although the focus is on psychology, there is biological material, for example, concerning anatomy and physiology of stress and emotion, normal anatomy and physiology of various other body systems, and the etiology and pathogenesis of physical disease.
- **WARNING:** Class participation counts for approximately a third of your grade. **IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND CLASS REGULARLY, DO NOT TAKE THIS COURSE!**
- In addition to class participation, grading will be based on written assignments and essay exams
- For students taking the course on a writing intensive basis, there is an additional 15 page paper.
- Weekly reading assignments consist mainly of primary source journal articles and book chapters; there is no required undergraduate textbook

General objectives: It is my purpose in teaching this class to foster your familiarity and understanding of:

- The Health Psychology field as a whole, its history, assumptions, goals, topics, concepts, methods
- Selected topic areas to be examined in depth
- The relationships between Health Psychology and more traditional areas of Psychology
- How to think critically about psychology and health
- The relationship between basic research and applications to health problems
- The contributions of disciplines other than psychology to research and application concerning behavior and health
- How to improve your own health related behaviors and those of family and friends
- How to be a critical consumer of health- and psychology-related information presented in the media
- Academic, professional, and other career opportunities in psychology, health, and medicine
- Evolving problems of health/illness and health care

Objectives that distinguish this seminar from a 300-level course:

- How to write clearly and cogently about health psychology topics
- How to think about, present orally, and discuss psychology at an advanced level
- Learn to identify and formulate new directions for health psychology research

Outline of main topics and exams: Topic coverage is subject to changes (announced in class, on Sakai).

September	6	Class 1: Course Overview and Introduction
	13	Class 2: Theory and Research Methods
	20	Class 3: Health Behavior and Illness Cognition
	27	Class 4: Doctor-Patient Interactions
October	4	Class 5: Hospitals
	11	Class 6: Stress
	18	Class 7: Immune
November	25	Class 8: Moderators
	1	Class 9: Stress Reduction
	8	Class 10: Cardiovascular Diseases
	15	Class 11: Cancer
	20	Class 12: Pain (Thurs schedule on Tues)
	22	No Classes (Thanksgiving)
December	29	Class 13: HIV/AIDS
	6	Class 14: Smoking
	13	Class 15: TBA

Possible additions/substitutions: Race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation; chronic disease management; drinking; eating, exercise, body image/eating disorders; medical decision making

Determination of final grades: Class participation, exams, and written assignments will contribute roughly equally to final course grades.

Optional/supplemental readings/resources:

Health Psychology Textbook. It is suggested that you read through and have on hand an undergraduate health psychology textbook especially if you've never had a course in health psychology. The idea is to get a sense of the range of topics and to get a little bit into some of the topics to which you may not have been exposed previously. My impression is that all the major health psychology texts are roughly equivalent, including Brannan and Feist, Taylor, and Sarafino. It would be good to have a recent edition but it does not have to be the current edition as these books can be overpriced so if you can avoid buying one you should. Some may be available at the library.

Health-Related Websites. You might want to browse through and bookmark websites for such organizations as the National Institutes of Health and specific Institutes of interest, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, World Health Organization, American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, Health Psychology Division (38) of the American Psychological Association. These websites contain many useful resources.

Required readings:

This will mainly be primary source materials and will be made available through Sakai under "Resources".

Notes:

1. This class necessarily involves material having to do with anatomy, sickness, disability, death, and personal behaviors such as sex and drug/alcohol use that are related to health.
2. Please do not talk during class; it is disruptive in a lecture room this size. Also, please turn off cell phones. If you must arrive late or leave early, please sit in back.
3. Regular attendance is essential. If you must miss a class, get notes, and find out if you missed any announcements about changes in exam dates, etc.
4. If you have trouble downloading materials from Sakai, please email sakai@rutgers.edu and/or get help at one of the University computer labs because it is unlikely that I will be able to help since the issues are usually local to your PC/browser/printer. Sometimes the problem is solved by: (a) making sure you respond to a question about copyright issues in a window that may be open but hidden somewhere on your screen; (b) saving the file before opening; (c) upgrading to the latest version of relevant software (e.g., Adobe Reader).
5. Students who miss an exam because they are physically unable to take it as scheduled must inform me in advance of the exam and may request a make-up, which, if granted, will not be the same as the regularly scheduled exam. There must be documentation of severe illness in the form of a letter from a physician that includes a phone number so that the physician can be contacted for verification. The letter must be received by the instructor within one week of the missed exam.
6. During the 13th and 14th weeks of the semester tests of more than 30 minutes duration may not be given except if a course gives more than one hour test and a final. If there is no final examination in a course, the last hour test must be given earlier than the 13th week or at the hour scheduled for the final examination.
7. There will be a loss of credit for assignments that are submitted late.
8. Assigned exercises must be based on the student's own, independent work. Plagiarism is unacceptable. **Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy:** <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>
9. Because the instructor for this course may not be on campus after the end of the semester, all students must complete all exercises and take all exams prior to the end of the semester.
10. All grades will be posted electronically. Students are responsible for contacting the instructor in a timely fashion if they believe they have not received credit for submitted exercises or exams they have taken. All grades are final; there are no extra credit opportunities.
11. The lectures and course web page are my personal intellectual property. I view the sale or purchase of these materials as a violation of copyright laws.