

# Preliminary Syllabus Subject to Change: Check Periodically

HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY—Fall 2012 (830:377:01), Index: 05663

Tuesday and Friday, Second Period (10:20-11:40am), Beck Auditorium (Livingston)

Instructor: Richard J. Contrada ([contrada@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:contrada@rci.rutgers.edu))  
By Appointment

Office Hours:

TA: To be announced  
Hours: By Appointment

Office

Readings: Required readings are from primary sources. There is **no required textbook**.

**Optionally**, you may wish to read any of the standard Health Psychology Texts, including those written by: L. Brannon & J. Feist, by S. Taylor, or by E. P. Sarafino. The more recent the edition, the better, and **be aware that certain facts and figures will differ between text books and my lecture**, though on balance any text will help you with major concepts. Copies of useful texts will be placed on reserve at the Kilmer Library on Livingston.

The readings and other course material will be provided online through **Sakai**.

**To see and download this syllabus:** Sign in to the class website on **Sakai**.

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

Sakai will contain course materials including this syllabus, readings, assigned exercises, sample midterm and final exam questions, and midterm and final exam review guides. Students are responsible for all information and materials on all the course web pages on **Sakai**. In addition, because all the information is subject to change, students should check **Sakai** at least twice a week for changes and announcements.

Materials will be made available in Sakai under **“Resources”** unless otherwise indicated.

**Videos:** Excerpts from several videos will be shown in class and then placed on reserve in the Media Center, in the basement of the Kilmer Library.

**Exercises:** There will periodically be brief assigned exercises for you to complete **outside** class. All will be announced and made available through **Sakai** and completed exercises will be submitted to the TA through **Sakai**.

**Learning Goals:** It is my purpose in teaching this class to foster your familiarity and understanding of:

1. The history, basic assumptions, main topic areas, concepts, and methods of Health Psychology
2. The relationships between Health Psychology and more traditional areas of Psychology
3. How to think critically about psychology and health
4. The relationship between basic research and applications to health problems
5. The contributions of disciplines other than psychology to research and application concerning behavior and health
6. How to write clearly and cogently about health psychology topics
7. How to improve your own health related behaviors and those of family and friends
8. How to be a critical consumer of health- and psychology-related information presented in the media
9. Academic, professional, and other career opportunities in psychology, health, and medicine
10. Evolving problems of health/illness and health care

**Class Schedule Notes:**

**First Class:**

**Tuesday, September 4**

## Last Class:

**Tuesday, December 1**

**Main Topics and Exams: Topic coverage is subject to changes.**

Class 1 and 2	Course Introduction and History and Background of the Health Psychology Field
Class 3	Conducting Health Research: Theory and Research Methods
Class 4 and 5	Health-Related Behavior: Major Theoretical Models and Perspectives
Class 6 and 7	Interacting with the Health Care System and Adhering to Medical Advice
Class 8 and 9	Defining and Measuring Stress: Biological, Psychological, and Environmental Approaches
Class 10	Stress and Disease: A focus on the immune system
Class 11	Psychosocial Resources and Stress Moderators I
Class 12	Psychosocial Resources and Stress Moderators II
Class 13	Managing Stress and Pain: Coping Techniques

## Midterm Exam:

**Friday, October 19**

Class 15 and 16	Behavioral Factors in Cardiovascular Disease
Class 17 and 18	Behavioral Factors in Cancer
Class 19	Pain
Class 20 and 21	HIV/AIDS
Class 22	Smoking Tobacco
Class 23	Using Alcohol
Class 24	Eating and Weight Control
Class 25	Exercising; Body Image and Eating Disorders
Class 26	Future Challenges
Class 27 and 28	Review for Final

## Final Exam:

**Tuesday, December 18, 8:30am to**

**11:30am, Beck Auditorium (Livingston)**

**Midterm:** About 60 multiple-choice and true-false questions based on lecture and readings.

**Final Exam:** About 60 to 80 multiple-choice and true-false questions. Exclusively on material covered since the Mid-Term Exam.

**Determination of Final Grades:** The Midterm Exam, Final Exam, and Assignments, and will contribute to final course grades in proportion to the number of questions on each exam and the number and scope of the assignments.

## NOTES

1. Please contact the **TA** and/or **instructor** with questions about **course material**. The **TA** should be contacted for all matters relating to **course mechanics** such as registration, exercises, exams, grade issues, and the like.
2. 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.
3. 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.

4. Attendance is strongly recommended. If you must miss a class, get notes, and find out if you missed any announcements about changes in exam dates, lecture topics, etc.
5. If you have trouble downloading materials from Sakai, please email [sakai@rutgers.edu](mailto: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).
6. Both the Midterm and Final exam are multiple choice/true-false and require scantron sheets; students must provide a #2 pencil.
7. You must bring a picture ID (student ID or driver's license) to the midterm and final exams.
8. 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. If granted, the make-up may include short essays and other open-ended questions. 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.
9. 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.
10. There will be a loss of credit for exercises that are submitted late.
11. Assigned exercises must be completed based on the student's own, independent work. Plagiarism is unacceptable. **Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy:** <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>
12. Because the instructor for this course may not be on campus after the end of the semester, all students must complete all assigned exercises and take all exams prior to the end of the semester.
13. All grades will be posted electronically. Students are responsible for contacting the TA in a timely fashion if they believe they have not received credit for submitted exercises or exams they have taken.
14. All grades are final. If necessary, grades will be curved. Also, many of the assigned exercises are simple and only require you follow straightforward directions; several do not even have right or wrong answers. And a lot of information will be provided to guide efforts to prepare for the midterm and final exams, including specifics about what will and will not be covered. Some may feel they "just missed" the next highest grade, for example, because they were sick or under a lot of stress during exam periods. But remember, you will have come that close to the next highest grade only after the curves and fairly easy assignments. If I were to lower the cutoff to raise the letter grade for a student who "just misses" the next highest grade, there would be another student who scored slightly lower who now would "just miss" the new cutoff, and the logical conclusion would be to keep lowering the cutoff until everyone receives an "A". Such grades would be meaningless.
15. There are no extra credit opportunities. All students will receive the same extra credit opportunities in the form of simple exercises and grade curves. I cannot negotiate extra credit opportunities for individual students because it would not be fair to the others. And I cannot work separately with each student until all students are satisfied with their grades. Please do not contact me to request further extra credit opportunities or just to let me know you were not satisfied with your grade. I do not under any circumstances offer "extra credit" opportunities because I believe a grading system is only fair if it is based on the same exams/exercises for all students.

16. 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.

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