

Close Relationships across the Lifespan
Psychology 493w
Spring 2021
Monday/Wednesday 3:00PM-4:20PM
Location: Zoom

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Course Overview

Course Goals

This writing seminar will provide an advanced introduction to close relationships, particularly in the context of lifespan development. By the end of this course, you will be knowledgeable about relationship dynamics at each point of the lifespan. Topics covering both biological and sociocultural influences are designed to give you a more holistic view of close relationships. By studying the antecedents (and consequences) of close relationships, I hope that the material will give you a deeper appreciation of those around you and lead you to develop more fulfilling relationships.

Readings

There are no required readings for this course. Although there are a few textbooks on close relationships, I felt that none of them went enough in depth and had appropriate coverage. Likewise, assigning enough empirical articles or book chapters to give you enough of a foundation would also be overwhelming. In short, just come to class and you should be able to learn a lot about the study of close relationships.

You are free to draw on empirical articles for your writing assignments. If you would like further guidance on any of the topics discussed in class, I would be happy to send you some articles, book chapters, and reviews on that particular topic.

Course Website

You can access course materials through D2L. There you can find a copy of the syllabus, the lecture notes, and assignments. You will also submit assignments to the course website. I expect that you will take detailed notes on the lecture material. To help you focus on the important themes rather than writing everything down, I will provide PowerPoint notes of each lecture on D2L (available the day class starts). These slides are not meant to replace your notes; they simply provide an outline of the material that will be covered. You should fill in the details during class yourself. You will not succeed in this class if you rely solely on the slides for your notes! **You are not allowed to sell or post any lecture notes or other course materials without authorization from the instructor. Photographing lecture notes or slides is also prohibited.**

Email Communication

The main purpose of email should be brief inquiries regarding course content not addressed in the syllabus or information otherwise not available to students. When a student needs to discuss a particular set of personal circumstances regarding their course performance a meeting with the professor is the appropriate venue. Any

correspondence for this course should originate from a Michigan State University email account. Include PSY493 in the subject of your message. Be aware that it may take 24-48 hours for your email messages to receive a response.

Accommodations

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at www.rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (“VISA”) form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc.). Requests received after this date will be honored if possible.

Course Requirements

The course is composed of three exams, three assignments, attendance, and extra credit. There is an optional final. Following is a summary of the due dates and point values for each course component.

Course components	Due Date	Points	TOTAL Points for component
Semester Exams (3)		15% of grade each	225 (45% total grade)
Exam #1	Mon, 2/22	75 points	
Exam #2	Mon, 3/2	75 points	
Exam #3	Mon, 4/19	75 points	
Assignments (4)		10% of grade each	200 (40% of total grade)
Assignment #1	Mon, 2/8	50 points	
Assignment #2	Mon, 3/1	50 points	
Assignment #3	Mon, 3/29	50 points	
Assignment #4	Wed, 4/19	50 points	
Blog Post Assignment	Mon, 4/5	5% of grade 25 points	25 (5% of total grade)
Class Activity	Wed, 1/27	5% of grade 25 points	25 (5% of total grade)
Attendance and Participation	Randomly taken throughout semester	5% of grade 25 points	25 (5% of total grade)
Total Available Points in Class			500
Extra Credit	Wed, 4/21 (11:59pm)	20 points	up to 20 points (4% of total grade)
Optional Final	Thurs, 4/29		Will replace your lower exam score (if you score higher)

Exams

There will be three exams during the semester and they will be delivered online via d2L. You will need to take the exam during class time that day. In other words, the exam will only be available from 3:00pm-4:20pm. Exams will be all or mostly multiple choice and *will not* be cumulative. Exam questions will be based on lecture material. Material from videos or demonstrations shown in class will also be on the exam.

Optional Final Exam: An optional final exam will be held on April 29th from 12:45pm-2:45pm. If you choose to take this optional exam, and perform better than one of your previous exams, the grade from this optional final will replace your lowest exam grade. If you perform *worse* on this optional exam, the grades from your three in-class exams will be used. In short, the highest three exams will be used to calculate your final grade. The optional final exam will be cumulative and cover topics from the entire semester.

Missed Exams: If you will be absent from an exam to observe a *religious holiday, or to participate in a required activity for another course or a university-sanctioned event*, please make arrangements with me far in advance and a make-up exam will be available. For a university sanctioned event, I require adequate advance notice and a written authorization from the faculty member of the other course or from a university administrator. If you miss an exam because of a *serious illness or emergency*, an official notice (such as a letter from a doctor) is helpful. In such cases, I will evaluate the circumstances to determine whether to provide a make-up exam. **All make-up exams will be in essay format and will be proctored by me. Students who require any accommodations should see me as soon as possible.**

Assignments

There will be four written assignments (2+ single spaced pages each) that will be posted on the course website and reviewed in class at least 1 week before the due date. In each of the assignments, you will have an opportunity to write in depth about one or more concepts covered in class. These assignments are designed to be fun ways to critically use the knowledge you have gained in class. Each assignment is due by 11:59PM on the due date listed above. **Only word document (.doc or .docx files) will be accepted.**

Blog Post Assignment

Because this is a writing class, I am encouraging writing assignments that you wouldn't typically write for other classes. For this assignment, you will write a short piece (~500 words) that is an accessible summary of any topic covered in class or one that is found on your own. You are free to draw on empirical articles, popular culture and media, or personal experiences to help present the material. This assignment will be due on Monday, April 5th but can be turned in at any point throughout the semester.

For a list of great examples, there is a whole website dedicated to relationships: <https://www.luvze.com/>

Extra Credit

There are two ways to earn extra-credit points. You may complete any combination of them, for a **maximum of 20 extra credit points**:

- 1.) You can write **multiple-choice exam questions** to be used on the exams. **IF** one of your questions is used on the exam, you will get **two extra credit points (per question used)**. If your questions are deemed of good quality but are not used, **you can receive up to two points for the entire set of questions**. You must submit at least four questions for extra credit to be considered. You may submit up to 10 questions for each exam; however, we cannot guarantee how many (if any) will be used. To have your questions considered for an exam, you will need to submit them at least 7 days before the exam.

Submit your questions to the d2L; be sure that each question has 5 possible answers, and indicate which option is the correct answer!

Deadlines for submitting multiple-choice questions are: February 15th (Exam 1), March 15th (Exam 2), and April 12th (Exam 3). All questions must be submitted by 11:59 PM on their due date.

2.) Find a story in a newspaper, news magazine, or other news source that *illustrates issues discussed in class*. You may also choose a situation or character from a television show, book, or movie that illustrates a concept from class. Write an essay that (1) briefly describes the news item, situation, or character, and (2) explains in detail how it demonstrates a particular close relationship theory or concept. The essay must be relevant to class and have a section devoted to talking about the close relationship phenomenon that it is linked to. **(Three points per essay. Up to 7 essays max)**

Each essay should be at least 750 words, single-spaced, with 12-point font and 1-inch margins in which you:

- a. Briefly summarize the main points of the news article or the key features of the situation or character (write for an audience who is not familiar with it).
- b. Describe the concept addressed in the news item, situation, or character, and explain in detail how it demonstrates this theory or concept.

Note: Each essay should be on a different source, news item, film, situation, character, etc. Each example should also illustrate a different theory or concept. If you are not sure whether the news item or fictional character is a good illustration of a particular theory or concept, talk to the Professor.

Deadline for submitting these essays is April 21st at 11:59 PM. Submit your essays to **d2L**.

3.) Write a 3-page single spaced review of a book related to close relationships. The book can be of your choice but needs to be approved by Dr. Chopik by March 24th. In the past, people have chosen the books like Eli Finkel’s *The All-or-Nothing Marriage*, Ben Schwartz/Laura Moses’ *Things You Should Already Know about Dating*, Andi Dorfman’s *It’s Not Okay*, Aziz Ansari’s *Modern Romance*, and others. A brief summary of sections that were of particular interest to you is sufficient. Be sure to also link it in some way to material and concepts covered in class. You can be rewarded 20 points for this book review.

Deadline for submitting this book review is April 21st at 11:59 PM. Submit your review to **d2L**.

Grading Scale

TOTAL POINTS	% TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	LETTER GRADE
450 - 500	90-100	4.0	A
425 - 449.99	85-89	3.5	A-/B+
400 - 424.99	80-84	3.0	B
375 - 399.99	75-79	2.5	B-/C+
350 - 374.99	70-74	2.0	C
325 - 349.99	65-69	1.5	C-/D+
300 - 324.99	60-64	1.0	D
under 300	under 60	0	F

Classroom Environment

The goal is to create a community in which we learn together and benefit from our time together. If you complete the assigned reading for each class prior to coming to class, you will gain more from the in-class experience. I expect that students will come to lecture on-time, prepared to learn, and ready to contribute to the course in a thoughtful manner. ***Please do not engage in distracting behaviors during class time.*** If you read the paper, do the crossword, sleep, take care of phone calls, watch DVD’s, listen to music, manage your text

messages, browse the Internet, and engage in social conversations during class you are not learning and are disrupting the learning of others around you. **Cell phones and pagers need to be off or on silent-mode during class.** I appreciate your attention to these common courtesies. I also know that at times you will have to leave class early. If you must leave early, I would greatly appreciate it if you sit near a door, and do so as quietly as possible.

Academic Honesty

Simply put, any and all forms of cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable. Students are expected to complete exams without assistance from any sources. **Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a failing grade on the assignment or in this course.** Legalistic Details: *Article 2.3.3* of the *Academic Freedom Report* states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." The Department of Psychology adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, *Protection of Scholarship and Grades*; the all-University Policy on *Integrity of Scholarship and Grades*; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. For extensive details see *Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide* and/or the MSU Web site. I encourage you to be familiar with university policy; the Ombudsman has prepared a useful website with specific information about specific activities that are or are not appropriate. <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/>

Limits to Confidentiality

Please be aware that class materials are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies. However, all University employees, including instructors, cannot maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues based on external legal obligations or health and safety considerations of MSU community members and others. As the instructors, the TA and I must report the following information to other University offices if you share it with us:

- Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child,
- Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, and
- Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual or not. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center (<http://www.counseling.msu.edu/students>).

Course Schedule		
Date	Topic	Notes
Monday, January 11	CLASS CANCELLED (RRR Day)	
Wednesday, January 13	CLASS CANCELLED (RRR Day)	
Monday, January 18	CLASS CANCELLED (MLK Day)	
Wednesday, January 20	Syllabus Day	
Monday, January 25	Fast Friends	
Wednesday, January 27	Why Study Close Relationships?	Class Activity Due
Monday, February 1	Theoretical Frameworks	
Wednesday, February 3	Attachment Theory	
Monday, February 8	Attraction and Mate Selection	Assignment #1 Due
Wednesday, February 10	Gender and Sexuality	
Monday, February 15	Personality and Personal History	
Wednesday, February 17	Exam #1 Review	
Monday, February 22	Exam #1	
Wednesday, February 24	Communication, Intimacy, and Managing Differences	
Monday, March 1	Beliefs and Values	Assignment #2 Due
Wednesday, March 3	CLASS CANCELLED (Break Day)	
Monday, March 8	Understanding and Information Processing	
Wednesday, March 10	Embodied Relationships	
Monday, March 15	Relationships in Context	
Wednesday, March 17	Exam #2 Review	
Monday, March 22	Exam #2	
Wednesday, March 24	Non-monogamy	
Monday, March 29	Friendship	Assignment #3 Due
Wednesday, March 31	Relationship Dissolution and Bereavement	
Monday, April 5	How to Improve Relationships	Blog Post Due
Wednesday, April 7	Hot Topics	
Monday, April 12	Hot Topics	
Wednesday, April 14	Exam #3 Review	Assignment #4 Due
Monday, April 19	Exam #3	
Wednesday, April 21	Final Exam Review Session	
Thursday, April 29	Optional Final Exam	12:45-2:45pm online