

Issues in Psychology:

Critical Psychology

Spring 2023 | Psy 493 | In-Person | Prerequisite: Psy 101, Tier I Writing Req | 3 credits

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores a growing field in which critical theories and discourses are used to understand social inequities and further social justice. Students will identify the ways in which injustice has been historically upheld by social scientists broadly and psychologists specifically, and critique the ways in which our intentions may differ from our impacts. The course is guided by several overarching critiques of mainstream psychology – the traditionally limited level of analysis, how our ideology upholds the status quo, and the tendency to claim scientific objectivity and political neutrality.



Professor:

Dr. Katie Clements

Pronouns: she/her

vadnais3@msu.edu

I will respond within
1 business day.



Giltner 346

Mon and Wed
12:40 – 2:00pm



Office Hours – Fri 2:00 – 3:00, Psy 136
or schedule at calendly.com/drkvc



Office Hours

Office hours are informal ways to connect with your instructor. You can ask questions or discuss course topics. You may or may not have to have a specific concern; think of them as more casual conversations. Attend on Fridays or schedule at the link above (note Psy 493 in your appointment).



Required Text

This is quite likely your first introduction to the topic. Although there are many scholarly/academic and general places to read critiques of mainstream psychology, we'll cover the fundamentals with this textbook:

Fox, D., Prilleltensky, I., & Austin, S. (2009). *Critical Psychology: An Introduction* (2nd ed). London: SAGE Publications.



Course Format

This course meets in person twice each week. Complete assigned reading prior to class. We'll discuss the reading, practice developing critical perspectives through discussion and writing. This is a writing course, centered on the particular issue/area of critical psychology, so you can expect to write different critiques of mainstream psychology. You will also be expected to peer review each other's writing.



Classroom Philosophy

- We are whole people – I respect your “whole personness”
- We all must be *active, engaged* learners and co-create our learning environment
- Humble respect for others' experiences, insights, and identities gives us the most room to learn and grow
- We are all doing our best – it might look different than it was yesterday, or tomorrow, or someone else's – but we are doing the best we can in this moment

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The following are the course objectives you can expect to achieve this semester. By the end of the course you will be able to:

- ✓ Critique mainstream psychology's disciplinary-based and issue-based approaches to:
 - Traditional individual level of analysis
 - Ideological support of the status quo
 - Tendency to claim scientific objectivity and political neutrality
- ✓ Articulate and critique the current state of mainstream psychology by:
 - Recognizing and naming underlying assumptions
 - Recognizing and naming institutional practices
 - Exploring and proposing other ways of knowing and understanding human behavior

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS



Reflexivity Paper

Being able to critique the beliefs we have about psychological knowledge requires understanding who we are and how we come to know and connect with that scholarship. This assignment is a short 1–2-page paper articulating your background, your connection to psychology, and what stands out and connects with your values and interests.



Small Individual Assignments

Most weeks you will complete a short (max 1 page) writing assignment that encourages and develops your ability to be critical about existing current scholarship. Details will be shared each preceding week and you will submit them to a peer review portal. These assignments are designed to help you break down the process of studying psychology into small, manageable pieces to critique.



Small Individual Peer Review

A big part of developing your own critical thinking about psychology is reading critical thinking (and mainstream thinking!) and developing an ability to ask probing or follow-up questions to understand the details and implications. Most weeks you will complete a short peer-review assignment that helps develop the individual writing assignments submitted for the week. You will complete them in a peer review portal, Eli Review.



Attendance

There is an attendance component to your grade, for weeks 3-15. 10 of these weeks count towards your grade. Each week includes one class period primarily spent doing in-class writing, so attendance is important for developing those skills towards larger written assignments.



Final Writing Assignment

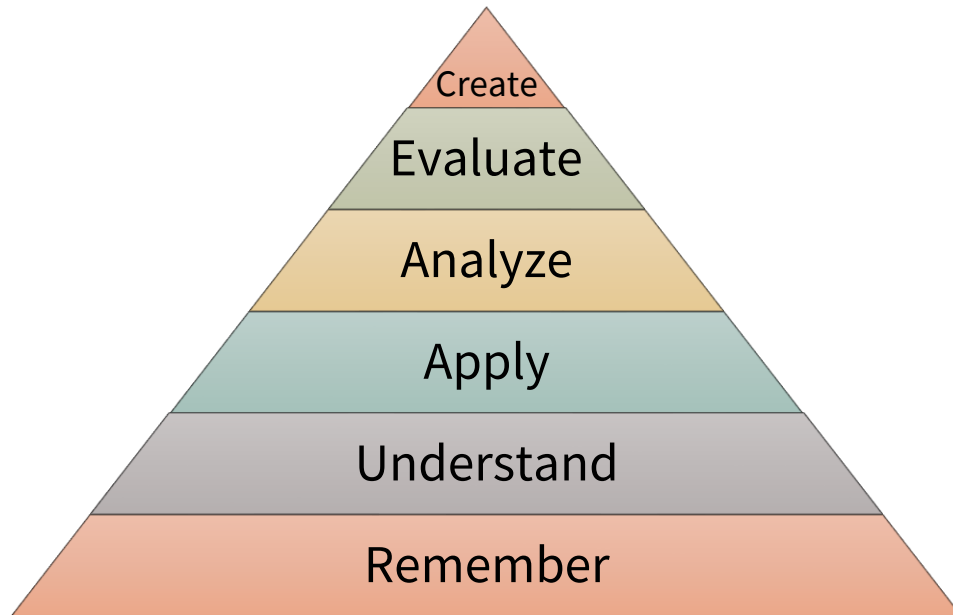
Your final writing assignment will be a comprehensive critique of psychology by answering “How should psychology change? What does the future of psychology look like? *More specifically* How can psychology foster emancipation, social justice, and social change?” Details provided in the second half of the class.

ASSIGNMENT MAPPING

I want us to cultivate a classroom where we are invested in the learning process (not an exam). Here is how I do that.

Bloom’s Taxonomy is basically a hierarchical classification of levels of thinking. Modern updates to the model have renamed the levels as verbs (things we consciously do), identified knowledge dimensions (the type of knowledge gained) and cognitive processes dimensions (the processes used to gain the knowledge). I use Bloom’s Taxonomy to ensure we’re mastering a variety of writing skills using a variety of cognitive processes.

Here is a diagram for our course that outlines how you’re progressing up through the levels of thinking in this course, via activities and cognitive processes. As you master more fundamental activities, you gain those skills and move up the hierarchy. Obviously some of the assignments use multiple skills and processes.



Assignments	Bloom’s Taxonomy	Cognitive Skills (and many more!)
Future of Psychology Paper	Create	Design, develop
Future of Psychology components	Evaluate	Argue, critique
Group Discussions in class	Analyze	Compare, contrast
Peer Review	Apply	Implement, demonstrate
Individual Writing	Understand	Explain, describe, summarize
Attendance	Remember	Recall

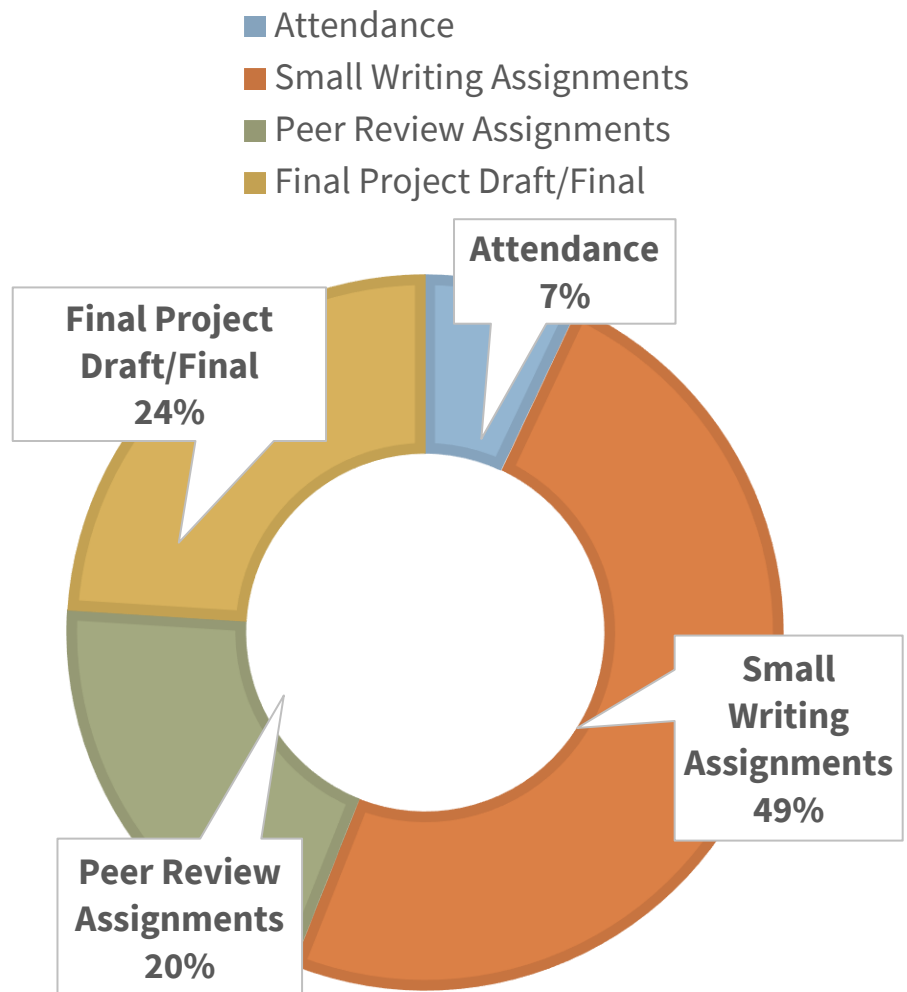
GRADING POLICIES

The grading scale and points allocated per assignment are shown below.

The earlier individual writing activities are 5 points (reflexivity paper is 10 points). The later individual writing activities become more difficult, and are worth 10 points. The final writing components are worth 15-20 points, the draft is worth 30 and the final comprehensive writing project is worth 40 points. All peer reviews are worth 5 points.

Grading Scale	
Grade	%
4.0	89.5-100
3.5	84.5-89.4
3.0	79.5-84.4
2.5	74.5-79.4
2.0	69.5-74.4
1.5	64.5-69.4
1.0	59.5-64.4
0.0	<59.4

Assignment Distribution



POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

The following describe various policies that will be enforced during the semester.



Deadlines and Due Dates

- Class: Mon, Wed 12:40 – 2:00 in person
- Most assignments due by class start

Note exceptions in the syllabus/assignment details. I will make reasonable accommodations for students if notified in a timely manner. I never assign weekend or late night deadlines, in alignment with my values.



Academic Misconduct

Both students and faculty are responsible for "maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards," per

MSU's [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) and the [Spartan Code of Honor](#). In addition, the Psychology Department adheres to 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. **Your work must be your own original work, and all contributing ideas must be cited. If you are unsure, contact me.**



Civility (Non-Academic Misconduct)

Developing a successful learning space requires extra attention to the *way* we engage each other. Our actions affect everyone in our community. This class may challenge and explore our own beliefs and we may find ourselves challenging each other's beliefs as well. Please remember that everyone moves through this material in their own way and from the lens of their own experiences. If/when you challenge your classmates, make sure it's with the goal of enhancing each other's learning.



Course Management Software (D2L)

- We use D2L (<https://d2l.msu.edu/>) for course management *and communication*.
- **Very important:** Please manually set your D2L emails and announcements to forward to your @msu.edu email (in D2L email settings)
- We also use the Eli Review website to manage peer review assignments.



Limits to Confidentiality

Please note that **the instructor of this course is a mandated reporter**. I am required to report all incidents of relationship violence and sexual misconduct that involve students, faculty, or staff, occurred at a University-sponsored event, or occurred on University property, and *even if these are reported in course materials*. Therefore, if you share such an experience with me, I will be required to share your name and the details of the disclosure to the Office of Inclusion and Equity (OIE) and MSU Police:

- *Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child;*
- *Allegations of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, or sexual harassment; and*
- *Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others.*

OIE will include these facts, (not your name) in the University's statistics on sexual and domestic violence. They will also reach out to you via email with additional university resources. It is entirely your decision to use any of the provided services or even respond to the University's email.



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 rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation ("VISA") form. Please email or have RCPD send this form to **me as soon as possible or at least two weeks prior to the accommodation date** (class, assignment, etc.). VISAs are not retroactive. You must submit them prior to the accommodation, so submit early **even if you're unsure if you will need it.**

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

You should expect a 4.0 in this class. Do the following, and you will succeed!



Reading and Projects

Complete the assigned reading/watching/listening before class.

They will help you develop an informed perspective to bring to class discussion. If you are confused about any part of the reading or have questions about what you read, bring those too! The more familiar you are with the readings, the more you prepared you will be to express your own critical ideas in small writing assignments. These are less than one page, but please take your time to complete these with your best work. Reviewing others' writing also helps you think about your own writing in new ways!

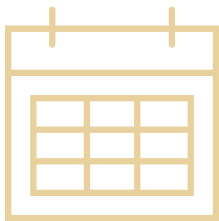


External resources

I am very aware that students are facing additional financial strain. If accessing external resources like the book or other media is a financial barrier for you, let me know – there is no threshold of need here. No one will go without the resources they need for this class. We'll make sure you get what you need.

Weekly Schedule

I recommend maintaining a weekly schedule of activities for this and any other courses with unusual schedules (online, once-a-week, etc.). It can be extra difficult for some students to hold themselves accountable in these course formats. The schedule below is just a suggestion, but I recommend sticking to something that works for you and helps spread out the work.



Monday: Class
Tuesday: Peer review
Wednesday: Class
Thursday: Read, annotate
Friday: Weekly writing



How to Email

I post all announcements in D2L, even though we meet in person. Check your email and D2L regularly for updates. Please forward your D2L inbox to your regular MSU email. I will make every effort to respond to emails within 1 MSU business day. I expect you will extend the same courtesy and respond to emails from your instructors and classmates in a timely manner. Always include 'Psy 493' in your subject line so I can find your emails and respond appropriately. Always write your email in a professional manner (i.e., greeting, complete sentences, sign your name). MSU is my professional workplace, and it's easy to email your professors respectfully. Follow these guidelines: [Email without being annoying](#)



D2L

D2L will be used for administrative and instruction purposes including announcements, housing course documents (e.g., assignments, readings), and recording grades. Please explore D2L widely, so you know how to find materials and track your progress. As an instructor, I can also see your progress – including what you do and don't access and submit. Please remember the D2L HelpDesk (accessed at <http://d2l.msu.edu> or by phone at 1-800-500-1554) is a great tool for navigation and troubleshooting. Please route your technological concerns to them.



Personal Success

Please utilize me as a resource to help you succeed, both in class and outside class. I want you to 4.0 and enjoy this class, do well at MSU, and still have a life with your friends, family, and hobbies. If one or more of those things are not happening, please connect with me so we can work together to figure out a plan to improve your situation.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

I can help you with needs pertaining to this course, and I will otherwise do my best to connect you to the right place. The university is a huge institution, and if a different form of support would be useful, we will do our best to help you find it.

Please, save the **National Suicide Prevention Hotline number in your phone: 800-273-8255**
Mental Health Hotline: 988



MSU Campus Resource List

The Department of Psychology has compiled a list of academic, mental health, culture, and identity resources around campus: <https://psychology.msu.edu/undergraduates/student-resources.html>



MSU Dependent Care Support

Michigan State University offers a dependent care support program for children or elders. This is a backup option if your usual child or eldercare falls through and a lack of care would stop you from attending class or completing schoolwork. More information about the program can be found here: <https://worklife.msu.edu/family-care/kids-parents/backup-care>.



MSU Student Food Bank

The MSU Student Food Bank serves MSU students experiencing food insecurity by providing free food and related items. You can visit their website here: <https://foodbank.msu.edu/> or email them at: foodbank@msu.edu.



Legal Services

Funded by student taxes, Student Legal Services provides free professional legal assistance and representation to eligible students through a contract with the law firm of Jeffries and Associates, PLLC. Call to engage services. <http://studentlegalservices.com/index.html>.



Writing Center and Collaborative Learning Center

The Writing Center (writing.msu.edu) and the Collaborative Learning Center (nssc.msu.edu/clc) help develop writing skills and academic strategies.



Student Essential Needs

Student Advocates for Essential Needs Security (SAENS) is a student organization that advocates on behalf of students for the equitable distribution and practice of providing for the essential needs of students. This includes housing, food, health, and access to the hygiene and other resources that contribute to student success. Their website and resource guide are located at: <https://socialwork.msu.edu/students/student-advocates-for-essential-needs-security.html>



Confidential MSU Resources

There are several resources available for students who would like confidential support, *without reporting* to OIE or MSU Police.

<p>MSU Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) 3rd Floor Olin Health Center Building 463 E Circle Drive East Lansing, MI 48824 (517) 355-8270</p>	<p>MSU Sexual Assault Program 207 Student Services Building 556 East Circle Drive East Lansing, MI 48824 (517) 355-3551 (office) (517) 372-6666 (24 hour crisis line) Website: www.endrape.msu.edu Sexual Assault Healthcare Program – 24/7 Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners Student Services Bldg w/ Parking Website link (517) 353-2700</p>
<p>MSU Safe Place (Domestic Violence) (517) 355-1100 Email: noabuse@msu.edu Website: http://safeplace.msu.edu u</p>	<p>University Ombudsperson 354 Farm Lane, Room 129, North Kedzie Hall East Lansing, MI 48824 (517) 353-8830 Email: ombud@msu.edu Website: http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud</p>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Each week we will cover a scholarship or practice area. See the attached reading list for each week.

W	Date	Topic	Assignments & Projects Due
1	1/9	Course, Syllabus, D2L exploration	
	1/13	Library, Writing Intro	
2	1/16	MLK Holiday	
	1/18	History of Psychology	Reflexivity Paper
3	1/23	Critiquing Social Psychology	Find article, identify meaningful pieces of information
	1/25		Peer Review
4	1/30	Critiquing Clinical Psychology	Find article, identify meaningful pieces of information
	2/1		Peer Review
5	2/6	Critiquing Community Psychology	Find article, identify theory – explain in your own words
	2/8		Peer Review
6	2/13	Critiquing Cognitive Psychology	Find empirical article, explain in your own words how they developed research question
	2/15		Peer Review
7	2/20	Critiquing Race in Psychology	Consider any topic – use a critical lens to develop your own research question
	2/22		Peer Review
8	2/27	Critiquing Psychology and Disability Studies	Find empirical article, explain the methods in your own words
	3/1		Peer Review
9		Spring Break!	
10	3/13	Critiquing Class in Psychology	Consider any topic [critically], how would you study it? What would you measure and how?
	3/15		Peer Review
11	3/20	Critiquing Gender in Psychology	Find empirical article, identify who/what seems valued, who/what is missing
	3/22		Peer Review
12	3/27	Critiquing Mental Health in Psychology	Draft topic and audience for final writing – thesis statement
	3/29		Peer Review
13	4/3	Critical Theorizing	Outline 3+ scholarly sources as background
	4/5		Peer Review
14	4/10	Critical Research Methods	Outline critique of previous scholarly sources – assumptions? Values? Voices included and missing?
	4/12		Peer Review
15	4/17	Critical Psychology and Politics of Resistance	Full Draft
	4/19		
16	4/24	Final Writing Workshop Week	Individual Meetings
	4/26		
	5/1	Final Exam Time – 12:45 – 2:45pm	Remote; Submit final writing assignment

