Instructor: Bill Chopik
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Office: 254 Psychology
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Goals

The overarching goal of this course is to provide an introduction to theory and research relevant to our understanding of close relationships. The seminar is necessarily broad and covers most of the dominant perspectives and traditions in relationships research in social/personality today—biology/evolutionary psychology approaches, interdependence theory, culture and context, attachment theory. Methodological advances and new emerging trends (e.g., sexuality and sexual behavior, technology) in the field of close relationships will also be covered. At the end of the course, you will have a firm grasp of what the new trends in the field are, representative findings in relationship science, an intuition about the dominant theoretical perspectives, and an idea about where the field is going.

A secondary goal is to give you professionalization opportunities. Specifically, you will be tasked with leading and facilitating class discussions, interacting with visiting speakers, and producing an end-of-semester project that will give you experience in study design or grant writing. Throughout the course, there will be opportunities to discuss professionalization issues as well.

Readings

There is no required textbook for the course. Copies of each week’s readings will be available at https://d2l.msu.edu/. If you have trouble accessing any of the course material, please contact me.

We’ll be drawing on chapters from multiple books about close relationships. I recommend getting them eventually, but they are not required for the course. Below are just a few suggestions if you wanted a more “deep dive” into the field. The Bradbury/Karney book is an undergraduate textbook. Cassidy/Shaver is the definitive text about attachment theory (I read it cover-to-cover my first semester of grad school). Vangelisti/Perlman will provide the most comprehensive and current overview of the field; the chapters are written by a who’s who of the field. Kenny/Kashy/Cook provides an accessible introduction to dyadic data analyses. Other texts exist and I’m happy to provide recommendations but these would be a good start if you wanted to learn more about the field.


Course Requirements

Constructive participation in seminar (15% of your final grade). It is critical that everyone reads the course material and participates in the seminar meetings. You are required to produce 2 discussion questions each week about the upcoming seminar meetings. If you are leading a class discussion (see next), you do not need to submit questions for that week. You must post your questions to d2L by 6:00pm on Sunday.

Leading class discussions (15% of your final grade). You will be required to lead discussions of readings twice during the semester. The discussion can take any form you would like but should also integrate the discussion questions posted by your classmates. When you are leading the discussion, you do not have to post questions for that week.

Reaction papers (40% of your final grade). You will be required to complete four reflection papers that must be at least 2 pages single-spaced written in a narrative format (1 inch margins; 12 pt font, Times New Roman). Reaction papers are meant to give you the opportunity to reflect on the readings and discussions that took place in class the previous three weeks. The first reaction paper will take a different form and will be based on an activity we complete during the first week and some discussion prompts. All papers will be submitted to d2L.

Speaker interactions (10% of your final grade). Part of the professionalization experience is interacting with other people you don’t know who present their research. The best questions are those that are thought-provoking, challenge a speaker (in a non-antagonistic way), and prompts an answer that tells us more about relationship science. Each student is expected to ask at least 3 questions over the course of the semester.

Complete a final project (20% of your final grade). You must turn in a final written project that is either (a) a research proposal/design of a study examining a close relationships process or (b) a variant of an NSF/NIH grant application that proposes and justifies a study. Examples of the latter can be provided upon request. This project must be at least 3 pages single-spaced (1 inch margins; 12 pt font; Times New Roman). An outline of your topic is due on November 16th via email to me (chopikwi@msu.edu). The final project is due by 5PM on December 14th. The final project will be turned into d2L.

Course Schedule and Assigned Readings

Week 1: Introductory Information and Fast Friends

September 14th

No readings.
**Week 2: History of the Field**  
September 21st

**Speaker:** Allison Farrell, Miami University


**Week 3: Biological and Evolutionary Approaches**  
September 28th

**Speaker:** Sara Chadwick, University of Michigan


**Week 4: Attachment Theory**  
October 5th

**Speaker:** Thuy-vy Nguyen, Durham University


**Week 5: Interdependence Theory**  
October 12th

**Speaker:** Elizabeth Dorrance Hall, Michigan State University


**Week 6: Methodological Issues and Approaches**  
October 19th

**Speaker:** Juliana Schroeder, University of California, Berkeley


**Week 7: Initial Attraction and Relationship Initiation**  
October 26th

**Speaker:** David Lee, University of Buffalo


**Week 8: Relationship Commitment and Maintenance**

November 2\textsuperscript{nd}

**Speaker:** Jaimie Krems, Oklahoma State University


**Week 9: Relationship Dissolution, Bereavement, and Infidelity**

November 9\textsuperscript{th}

**Speaker:** William Chopik, Michigan State University


**Week 10: Technology, Social Media, and Relationships**
November 16th

**Speaker:** James Kim, Western University


**Week 11: Sex and Intimacy**
November 23rd

**Speaker:** Brittany Jakubiak, Syracuse University


Week 12: Relationships and Health  
November 30th

Speaker: Samantha Joel, Western University


Week 13: Context, Culture, and Diversity  
December 7th

Speaker: Jeffrey Stokes, University of Massachusetts, Boston


