

**Close Relationships across the Lifespan**  
**Psychology 493w**  
**Spring 2026**  
**Monday/Wednesday 12:40pm-2:00pm**  
**Location: 319 Berkey Hall**

**Instructor:** Dr. Wiliam J. Chopik  
**Email:** [bill.chopik@gmail.com](mailto:bill.chopik@gmail.com) (preferred) or [chopikwi@msu.edu](mailto:chopikwi@msu.edu)  
**Office Hours:** by appointment/drop-in (Rm 254 Psychology)

**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](http://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.

<b>Course components</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>TOTAL Points for component</b>
Semester Exams (3)		15% of grade each	225 (45% total grade)
Exam #1	Mon, 2/16	75 points	
Exam #2	Wed, 3/25	75 points	
Exam #3	Mon, 4/20	75 points	
Assignments (4)		10% of grade each	200 (40% of total grade)
Assignment #1	Mon, 1/26	50 points	
Assignment #2	Mon, 3/9	50 points	
Assignment #3	Mon, 4/6	50 points	
Assignment #4	Wed, 4/15	50 points	
Class Activity	Wed, 1/21	5% of grade  25 points	25 (5% of total grade)
Attendance and Participation	Randomly taken throughout semester	10% of grade  50 points	50 (10% of total grade)
<b>Total Available Points in Class</b>			<b>500</b>
Optional Final	Mon, 4/27		<b>Will replace your lower exam score (if you score higher)</b>

## Exams

There will be three exams during the semester and they will be delivered in-person and in-class. You will need to take the exam during class time that day. 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 Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup> 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 (500-1200 words each, single spaced) 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.**

### Class Activity

You will participate in a structured activity with a classmate, online. It involves a one-hour structured conversation and completing a post-conversation survey. Both of these parts (the conversation and survey) must be completed to receive full credit. Completion of the survey is due by Wednesday, January 21<sup>st</sup> at 11:59PM. More details will be provided in class.

### Grading Scale

<u>TOTAL POINTS</u>	<u>% TOTAL POINTS</u>	<u>GRADE</u>	<u>LETTER GRADE</u>
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 round 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.

### AI Policy

This is a writing course, and there is no question that generative AI has changed the way that people write. Content creators (e.g., artists and writers) are already being replaced by generative AI, and the tools clearly have some value. At the same time, an important goal of this course is to help you think clearly about the issues we discuss, and developing your ideas through the process of writing will help you achieve this goal.

The use of generative AI is not prohibited in this class, but the ways that you use it must be disclosed. For instance, as one assignment, you will be asked to generate a topic for a blog post that you will eventually write. You can use generative AI to help come up with ideas, but you must disclose this if you do. Another assignment allows you to explicitly use Chat GPT as one of the options. As a warning, generative AI can come up with some really bad ideas or ideas that sound good but that don't meet the requirements of the assignment. So if you do use generative AI, you will be responsible for evaluating what it provides you and adapting it for this class.

Similarly, many parts of the writing assignments will require you to discuss specific issues that generative AI may struggle with. So, for instance, if you use a generative AI tool to help you understand and summarize an article or source (which again, you must disclose), then you may miss specific issues that are relevant to the assignment (i.e., how the article relates to issues discussed in class).

Finally, each assignment in this class requires some continuity from start to finish. It may be difficult for generative AI tools to link these pieces together, which you will be asked to do. So although disclosed use of generative AI is allowed, you are responsible for making sure that the resulting work makes sense and is responsive to the requirements of the assignments.

### **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 12	Syllabus Day	
Wednesday, January 14	Fast Friends	
Monday, January 19	<b><u>CLASS CANCELLED</u></b>	
Wednesday, January 21	Why Study Close Relationships?	Class Activity Due
Monday, January 26	Theoretical Frameworks	Assignment #1 Due
Wednesday, January 28	Attraction and Mate Selection	
Monday, February 2	Gender and Sexuality	
Wednesday, February 4	Personality and Personal History	
Monday, February 9	Exam #1 Review	
Wednesday, February 11	<b><u>CLASS CANCELLED</u></b>	
Monday, February 16	Exam #1	
Wednesday, February 18	Communication, Intimacy, and Managing Differences 1	
Monday, February 23	Communication, Intimacy, and Managing Differences 2	
Wednesday, February 25	<b><u>CLASS CANCELLED</u></b>	
Monday, March 2	<b><u>CLASS CANCELLED</u></b>	
Wednesday, March 4	<b><u>CLASS CANCELLED</u></b>	
Monday, March 9	Beliefs and Values	Assignment #2 Due
Wednesday, March 11	Understanding and Information Processing	
Monday, March 16	Embodied Relationships	
Wednesday, March 18	Relationships in Context	
Monday, March 23	Exam #2 Review	
Wednesday, March 25	Exam #2	
Monday, March 30	Pets and People	
Wednesday, April 1	Friendship	
Monday, April 6	Relationship Dissolution and Bereavement	Assignment #3 Due
Wednesday, April 8	Hot Topics	
Monday, April 13	How to Improve Relationships	
Wednesday, April 15	Exam #3 Review	Assignment #4 Due
Monday, April 20	Exam #3	
Wednesday, April 22	Final Exam Review	