

PSYC GU4682
FAQs about Life: Applications of Psychological Research to Everyday Experiences
Fall 2017

PSYC GU4682: FAQs about Life: Applications of Psychological Research to Everyday Experiences (seminar, 4 points). Fall 2017, Wednesdays 2:10 p.m. – 4:00 p.m., 200C Schermerhorn.

Instructor: Larisa Heiphetz (lah2201@columbia.edu)

Office hours: Thursdays 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., or by appointment, in 355C Schermerhorn Extension.

The best way to reach me is via e-mail, and I typically reply to e-mails within 48 hours. I am happy to meet with you throughout the semester to discuss anything related to the course. Please feel free to stop by my office hours or, if they conflict with one of your other classes, e-mail me to arrange a different time to meet.

- I. Bulletin description
- II. A full description of the content of the course
- III. The rationale for giving the course
- IV. The reading list and weekly syllabus
- V. Course requirements

I. Bulletin description

Prerequisites: Two courses in psychology, with at least one focusing on statistics and/or research methods in psychology, and permission of the instructor.

Review of basic psychological research that is relevant to questions people frequently encounter during the course of everyday life. Potential topics include research on decision-making, emotion, and/or interpersonal relationships.

II. A full description of the content of the course.

Basic psychological research—that is, research whose primary goal is to advance scientific understanding and build theories of human behavior—provides a wealth of information that can help people live better lives. The goal of this course is to introduce students to basic research that can inform their daily living. To this end, we will discuss empirical and theoretical work that sheds light on topics at the center of everyday life, such as decision-making and interpersonal relationships. The course will focus on recent research but will also include classic papers when appropriate, thus possibly giving students an opportunity to read and critique primary literature that they may have previously encountered in textbooks.

Students will read and discuss several journal articles per week and will complete a final project in which they examine the research literature related to a question of interest to them and use this literature to achieve a personal goal. To get the most out of this class, students should be comfortable reading empirical psychological research and have some background in research methods and/or statistics.

III. The rationale for giving the course

This course aims to achieve three goals: (1) helping students learn about theories and empirical findings within psychology, primarily social psychology; (2) showing students how to apply findings from the basic psychological literature to their own lives; (3) improving students' written and oral communication skills. Students will read and discuss several journal articles each week. Additionally, students will write a final paper in which they discuss the psychological literature relevant to one of their personal goals and

develop a plan, based on this literature, to help them achieve their goal. Furthermore, students will participate in weekly course discussions, lead a discussion on one assigned article, and give a brief presentation of their final project.

This course is an advanced seminar designed for graduate students, for advanced undergraduate psychology majors, and for students participating in the postbac psychology certificate program. It fulfills the following degree requirements:

- For psychology graduate students, this seminar can count as one of the three graduate-level seminars required for the M.A. degree or as one of the two additional graduate-level elective courses for the M. Phil. degree.
- For undergraduate psychology majors, this seminar will meet the Group III (Social, Personality, and Abnormal) distribution requirement and the seminar requirement.
- For students in the psychology postbac certificate program, this seminar will fulfill the Group III (Social, Personality, and Abnormal) distribution requirement and the advanced seminar requirement.

IV. The reading list and weekly syllabus

[Note: Articles preceded by an asterisk are eligible for in-class presentations.]

Week 1 (September 5th): How will this class work? What will we learn?

Please read this syllabus in preparation for our first course meeting.

PART I: DECISION-MAKING

Our decisions underlie many areas of our lives: how we act on a day-to-day basis, what opportunities become possible for us in the future, even how we think and feel. Therefore, we will begin by examining the science of decision-making.

Week 2 (September 12th): How can I make good decisions?

*Gilbert, D. T., Killingsworth, M. A., Eyre, R. N., & Wilson, T. D. (2009). The surprising power of neighborly advice. *Science*, *323*, 1617-1619. doi: 10.1126/science.1166632

Iyengar, S. S., Wells, R. E., & Schwartz, B. (2006). Doing better but feeling worse: Looking for the "best" job undermines satisfaction. *Psychological Science*, *17*, 143-150. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01677.x

Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. *Science*, *185*, 1124-1131. doi: 10.1126/science.185.4157.1124

Week 3 (September 19th): How can I make ethical decisions?

*Efron, D. A., Miller, D. T., & Monin, B. (2012). Inventing racist roads not taken: The licensing effect of immoral counterfactual behaviors. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *103*, 916-932. doi: 10.1037/a0030008

*Mead, N. L., Baumeister, R. F., Gino, F., Schweitzer, M. E., & Ariely, D. (2009). Too tired to tell the truth: Self-control resource depletion and dishonesty. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *45*, 594-597. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2009.02.004

*Tasimi, A., & Young, L. (2016). Memories of good deeds past: The reinforcing power of prosocial behavior in children. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *147*, 159-166. doi: 10.1016/j.jecp.2016.03.001

Week 4 (September 26th): What decisions should I make about how to spend my resources?

Dunn, E. W., Aknin, L. B., & Norton, M. I. (2014). Prosocial spending and happiness: Using money to

benefit others pays off. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 23, 41-47. doi: 10.1177/0963721413512503

*Hsee, C. K., Zhang, J., Cai, C. F., & Zhang, S. (2013). Overearning. *Psychological Science*, 24, 852-859. doi: 10.1177/0956797612464785

*Van Boven, L., & Gilovich, T. (2003). To do or to have? That is the question. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 1193-1202. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.85.6.1193

PART II: GOALS

We can make excellent decisions but fail to carry them out effectively—in which case, making an excellent decision ends up being. . .not as helpful as it could be. This section of the course will examine the science behind setting and reaching one’s goals.

Week 5 (October 3rd): How can I achieve my academic goals?

*Paunesku, D., Walton, G. M., Romero, C., Smith, E. N., Yeager, D. S., & Dweck, C. (2015). Mind-set interventions are a scalable treatment for academic underachievement. *Psychological Science*, 26, 784-793. doi: 10.1177/0956797615571017

Putnam, A. L., Sungkhasettee, V. W., & Roediger, H. L. (2016). Optimizing learning in college: Tips from cognitive psychology. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 11, 652-660. doi: 10.1177/17456916166457770

*Shih, M., Pittinsky, T. N., & Ambady, N. (1999). Stereotype susceptibility: Identity salience and shifts in quantitative performance. *Psychological Science*, 10, 80-83. doi: 10.1111/1467-9280.00111

Week 6 (October 10th): How can I reach my goals effectively, even in non-academic contexts?

Note: Topic proposals due in hard copy at the beginning of class.

*Hafenbrack, A. C., Kinias, Z., & Barsade, S. G. (2014). Debiasing the mind through meditation: Mindfulness and the sunk-cost bias. *Psychological Science*, 25, 369-376. doi: 10.1177/0956797613503853

*Lin, P. Y., Wood, W., & Monterosso, J. (2016). Healthy eating habits protect against temptations. *Appetite*, 103, 432-440. doi: 10.1016/j.appet.2015.11.011

Rogers, T., Milkman, K. L., John, L. K., & Norton, M. I. (2015). Beyond good intentions: Prompting people to make plans improves follow-through on important tasks. *Behavioral Science & Policy*, 1, 33-41.

PART III: EMOTIONS

Our decisions and goals are deeply intertwined with our emotions. Our feelings can influence how we make decisions, which goals we set, and how effectively we reach those goals. Conversely, reaching one’s goals—or not reaching them—can certainly influence emotions. This section of the course will examine how to handle negative emotions and how to increase positive emotions.

Week 7 (October 17th): What are some good ways to handle unpleasant emotions?

Jamieson, J. P., Mendes, W. B., & Nock, M. K. (2013). Improving acute stress responses: The power of reappraisal. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22, 51-56. doi: 10.1177/0963721412461500

Kashdan, T. B., Barrett, L. F., & McKnight, P. E. (2015). Unpacking emotion differentiation: Transforming unpleasant experience by perceiving distinctions in negativity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 24, 10-16. doi: 10.1177/0963721414550708

*Tugade, M. M., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). Resilient individuals use positive emotions to bounce back from negative emotional experiences. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86, 320-333. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.86.2.320

Week 8 (October 24th): How can I feel more positive emotions?

- *Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*, 377-389. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377
- *Killingsworth, M. A., & Gilbert, D. T. (2010). A wandering mind is an unhappy mind. *Science*, *330*, 932. doi: 10.1126/science.1192439
- *Strack, F., Martin, L. L., & Stepper, S. (1988). Inhibiting and facilitating conditions of the human smile: A nonobtrusive test of the facial feedback hypothesis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *5*, 768-777. doi: 10.1037//0022-3514.54.5.768

PART IV: INTERACTING WITH OTHERS

Everything we've discussed in class so far is intimately connected with social interaction. Other people play a role in our decisions, our goals, and our emotions. Therefore, we will end the course by examining the science behind our interactions with others, using prejudice as an example of an area characterized by negative interactions and close interpersonal relationships as an example of an area often characterized by positive interactions.

Week 9 (October 31st): How can I reduce my biases?

- Dovidio, J. F., Gaertner, S. L., & Saguy, T. (2009). Commonality and the complexity of "we": Social attitudes and social change. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *13*, 3-20. doi: 10.1177/1088868308326751
- *Lai, C. K., Marini, M., Lehr, S. A., Cerruti, C., Shin, J. L., Joy-Gaba, J. A., Ho, A. K., Teachman, B. A., Wojcik, S. P., Koleva, S. P., Frazier, R. S., Heiphetz, L., Chen, E., Turner, R. N., Haidt, J., Kesebir, S., Hawkins, C. B., Schaefer, H. S., Rubichi, S., Sartori, G., Dial, C. M., Sriram, N., Banaji, M. R., & Nosek, B. A. (2014). Reducing implicit racial preferences: I. A comparative investigation of 17 interventions. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *143*, 1765-1785. doi: 10.1037/a0036260
- *Richeson, J. A., & Nussbaum, R. J. (2004). The impact of multiculturalism versus color-blindness on racial bias. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *40*, 417-423. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2003.09.002

November 7th – Election Day – No Class

Week 10 (November 14th): How can I deal with people being biased against me?

Note: Research papers due in hard copy at the beginning of class.

- *Gervais, S. J., Hillard, A. L., & Vescio, T. K. (2010). Confronting sexism: The role of relationship orientation and gender. *Sex Roles*, *63*, 463-474. doi: 10.1007/s11199-010-9838-7
- *Newheiser, A., & Barreto, M. (2014). Hidden costs of hiding stigma: Ironic interpersonal consequences of concealing a stigmatized identity in social interactions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *52*, 58-70. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2014.01.002
- *Smith, V. J., Stewart, T. L., Myers, A. C., & Latu, I. M. (2008). Implicit coping responses to racism predict African Americans' level of psychological distress. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, *30*, 264-277. doi: 10.1080/01973530802375110

Week 11 (November 21st): How can I form relationships?

- *Aron, A., Melinat, E., Aron, E. N., Vallone, R. D., & Bator, R. J. (1997). The experimental generation of interpersonal closeness: A procedure and some preliminary findings. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *23*, 363-377. doi: 10.1177/0146167297234003
- *Eastwick, P. W., Finkel, E. J., & Eagly, A. H. (2011). When and why do ideal partner preferences affect the process of initiating and maintaining romantic relationships? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *101*, 1012-1032. doi: 10.1037/a0024062

Festinger, L., Schachter, S., & Back, K. (1950). *Social pressures in informal groups: A study of human factors in housing*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. [Read Chapter 3 only: “The spatial ecology of group formation,” pp. 33-59.]

Week 12 (November 28th): How can I sustain relationships?

*Clark, M. S., Lemay, E. P., Jr., Graham, S. M., Pataki, S. P., & Finkel, E. J. (2010). Ways of giving benefits in marriage: Norm use, relationship satisfaction, and attachment-related variability. *Psychological Science, 21*, 944-951. doi: 10.1177/0956797610373882

Driver, J., Tabares, A., Shapiro, A. F., & Gottman, J. M. (2012). Couple interaction in happy and unhappy marriages: Gottman laboratory studies. In F. Walsh (Ed.), *Normal family processes: Growing diversity and complexity* (pp. 57-77). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

*Gable, S., Gonzaga, G. C., & Strachman, A. (2006). Will you be there for me when things go right? Supportive responses to positive event disclosures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91*, 904-917. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.91.5.904

Week 13 (December 5th): Student presentations

Note: Reflection papers due via e-mail before the beginning of class.

V. Course requirements

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Attendance/participation (10%)
- Weekly discussion comments (15%)
- Presentation (15%)
- Final project (topic proposal: 15%; research paper: 35%; reflection paper: 10%)

Attendance/participation (10%)

Attendance at each class is mandatory. Because life sometimes throws everyone curveballs, each student is permitted one absence to use in whatever way he/she deems best. Each subsequent absence will result in losing participation points for each class missed (see below for more on participation points). Medical and family emergencies are excusable with appropriate documentation. In such instances, with my permission, you may write a 3-page paper on a topic of my choice to receive participation credit for that week. This make-up paper will be due before the beginning of the class following the one you missed (e.g., if you missed class on October 3rd and receive permission to write a make-up paper, it would be due by 2:10 p.m. on October 10th). Make-up papers should be submitted as a .doc or .docx attachment via e-mail (lah2201@columbia.edu).

Please arrive in class on time. This is for your own benefit as well as that of the other students, since it can be disruptive for students to arrive during class discussion. If you arrive late, your participation grade will be cut by 50% for that day.

In addition to coming to class, it's important to participate positively (and do other things that alliterate). Positive participation requires a balance between speaking and listening to your classmates. Please speak up if you have a question or thought to share, and please listen to your classmates' ideas and engage with them constructively. It is perfectly acceptable for you to disagree with someone else's comments—in fact, disagreement can make for lively and thought-provoking discussion! Please phrase your disagreements respectfully. If you feel nervous or hesitant about speaking in class for any reason, I'd be happy to discuss your situation with you.

Each week, participation is graded in the following way: 2 points = you were present in class and participated positively; 1 point = you were present but didn't participate positively and/or arrived late; 0 points = you weren't present and you already used your "get out of class free" card (i.e., your one allowed absence).

Weekly discussion comments (15%)

Each week, you are required to turn in a set of discussion comments on that week's reading. Please e-mail me your comments 24 hours before the beginning of each class; my e-mail address is lah2201@columbia.edu. Comments should be included as a .doc or .docx attachment. You are responsible for making sure that you are attaching a) the correct file and b) an uncorrupted file. I will grade the file I have in front of me at the deadline, even if that file is corrupt or contains comments for the wrong set of readings. Files should be named in the following format: YourLastName_Class_WeekNumber_DiscussionComments (e.g., Smith_FAQs_Week2_DiscussionComments). Please also type your name at the top of the Word document. Late discussion comments will not be accepted.

For each reading, please include a comment that is about 2-3 sentences long. You do not need to integrate the comments for each article into one cohesive essay; instead, many students find it easiest to include one bullet point or short paragraph per article. **Comments should not summarize the article!** Instead, they should discuss your thoughts about the readings. Some ideas for what you may wish to address in your comments include the following:

- An interesting connection between two or more of the readings. This could involve synthesizing two seemingly disparate areas or highlighting a contradiction between two sets of findings. (Your total number of comments should still equal the total number of readings, so if your comment for one reading connects it with another reading, you should still write a separate comment for the second reading.)
- Possible extensions or applications of findings, including interesting policy implications or ways to apply the finding to everyday life that were not addressed in the paper.
- Comments about a particularly clever, apt, or unusual experimental design and why it affords a unique ability to learn something about the question of interest.
- Reasons why the authors' conclusions do not follow from their results, alternative explanations for their findings, methodological flaws, and other criticisms. Be civil in your critique, and make a good-faith attempt to understand the authors' reasoning. Also, note that authors typically address potential criticisms at the end of an article, often to the reader's satisfaction. . .so you might want to make sure you get that far. Additionally, **you may not use your comment to offer criticisms that could be made of the vast majority of psychological studies (the sample size is less than a hundred gazillion, the sample was not nationally representative, etc.).** Comments that offer these types of criticisms will not receive credit. Instead, if you wish to offer a criticism, focus on something unique to the paper you are criticizing.
- A proposal for a study that could be conducted to clarify the nature of a finding or address an unresolved issue.

Remember: although it is important to maintain a critical eye when reading scientific papers, some of the best discussion comments will be insightfully positive in nature. Weekly comments will receive grades of $\sqrt{-}$, $\sqrt{}$, or $\sqrt{+}$. Don't be discouraged if you're not getting $\sqrt{+}$ s right away—this is a learning experience, and there's always room for improvement. **If you submit all required discussion comments (i.e., for every week other than the first week and the last week), I will drop your lowest discussion comment grade.**

Presentation (15%)

During one class period, you will give a short (10-15 minutes) presentation on one of the assigned readings. Your presentation should have three components:

First, give the class a brief (2-3 sentences) summary of the article. Assume that your classmates have read the article and just need to have their memories jogged.

Next, support and/or critique the article. This should be the bulk of your presentation. If you decide to support the article, explain why you think the article is the bee's knees. Why are the findings important? What in particular about the study design was so wonderful? You must include your own ideas rather than just providing a summary of the authors' arguments about the importance of their topic and/or the amazingness of their studies. You must also explain how the paper could be critiqued and offer a rebuttal to those critiques. If you decide to critique the article, explain what problem(s) you see in the paper and how these issues could be fixed. For example, could follow-up studies provide a solution? If so, what would those studies look like? You must discuss one or more substantial issue(s) that are specific to this paper and that could not be generalized to most psychology articles (same rule as for discussion comments). If the authors attempted to address your concern, why are their attempts unsatisfactory to you? You may also decide to give your article a mixed review, supporting some aspects and critiquing other aspects.

Finally, discuss one practical implication of the article. How can we use the findings from this article in our daily lives, or how can the finding inform public policy? Or, perhaps you think the article is not applicable to daily life outside of psychology labs—if so, tell us why.

Since your presentation is so short, you do not need to cover all aspects of the article. Instead, focus on the 1-2 best and/or worst features of the paper for the middle part, and on one practical implication in the last part. After your presentation, the rest of the class will discuss the article using your comments as a springboard. You may use your notes during your presentation, but as a general rule, do not bring slides, videos, or anything else that requires technology. (Technology can inhibit conversation and has a tendency to not work at the most inopportune times.) Talk with me at least one week prior to your presentation if you would like to request an exception to this general rule.

Please e-mail me by **WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6TH, AT 2:10 PM** with a list of your top 5 preferred articles (1=the article you would most like to discuss). You may choose any articles that have asterisks next to them on the reading list above. I will e-mail you before the next class to confirm your article. To make sure that presentations are spread relatively equally across articles and weeks, I may not be able to assign you your first choice, but I guarantee that you will be assigned one of your top 5 choices. If I haven't received your preferences by the deadline, I will assign you an article that no one else has selected.

Final project (topic proposal: 15%; research paper: 35%; reflection paper: 10%)

Formatting requirements for all three components: 12 point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, double-spaced. Length: topic proposal = 1-2 pages, research paper = 12-15 pages, reflection paper = 2-3 pages. Your research paper should include a cover page with your name and the title of your paper. Cover page and references do not count toward the page requirement. An abstract is not required.

In your final project, you will address a question relevant to your everyday life, similar to the weekly questions listed on the syllabus. You may write about one of these questions we discussed in class if you'd like, but you can also write about a different question of your own choosing. I must approve your question before you begin writing your paper. I will approve a host of pro-social or socially neutral goals, but I will not approve any questions whose aim is to help you achieve things that I don't feel comfortable

helping you achieve (e.g., questions like, “How can I lie to people more effectively?” or, “How can I overcome my aversion to smoking cigarettes?” will not be approved). You will review the literature relevant to your topic, create an action plan to help you achieve a goal based on your topic, spend a week implementing your action plan, and write a reflection paper about your experience.

Prior to beginning your research paper, you will turn in a **topic proposal**. This document should include all of the following information:

- a) your name
- b) two different topics/questions about which you are considering writing your paper
- c) for each topic, references in APA format for two empirical articles that you would discuss in your paper
- d) a brief summary of each reference (1-2 sentences); and
- e) a brief explanation of how you would use each reference (1-2 sentences).

Because you are listing two different references for each topic, your topic proposal will include a brief description of four different empirical articles. These articles must not be on the syllabus. (You can use the articles we’ve discussed in class in your paper as well, but you must include at least two empirical, peer-reviewed articles that we did not discuss in class, and these are the references you should include in your topic proposal.) Topic proposals are due by the beginning of class on **October 10th**. Please submit your proposal as a .doc or .docx attachment via e-mail; the file name should be YourLastName_Topic_Proposal. Late topic proposals may be e-mailed to me as a .doc or .docx attachment; however, they will be penalized 25% of all possible points for every 24 hours late or portion thereof (e.g., if you were going to earn all of the points and you submit the proposal 15 hours late you would earn 75% of the points, 36 hours late and you would earn 50% of the points, etc.). Turning in the proposal late may also delay my feedback and prevent you from getting timely comments on your ideas. Talk to me if an emergency prevents you from submitting the proposal on time.

About two-thirds of your **research paper** will discuss prior research that has been done on your question of interest. You will review peer-reviewed articles relevant to your question, including articles that we did not discuss in class. The final third of your paper will describe how you plan to use this research to bring about change in your own life and list the specific steps you will follow in a one-week period to help achieve your goal. The final third of your paper will also explain how your action plan derives from prior research on your topic. Please submit a **hard copy** of your final paper at the beginning of class on **November 14th**. Late papers can be submitted as a .doc or .docx attachment via e-mail; however, they will be penalized ten points for every 24 hours late or portion thereof. Again, please talk to me if an emergency occurs.

After turning in your research paper, you will spend a week implementing your action plan. You will then write a **reflection paper** on your experiences implementing your goal. Reflection papers are due via e-mail before the beginning of class on **December 5th**. Late reflection papers may be e-mailed to me as a .doc or .docx attachment and will be penalized 25% of all possible points for every 24 hours late or portion thereof.

Plagiarism and academic integrity.

Plagiarism (v.) is the act of taking undeserved or unwarranted credit for something.

Plagiarism (n.) is something represented in a plagiaristic fashion.

Severe plagiarism (a.k.a. “copying”) is the most overt and deceptive form of plagiarism. This involves deliberately misrepresenting all or part of another person’s work as one’s own. For example, a student might turn in a paper written by another student in a previous term. Another common example is writing containing chunks of “copy-and-paste” from published articles or online sources such as Wikipedia.

Irresponsible plagiarism (a.k.a. “omission”) is the act of paraphrasing or quoting from a source, without giving proper credit to the source. The author does not necessarily explicitly take credit for the idea or materials (but this is nevertheless implied).

Self-plagiarism (a.k.a. “recycling”) is the act of representing one’s own previous ideas or materials as new and original. For example, a student might turn in all or part of the same paper for more than one course. This may not seem as bad as stealing another person’s work, but it is *deceptive*, and therefore unacceptable.

Should I Plagiarize?

No. You will be caught, and then you will be sad. Assignments that show evidence of academic dishonesty will receive a zero, and any student who submits such an assignment will automatically be referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs and Community Standards.

For more information about academic integrity at Columbia, please see the following sources:

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity-statement>

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity>

Thanks for reading this far! I am very much looking forward to getting to know you and learning about psychology together.