PSYC UN3693
Stress in an Interpersonal Context

Course Information
Location: Sch. 405
Term: Spring 2020
Points: 3
Class Time: Mondays 4:10-6 pm
Website: Canvas

Instructor Information
Katherine Zee, PhD Candidate
Email: ksz2104@columbia.edu
Office hours: 1:15-2 Mondays or by appt.
Office: 219 Schermerhorn Hall

Overview

Course Description
Stress is an inevitable part of life. For better or worse, our experiences of stress rarely happen in a vacuum. Instead, they are embedded in our social environments and interpersonal relationships. This course explores the bidirectional interplay between stress and interpersonal context, with a specific focus on dyadic relationships in adulthood. Through class readings, discussions, and assignments, you will gain an overview of theories and empirical research that examine the ways in which interpersonal relationships can affect negative psychological and biological effects of stressors, as well as the ways in which stressors can impact relationships. Course themes will consider (a) why studying interpersonal relationships, and dyads in particular, is necessary for understanding the stress process, (b) whether and under what conditions relationships enhance vs. undermine efforts to cope effectively with stressors, (c) how experiencing stressors might undermine vs. strengthen relationships or social bonds, and (d) what opportunities and challenges are involved in studying stress within an interpersonal context.

Course Objectives
Through completion of this course, you will gain the ability to:

1. Evaluate original empirical research, including breaking down study logic, methods, and results, and assessing whether the proposed claims are warranted given the evidence (scientific literacy).

2. Synthesize findings across stress, relationships, social psychology, and health psychology literatures to (a) formulate theory-driven hypotheses and (b) design research paradigms to appropriately test these hypotheses.

3. Adapt your ideas and strengthen your thinking by developing a research proposal in multiple drafts and incorporating peer and instructor feedback.

4. Analyze everyday, real world issues and experiences through the lens of psychological theories of stress and interpersonal relationships, and communicate your ideas to others.
Prerequisites

- The Science of Psychology (PSYC UN1001) or equivalent introductory psychology course
- AND Research methods (PSYC UN14xx or equivalent)
- AND instructor permission
- Students who do not meet these pre-requisites but who have other relevant background may be admitted with instructor permission

Course Role in Departmental Curriculum

This seminar is suitable for advanced undergraduates majoring in Psychology. Students enrolled in the Psychology Postbac Certificate Program, students pursuing a Concentration in Psychology, and students pursuing a major in Neuroscience and Behavior with interests in stress and interpersonal relationships may also benefit from taking this course. Students enrolling in the course to fulfill the Columbia Psychology Department Seminar requirement will be given registration priority when possible.

Completion of this course satisfies the following requirements:

- Group III (Social, Personality, and Abnormal) Requirement for Columbia College and General Studies students majoring or concentrating in Psychology
- Seminar Requirement for Psychology majors and students in the Psychology Postbac program
- Social Science Requirement (one semester) for General Studies students
Course Components & Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Course Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>Weekly during class</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Posts</td>
<td>Weekly, by 11:59 pm Sunday</td>
<td>Canvas</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Leader</td>
<td>Student-specific</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QuALRMI Report</td>
<td>Week 2 by start of class</td>
<td>Canvas</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Proposal</td>
<td>Week 9 by start of class</td>
<td>Canvas</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Review</td>
<td>Week 11 by start of class</td>
<td>Canvas</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>Saturday, May 9</td>
<td>Canvas</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Class Participation (12%)**

Attendance and participation are indispensable parts of this class. Your classmates and I rely on you to attend class and to actively contribute to the discussion each week. Speaking up with a question or comment once per class is a good goal to start. Each student will be allowed one excused absence (e.g., for illness, family events, etc.), and as a courtesy, I ask that you let me know of your absence as soon as possible. There may be circumstances in which missing more than one class period is unavoidable. In such cases, you must provide documentation (e.g., from a physician and/or your dean) explaining the reason for your absence. After one absence, any unexcused/undocumented absences will decrease your participation grade.

Beyond attending class meetings, participation also involves completing the assigned readings prior to class, as doing so will enable a richer discussion. While personal examples, anecdotes, and “hunches” may be useful to our discussions from time to time, please anchor your comments in the assigned readings or in other psychology material (e.g., research articles or materials you may have read for other courses) as much as possible. Naturally, giving the assigned readings the proper time and attention will make this much easier to do!

Finally, a key component of participation is actively listening to what your classmates have contributed. While I encourage you to speak up if you have an idea, question, or comment, remember that an important source of learning is your classmates.
2. Discussion Posts (13%)

By 11:59 pm the day before class each week (Sunday night), you will submit a brief discussion post to Canvas under Assignments. The sole exception to this weekly post is that you do not need to post for the class session in which you are scheduled to be the Discussion Leader (see below). Your posts should be approximately 150-200 words in length. There is no one “right” way to compose these posts, but all your posts should touch on all of the assigned readings, and you are of course welcome to also touch on the supplemental readings (indicated with + on the weekly schedule). Generally, I encourage you to approach these posts as thought exercises or “low stakes” writing opportunities to get you thinking and help you draw connections or identify discrepancies in the assigned readings.

Some themes or questions you might consider addressing in your posts include:

- What are the consistencies and inconsistencies in the findings or theories covered in the readings?
- How do the readings relate to each other?
- Based on the readings, what other questions do you think we need to answer in this area? How might we go about investigating those questions?
- What are some flaws or limitations to the findings, and why are they important?
- What are the limitations or caveats of the theories or results discussed in the papers?
- How might these theories of findings generalize or apply in other contexts or populations (you should go beyond saying whether they generalize by also discussing why or why not).
- What are some open questions invited by the readings?
- Any other ideas you have!

For all classes, including those for which you were absent, you must still complete the readings and submit a discussion board post by the regular deadline.
3. Discussion Leader (15%)  

Each student will be responsible for leading one discussion (or co-leading a discussion, depending on enrollment), and selection of topics will be made during our first class meeting. When it is your week to present, you will be responsible for:

- Completing the assigned weekly readings, as usual.
- Completing an additional reading (indicated with + in the weekly agenda below) that builds on the other assigned readings. If there are two presenters, I will provide a second additional reading so that each presenter will be responsible for a different paper.
- Creating a brief (10 minute) presentation that will orient your classmates to the main points of the readings that week and to summarize the additional reading you completed. You are welcome to use Powerpoint, handouts, or simply talk through your notes for this presentation.
- Drafting 3-5 questions based on the reading assignments and course themes to pose to the class to stimulate discussion. These questions must be accompanied by notes (bullet points are fine) of important themes, findings, caveats, etc. that you feel a successful discussion of that question would need to address. These questions should be emailed to me (ksz2104@columbia.edu) by 11:59 pm the night before the class you are leading.

During class, you will briefly present the topic, summarize the main points of the required readings and the additional paper you read, and then launch the discussion using the questions you developed.

4. QuALMRI Report (10%)  

You will complete a QuALMRI report to be submitted by the start of class time via Canvas in Week 2. Using the QuALMRI template and instructions posted on Canvas under “Assignments,” complete a QuALMRI report for Jakubiak & Feeney (2018) (Study 1 only). The purpose of this assignment is twofold. First, it will enable me to get a sense of the level at which you as an individual and the class as a group are currently reading, comprehending, and analyzing research papers. Second, it will offer a framework for understanding the papers we will read for this class and that you will read independently as you work on your final paper.

5. Paper Proposal (15%)  

You will complete a paper proposal in preparation of writing a full research proposal, which will be your final paper assignment (described in detail under Final Paper). Guided by the QuALMRI
template, you will provide a brief (2-3 pages) summary of a proposed study to test a specific hypothesis related to stress in an interpersonal context and the expected results. You are welcome to expand on topics covered in the assigned readings, or to focus on a topic that was not a major focus of the class but that is related to stress and interpersonal relationships.

Your proposal should include a short overview of the background literature, have a clearly stated hypothesis, provide a succinct description of the methods you would use to test your hypothesis (including specification of IVs or predictor variables, DVs, and their operational definitions), a description of the anticipated results, and a brief discussion regarding the inferences drawn from your anticipated findings, including limitations and future directions. Please write your proposal in essay form, but include specific headers for the sections described above.

The purpose of this assignment is to organize your thinking and provide enough detail and that your classmates and I can understand what you plan to write about for your final paper. A handout with more details and instructions will be posted to Canvas under Assignments. Please be sure to follow these instructions carefully.

6. Peer Review (10%)

Given the importance of peer review in our discipline, you will complete a peer review exercise to have the opportunity to experience both giving and receiving constructive feedback.

You will each receive one anonymous/deidentified paper proposal from another student in the class to review. Your job is to help the author of the proposal strengthen their communication, logic, and design for their final paper submission. Examples of reviews and detailed instructions are provided on Canvas under “Assignments.”

I will then send your anonymous feedback, along with general feedback from me, to each student to incorporate into their final paper. The review you write will be graded for its thoughtfulness, clarity, and ability to help the author improve their proposal. As a reviewer, it is not your job to “fix” the proposal, but help the author identify gaps and opportunities to make the proposal stronger. Note that points will be deducted for overly harsh comments (i.e., critiques that are not presented in constructive or respectful manner), and you may be asked to redo portions of your review to ensure that the tone is constructive.

7. Final Paper: Research Proposal (25%)

For your final paper, you will write a research proposal in which you will investigate a research question broadly related to stress in an interpersonal context (with 1-2 studies proposed,
approximately 8-10 pages double-spaced). Detailed instructions are posted on Canvas under Assignments.

Your proposal should generally follow the QuALMRI format but be presented in essay form, with clearly delineated headers and sections. References are not included in the limit and must adhere to APA style guidelines (see https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/ for examples of citations).

In addition, your final paper must include one paragraph each discussing your proposed work’s Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts (descriptions of these will be provided on Canvas). These are review criteria used by real grant panels at the National Science Foundation, and descriptions of these criteria are provided in the instructions on Canvas. The majority of your grade for this assignment (80%) will be based on the overall clarity, logic, and soundness of the idea, the quality of the writing used to communicate it, the inclusion of appropriate background literature and application of relevant theoretical framework(s), and the rigor/suitability of the proposed methods (80%). The remaining percentage of your grade (20%) will reflect how successfully your proposal addresses the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts criteria.

Class Policies and Expectations

Class Attendance and Lateness

As detailed above under Class Participation, your preparation, attendance, and active engagement in class meetings are essential to our discussions and to your and your classmates’ learning. Class discussions will begin promptly, and students are expected to arrive on time. If you know that you will arrive more than 5 minutes late or need to leave early, please email me in advance.

Extensions

Assignments are due at the times specified under Course Grading and Requirements. However, you will each be permitted one 48 hour extension that can be used for any assignments¹ (e.g., one discussion post, paper proposal), except for the Discussion Leader assignment. To use your one-time extension, simply email me at least 2 hours in advance of the original due date to let me know that you would like to use your extension. Once invoked, the extension will shift your due date forward by 48 hours. For example, if you choose to use your extension for your weekly discussion post due on Sunday, February 8 at 11:59 pm, you must notify me that

---

¹ Note: One discussion post counts as one assignment
you are using your extension by 9:59 pm that day. Your discussion post would then be due no later than 11:59 pm on Tuesday, February 10.

Though you are welcome to take advantage of this extension whenever you wish for any of the eligible assignments listed above, please keep in mind this will be the only extension available to you. I therefore encourage you to plan ahead and ensure that you use your extension wisely.

Late Assignments

Late assignments not covered by the one-time extension policy will be penalized at a rate of 10% per day late. For example, if you submit your final paper two days late without using your extension and the grade would have been 90%, your grade will drop to 70%.

Class Etiquette

Laptops and other electronic devices (e.g., tablets) are permitted for note taking and course-related activities (e.g., pulling up PDFs of the readings) only. If you would like to use electronic devices during class time, please disable your internet/cellular connection as a courtesy to your classmates and me. If you anticipate receiving an important phone call or need to be online for some reason during class, please speak to me or email me about your needs before class begins.

Healthy discussions, particularly of science, can involve debating and critiquing others’ work or comments. While I encourage you to generate this kind of discussion, please remember to remain respectful of your classmates in doing so. Part of this respect comes with basing your critiques or disagreements in the science (e.g., in the methods or results of papers we read, in findings from other papers you may have read) rather than in personal feelings that are not rooted in some kind of scientific engagement.

Office Hours

Attending office hours is encouraged! Office hours are a great way to ask questions or get additional support with the course. Office hours also provide an opportunity to discuss particular course topics in further detail or talk about learning more about psychological research and professional development in psychology broadly. I encourage you to email me in advance letting me know when you plan to come by and what you would like to discuss so that I can prepare for our meeting in order to make the most of our time together. Drop-ins are very welcome too. Note that when multiple students attend office hours at the same time, I like to use the opportunity to discuss concepts and questions as a group. If you would like to speak with me individually, I encourage you to email me in advance so I can best accommodate you.
Students with Disabilities

All requests for special accommodations will first need to go through the Office of Disability Services. Please contact ODS about any accommodations you may need, and then we can discuss how to incorporate ODS-approved accommodations within the context of this course.

ODS Email: disability@columbia.edu
ODS Phone: 212-854-2388

Academic Integrity

By taking this class, you are agreeing to conduct yourself in accordance with the University’s policies regarding academic integrity. All work that you submit must be your own or correctly credited to the appropriate source. In the event that you are unsure of whether your work constitutes plagiarism or how to properly cite your sources, I encourage you to come to my office hours. You will NOT be penalized for asking questions about avoiding plagiarism before handing in your assignment. However, assignments that have been plagiarized or that have involved academic dishonesty will be reported. Such cases will be referred to the Dean and will receive a grade of 0 (www.college.columbia.edu/academics/disciplinaryprocess).

Unless otherwise noted, assignments for this course are meant to be individual assignments. While you may discuss general ideas with your classmates, I expect each of you to complete your own assignments using your own ideas.

Please refer to the Columbia University Guide to Academic Integrity for more information: www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity.

Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity:
The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars’ work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others’ ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.
Columbia College Honor Code:
The Columbia College Student Council, on behalf of the whole student body, has resolved that maintaining academic integrity is the preserve of all members of our intellectual community – including and especially students. As a consequence, all Columbia College students make the following pledge:
We, the undergraduate students of Columbia University, hereby pledge to value the integrity of our ideas and the ideas of others by honestly presenting our work, respecting authorship, and striving not simply for answers but for understanding in the pursuit of our common scholastic goals. In this way, we seek to build an academic community governed by our collective efforts, diligence, and Code of Honor.
In addition, all Columbia College students are committed to the following honor code:
I affirm that I will not plagiarize, use unauthorized materials, or give or receive illegitimate help on assignments, papers, or examinations. I will also uphold equity and honesty in the evaluation of my work and the work of others. I do so to sustain a community built around this Code of Honor.
For more information, contact:
Nicole Allicock, CC’18 and CCSC President for Policy
Abigail Porter, CC’17 and CCSC Vice President for Policy
Matthew Forrest, CC’17 and CCSC Academic Affairs Representative

Resources

- Columbia University Libraries: [https://library.columbia.edu/](https://library.columbia.edu/)
- Writing Center: [https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center](https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center)
- APA Style Guide: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html)
- Citation Managers:
  - Mendeley: [https://www.mendeley.com/?interaction_required=true](https://www.mendeley.com/?interaction_required=true)
  - Zotero: [https://www.zotero.org/](https://www.zotero.org/)
## Schedule of Class Meetings, Readings, and Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic/Agenda</th>
<th>Discussion Leader</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
<td>Katherine Zee (Instructor)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/27</td>
<td>Review of syllabus and class policies • Intro to QuALMRI: How to read a research paper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Theories and Foundations</td>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
<td>1. Bodenmann, 2005 2. Charania &amp; Ickes, 2006</td>
<td>**QuALMRI due No student presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>Due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. +Bodenmann et al., 2015 | **Peer Review Due** |
2. Meuwly, Bodenmann, Germann, Bradbury, & Heinrichs, 2012  
3. +Feeney & Kirkpatrick, 1996 |              |
2. Carstensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995  
| 14/5/4  | Culture                      | 1. Kim, Sherman, & Taylor, 2008  
2. Taylor, Welch, Kim, & Sherman, 2007  
| 5/9     |                              |                                               | **Final Paper Due by 11:59 pm** |

The full citations for each assigned reading are available on the next page and are posted to Canvas.

+ Indicates additional reading that will be completed by the discussion leader to present to the class. If you are not the discussion leader, this additional reading is optional. Supplemental readings are also provided on Canvas.
Reading List


