

**Syllabus for Honours Seminar: Psychology of Close Relationships**  
**Psychology 455:01**  
**Fall 2010**

**Meetings: Fridays, 10:30 – 1220pm, HH 373**

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**Overview:**

This course will focus on the life cycle of close relationships, ranging from stages of initial attraction and the development of an attachment, to growth and maintenance of the relationship, and in some cases, to conflict and even dissolution. A social psychological perspective is adopted, with an emphasis on understanding the basic processes involved in interpersonal relations. Seminars will be heavily oriented toward discussing and evaluating recent research in the field.

**Textbook:**

In my opinion our textbook is a very impressive book, with considerable depth, written by one of the pioneers in the field of relationships. I hope that the book will provide a more integrated perspective than what you would get from a long list of separate readings. It is well-written but sophisticated. Essentially, we will be using a book chapter each week as the main source of information for you. I will assign occasional scientific papers to read but this is your main source and I expect everyone to keep up with the chapter readings.

Berscheid, E., & Regan, P. (2005). The psychology of interpersonal relationships. Upper Sadle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

**Summary of Course Requirements:**

- ◆ Active participation in discussions based on a thorough preparation from readings
- ◆ Short, one to two-page thought papers every two weeks (five in total)
- ◆ A five to six page research proposal at the end of the course
- ◆ Discussion facilitator or paper presenter duties once or more in the course

**Course Grading Structure:**

My working assumption is that students in this senior Honours course will do high quality work that merits a grade in the B+ to A+ range. Overall, I do not want an evaluative tone in the seminar, and the grading of assignments should be seen more as a way of providing feedback

than simply evaluating students. Students whose contribution is falling below this standard will be given clear (private) feedback on their performance so that they have an opportunity to improve. The scheme below may sound precise, but the assumption for the 50% total seminar performance grade is that participants will generally contribute to discussions and do a good job!

Seminar participation: 35%

Seminar leader /class presentations: 15%

Thought papers: 25%

Research paper: 25%

### **Detailed Course Requirements:**

**Weekly Preparation and Participation:** Each person is expected to read the chapters listed from the Berscheid and Regan book with an analytical, inquiring perspective, enabling thoughtful contributions to discussions about the material. You should arrive in seminar with some definite opinions and be prepared to voice them to the class. Sometimes I will give you specific questions to consider for your reading and you should be ready to explain your answer to the class.

**Seminar Leader and Paper Presenter:** You will be asked to co-lead the class discussion with another student (and me) once in the term (and perhaps present a published journal paper if we have time in the course). Your role is to engage the rest of the group in discussions of the most important and interesting issues pertaining to that week's readings and your paper. You are welcome to come and see me anytime during the preparation period to discuss possible discussion themes and topics.

**Bi-weekly Thought Paper:** To facilitate your preparation for class and to encourage critical analysis of the literature, you will write a brief (a page or two) thought paper/commentary every two weeks in which you discuss some aspect of the week's readings. The class will be divided in half so that submission of papers is staggered and commentaries are available every week. The commentaries should be emailed to all members of the class by Thursday at 300pm (ie., the afternoon before the class). The thought paper can take any number of forms, including comments on the strengths or weaknesses of the ideas or research evidence, analysis of when or for whom particular principles are most likely to apply, ideas for further research or modifications of theories, and so on. Be thoughtful and do not simply summarize parts of the readings. Your thought papers will then be part of the class discussion.

**Research Paper:** By the end of the term (December 6), you have the assignment of completing a research proposal based on an idea you found particularly interesting in the course. The design should have at least one experimental condition in it. So as we progress in the course, you would be wise to keep track of your favorite ideas. The paper should be 5-6 pages in length. You need to present the theoretical background, your hypothesis, a methodology for studying the idea, an expected pattern of results, and a short discussion of why these findings would be important. I will be available to discuss the proposal throughout the term.

## Schedule of Classes & Readings

September 17: Organizational meeting and introduction

September 24: Interpersonal needs and theories of relationships

Chapter 1, Berscheid & Regan text  
Chapter 4

October 1: Personality and relationships

Chapter 10

October 8: No class/ Dr. Holmes at Conference

Chapter 3

October 15: Initiation of relationships

Chapters 5(fast read), 6

October 22: Growth of a relationship I

Chapter 7

October 29: Growth of a relationship II

Chapter 2

November 5: Cognitive processes

Chapter 8

November 12: Motivational and affective processes

Chapter 9

November 19: Love and sex

Chapters 11, 12

November 26: Satisfaction and stability in marriage

Chapter 13

December 3: Interventions and marital therapy

## Chapter 14

### Illness/Emergencies

Students who are requesting accommodation for course requirements (assignments, midterm tests, final exams, etc.) due to illness should do the following:

- seek medical treatment as soon as possible and obtain a completed UW Verification of Illness Form: [http://www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health\\_Services/verification.html](http://www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html)
- submit that form to the instructor within 48 hours.
- inform the instructor by the due date for the course requirement that you will be unable to meet the deadline and that documentation will be forthcoming.

In the case of a missed assignment deadline or midterm test, the instructor will either:

- a) provide an extension, or
- b) under special circumstances, waive the course component and re-weight remaining term work as he/she deems fit according to the goals of the course.

In the case of a missed final exam, the instructor and student will negotiate an extension for the final exam which will typically be written as soon as possible, but no later than the next offering of the course.

In the case of bereavement or a crisis in your personal or family life the instructor will provide similar accommodations to those for illness. Appropriate documentation to support the request will be required.

It is imperative that you inform us of any illness or crisis **before** the exam or assignment due date takes place. If you must cancel at the last minute, please leave a message at [psych291@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:psych291@uwaterloo.ca) or at 888-4567, x36512. **If you run into difficulties with course material, or keeping up with deadlines, talk with a TA or with the instructors as soon as possible; do not wait until it becomes a crisis.** For example, if you tell us during Week 8 that you're having trouble, it is more credible and we can be more helpful than if you suddenly ask for an exam postponement in Week 12.

### The Official Version of the Course Outline

If there is a discrepancy between the hard copy outline (*i.e., if students were provided with a hard copy at the first class*) and the outline posted on ACE, the outline on ACE will be deemed the official version. Outlines on ACE may change as instructors develop a course, but they become final as of the first class meeting for the term.

## **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

## **Concerns About the Course or Instructor (Informal Stage)**

We in the Psychology Department take great pride in the high quality of our program and our instructors. Though infrequent, we know that students occasionally find themselves in situations of conflict with their instructors over course policies or grade assessments. If such a conflict arises, the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Affairs (Dr. Colin Ellard) is available for consultation and to mediate a resolution between the student and instructor. Dr. Ellard's contact information is as follows:

Email: [cellard@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:cellard@uwaterloo.ca)  
Ph 519-888- 4567 ext 36852

A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. See Policy 70 and 71 below for further details.

## **Academic Integrity, Academic Offenses, Grievance, and Appeals**

To protect course integrity, as well as to provide appropriate guidance to students, course outlines in the Faculty of Arts must include the following note on avoidance of academic offenses:

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check <http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/> for more informaton.]

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity [check <http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/>] , to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about 'rules' for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 -

Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4,  
<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm>

**Academic Integrity website (Arts):**

[http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic\\_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)

**Academic Integrity Office (UW):** <http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/>

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's words or ideas as if they are one's own. It includes the use of quotations without proper referencing. All students must complete their assignments and papers on their own. Copying someone else's assignment (or portion thereof), or allowing someone to copy your assignment, are prohibited. Cheating on examinations or assignments and plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the course and will be reported to the Chair of the Department of Psychology and to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. Additional disciplinary action could include probation, suspension, or expulsion.

**How to Avoid Plagiarism and Other Written Offences: A Guide for Students and Instructors** (<http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sager/plagiarism.html>).

**Message from Heather Smith**

It is your responsibility to check e-mail regularly for important and time sensitive messages. You should use your UW account for all e-mail correspondence to UW personnel for reasons such as identification, reliability, and security. Note that higher priority may be given to e-mail received from UW accounts versus other accounts such as hotmail, yahoo, etc. See "Official Student Email Address" for further details:

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocist/emailuse.html>

The home page for the psychology department: <http://www.psychology.uwaterloo.ca/>