

Honours Seminar in Special Topics  
Psychological Interventions  
Psych 444R

**Mondays and Wednesdays 10:00am – 11:20am**  
**REN 2922**

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Office Hours: Immediately after class or by appointment

**Course Description:**

This course reviews research showing how brief, non-invasive, low-cost, social psychological treatments can have small but significant benefits months and years later. Topics include school-based interventions, health interventions, psychological well-being interventions, prejudice-reduction interventions, when and why interventions can fail, and the theories behind how interventions work.

**Course Prerequisite:**

**Prereq: PSYCH 253/253R or 220R; SDS/ISS 250R or PSYCH 292;  
SDS/ISS 251R or PSYCH 291; Level at least 3A Honours students.**

Antireq: PSYCH 449R prior to Winter 2016; PSYCH 450R taught Winter 2012

**Course Objectives:**

This course is designed to help you develop an in-depth understanding of social psychological interventions. You will learn about psychological theory and research as it relates to understanding the types of social problems that social psychological interventions can help address. You will hone your writing and speaking skills preparing and delivering a presentation and paper. And you will build your understanding of the most rigorous research methods, which can be used for research experiments or program evaluation. In doing so, this course will cover topics related to educational psychology, health psychology, prejudice and discrimination, as well as one topic that you select to learn about in-depth for your project.

By the end of the course you should be able to:

- (1) Describe key psychological theories and findings related to psychological interventions
- (2) Show how to organize your thoughts to learn take-home messages from a piece of writing or a presentation
- (3) Explain the benefits and drawbacks of testing interventions experimentally before implementing them
- (4) Describe examples of different kinds of interventions in the literature along with how they are thought to work and what unanswered questions remain

- (5) Describe the limits of what psychological interventions can accomplish and what are common moderators of their effects
- (6) List, and clarify, some misconceptions about psychological interventions
- (7) Explain how social psychological factors can affect students' academic performance and academic experience, people's eating and weight-related behaviours, and well-being more broadly
- (8) Search for, read, understand, explain, and apply findings from empirical journal articles
- (9) Learn how to provide peer feedback to strengthen others' presentations and papers, along with the benefits of doing so for your own speaking and writing
- (10) Show strong writing and public speaking skills

Grade Evaluation:

ITEM	WEIGHT	BREAKDOWN	DUE DATE
What I Learned from the Readings Reports	7.5%	15 readings total at .5% per report	Start of class
What I Learned in Class Reports	6.0%	Any 5 of the 6 lecture and discussion classes + any 7 of the 9 class project presentation classes at .5% per report	End of class ideally; may take until 4:30pm that day
Peer Feedback on Two Classmate's Papers	10.0%	5% for bringing a complete draft of your paper + 2.5% for each of two reviews of others' drafts	End of day on March 30
Present Your Topic to the Class	6.5%	See rubric	As scheduled Jan 27 – Feb 3
Major Presentation: Teach the Class	35.0%	See rubric	As scheduled Feb 29 and beyond
Term Paper: Design an Intervention	35.0%	See rubric	Exam period

Office Hours

This course instructor welcomes one-on-one meetings throughout the term to answer questions and hear students' thoughts about the course or SDS in general.

Student Special Needs.

Students who have disabilities, health problems, caregiver responsibilities, paid jobs more than 20 hours a week, or major life stressors (e.g., serious illness of loved one; recent trauma or loss) are strongly encouraged to come see me after the first class to set up a time to talk about how we can work together to maximize student learning and achievement in this class while balancing with those constraints. I will determine what documentation, if any, is needed, and we will determine the most appropriate and reasonable accommodations.

### General Statement About Late Submissions.

In the classroom, and in the world outside of university, late submissions are problematic for three reasons. First, they are unfair to others who did not get extra time to complete the task, or who made sacrifices to complete it on time. Second, they can seriously inconvenience people whose own work depends on timely submission (here, professors or peers who have their own deadlines). Third, they create the perception that the late submitter is disorganized or does not value the task or others' time, perceptions which can harm the submitters' career progression or relationships.

For this reason, *late submissions will lose marks unless documentation is provided or arrangements are made ahead of time with the professor, at the professor's discretion.*

### “What I Learned from the Readings” Reports and “What I Learned in Class Reports”

*Purpose for this Course.* Course material is carefully chosen to prepare students to do well on their projects – a schema for what psychological interventions are and the problems they can help address, an understanding of different ways they can be designed and why a particular design is chosen, examples of rigorous testing of interventions, understanding about what the intervention results can contribute to the research literature beyond helping to address a single problem in a single situation, and a strong understanding of ways intervention design, or students' project specifically, could go wrong. Research on learning shows that students retain the most information from class or from readings if they can organize their thoughts about what they have learned. This substantially improves later recall and allows for deep processing of the information.

*Implementation Details for What I Learned in Class Reports.* There are 6 lecture and discussion classes. Students must submit reports for any 5 of those classes that they choose. There are 9 major presentation classes. Student must submit reports for any 7 of those classes. A stack of report templates will be available near the classroom door. Students pick up one when they enter class and take notes on it throughout the class. At the end of specific classes (listed in this syllabus), students will hand in the report. Marked reports will be returned, usually at the subsequent class, so students can review what they have learned as they work on their projects. Ideally students submit reports at the end of class, either on Learn or on paper. If students need more time to process the material and write their report, they may submit by end of business day (i.e. by 4:30pm).

*Implementation Details for What I Learned from the Readings Reports.* Students must submit reports on every reading. A template will be provided in class and posted on learn. Students can submit it one of two ways: 1) upload it to Learn before class starts (recommended so students have their own copy with them to aid their participation during in-class discussion) or hand in on paper. Templates for reports will be provided on Learn and in class.

*Grading.* Each report is worth .5% of the course grade. Spelling does not count, bullet points are fine, as long as a reviewer can understand it to see evidence of learning. Reports will be evaluated very briefly, and graded as on a 3-point scale. Rubric will be posted on Learn.

*Missed Reports.* Missed reports cannot be made up without standard documentation. If a student submits documentation, the student can catch up with a group member and then submit missed reports at a date agreed upon with the professor. If students miss a class, with or without documentation, but can still submit the report on the readings, it would be wise to do so. Similarly, if students have not done the readings, it would be wise to show up for class. Students get one unexplained absence OR non-submitted What I Learned in Class Report during the lecture/discussion portion of the course. Students are strongly encouraged to attend every class, but need only submit 5 reports. If students earned less than full marks for a report, they may submit an extra one to replace it. They may do this only once during the term. Students get two “unexplained absences” during the part of the term when their classmates are doing presentations. Students are not required to submit a report or attend class but are encouraged to email the professor to indicate they are using an unexplained absence.

*Late Reports.* Readings Reports submitted after the beginning of class, or Class Reports submitted after the end of class are considered late and will lose .5 marks.

#### Present Social Problem to the Class

*Purpose for the Course.* This helps students stay on track rather than leaving the whole project until shortly before the deadline. It gives students a chance to get feedback from the instructor. Finally, it lets students learn from each others’ research so far and it gives students a chance to get comfortable presenting to this class.

*Implementation Details.* During two full class periods, students will each have 7 minutes – with a strict time limit – to introduce the class to their chosen social problem for their major projects. More details will be posted on Learn and presented in class.

*Grading.* Worth 6.5%. Students will be evaluated on evidence of deep thought, engaging and clear presentation, and meeting the requirements of the rubric to be posted on Learn and discussed in class.

*Missed Presentations.* Missed presentations, without documentation, receive a grade of zero.

#### Major Presentation

*Purpose for This Course.* Learning is maximized when students can study a topic that is meaningful to them in depth. Honours students are sophisticated in their understanding of issues, so their classmates can learn from them about a broad range of topics. Preparing and presenting interesting, educational presentations is an important skill. A part of this skill is learning to do practice presentations and get feedback. Giving such feedback builds ones’ own skills.

*Implementation Details.* As scheduled below, students will give their presentations to their groups for constructive feedback. Then, in the final weeks of the term (dates to be scheduled in class) students will have 25 minutes to teach the class about an important issue and a very brief overview of the social psychological intervention they have designed to address it. More details will be provided in class. A detailed rubric will be posted on Learn.

*Grading.* Worth 35%. Rubric will be provided early in the term. Students must have a draft of their presentation ready for peer feedback in class on the date specified below. Failure to do so counts as late and costs 10 marks off of the student's presentation grade (i.e., the presentation is marked out of 100 and worth 45%, losing 10 marks means losing 3.5% of total grade in the course).

*Missed Presentations.* Missed presentations without documentation cannot be made up. Students are welcome to attempt to trade slots with another classmate at any point in the term as long as both classmates enthusiastically consent to the trade. Presentations missed with documentation can be made up during one of the open slots.

### Peer Feedback on Major Paper

*Purpose for the Course.* Peer feedback sessions have two benefits: They allow students to improve their papers using feedback from another honours student, and the critical analysis skills they develop from evaluating another student's paper has potential to greatly improve their own writing skills.

*Implementation Details.* As a class, we will determine whether peer review can be done electronically (i.e., whether there are enough laptops for the class) or will need to be done on paper. We will discuss, as a class, how to give good peer review advice before conducting the reviews. A template will be developed in-class. Peer feedback will include line edits made directly on the paper and a completed overview sheet using the template.

*Grading.* Students earn 5% for bringing their own paper to class for their peers. Peer feedback sheets, and notes on the paper itself, will be marked very quickly according to a rubric posted on Learn for 2.5% each.

*Late or Missed Peer Feedback.* Students who have documentation may arrange with their group members to do their peer feedback outside of class and then submit it to Dr. Logel at an approved date. Peer feedback without documentation will earn a zero.

### Major Paper

*Purpose for This Course.* As with the presentation, learning is maximized when students can study a topic that is meaningful to them in depth. In writing, students can go into more depth to fully explain their ideas and back them up with solid evidence. Writing in a clear, persuasive way is essential for almost every career path, and writing a proposal for an experiment lays the groundwork for graduate school and for careers that require applying for grants, agency support, corporate buy-in, etc.

*Implementation Details.* The paper will cover the same topic of the presentation, but with fewer details about the social problem and more details about the intervention, why it should work, how to assess it, and how it will benefit the public and add to the research literature. Students are encouraged to be creative and to include sample materials they have created. More details will be provided in class.

*Grading.* Worth 35%. A detailed rubric will be posted on Learn early in the term. Clarity and quality of writing will be important criteria, just like outside of university. Depth of thought will be critical to earning 85% or above.

*Late Papers.* Late papers require documentation to avoid losing 10% per day. Submission is somewhat flexible during the exam period, as long as the professor is given time to thoughtfully grade each paper.

<b>Schedule for the Course</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading / Notes</b>
Jan 4	Icebreakers and Course Overview	No readings.
Jan 6	What is a Psychological Intervention? Identifying the social psychological component in social problems	Logel, C., Stinson, D. A., & Brochu, P. (in press). A well-being answer to the obesity question. <i>Social and Personality Psychology Compass</i> .  Cohen, S. (2004). Social relationships and health. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 59, 676-684.  Spencer, S. J., Logel, C., & Davies, P. G. (in press). Stereotype Threat. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> .  <b>What I Learned in Class Report Due by 4:30pm</b>
Jan 11	Psychological Interventions: The Basics	Walton, G. M. (2014). The new science of wise psychological interventions. <i>Current Directions in Psychological Science</i> , 23, 73-82.  Cohen, G. L. & Sherman, D. K. The psychology of change: Self-affirmation and social psychological intervention. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> .  Tough, Paul (2014). Who gets to graduate? <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/magazine/who-gets-to-graduate.html?_r=0">http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/18/magazine/who-gets-to-graduate.html?_r=0</a> <b>What I Learned in Class Report Due by 4:30pm</b>
Jan 13	School Interventions and Research Methods	Cohen, GL, Garcia, J, Apfel, N, Master, A (2006). Reducing the Racial Achievement Gap: A Social-Psychological Intervention. <i>Science</i> , Vol 313(5791),  Cohen, G L. Garcia, J;, Purdie-Vaughns, V, Apfel, N Brzustoski, P.. (2009) Recursive processes in self-affirmation: Intervening to close the minority achievement gap. <i>Science</i> , Vol 324(5925)  Yeager, D. & Dweck, C. (2012). Mindsets that promote resilience: When students believe that personal characteristics can be developed. <i>Educational Psychologist</i> , 47, 302-314. <b>What I Learned in Class Report Due by 4:30pm</b>

Jan 18	Health and Well-Being Interventions and Research Methods	<p>Logel, C., &amp; Cohen, G. L. (2012). The role of the self in physical health: Testing the effect of a values affirmation intervention on weight loss. <i>Psychological Science</i>, 23, 53-55.</p> <p>Miller, N. Reicks, M., Redden, J.P., Mann, T., Mykerezzi, E., Vickers, Z. (2015). Increasing portion sizes of fruits and vegetables in an elementary school lunch program can increase fruit and vegetable consumption. <i>Appetite</i>, 91(426-430).</p> <p><b>What I Learned in Class Report Due by 4:30pm</b></p>
Jan 20	Research Methods; Public Speaking Strategies	<p>Nisbett, Richard (2015). The High Cost of Not Doing Experiments.  <a href="http://thepsychreport.com/society/mindware-the-high-cost-of-not-doing-experiments/">http://thepsychreport.com/society/mindware-the-high-cost-of-not-doing-experiments/</a></p> <p><b>What I Learned in Class Report Due by 4:30pm</b></p>
Jan 25	Class project	In-Class- brainstorm social problems and intervention designs
Jan 27	Learn from your classmates	8-minute Presentations of social problems
Feb 1	Learn from your classmates	Presentations of social problems
Feb 3	Learn from your classmates	Presentations of social problems
Feb 8	One-on-one meetings	Bring two journal articles you have found that will inform your paper and presentation.
Feb 10	One-on-one meetings continue	
Feb 15	Reading week	No Class, but one-on-one meetings may be scheduled here
Feb 17	Reading week	No Class, but one-on-one meetings may be scheduled here
Feb 22	Misconceptions and Controversial Issues	<p>Yeager, D.S. &amp; Walton, G. (2011). Social-psychological interventions in education: They're not magic. <i>Review of Educational Research</i>, 81, 267-301.</p> <p>Kohn, Alfie (2015). The education fad that's hurting our kids  <a href="http://www.salon.com/2015/08/16/the_education_fad_thats_hurting_our_kids_what_you_need_to_know_about_growth_mindset_theory_and_the_harmful_lessons_it_imparts/">http://www.salon.com/2015/08/16/the_education_fad_thats_hurting_our_kids_what_you_need_to_know_about_growth_mindset_theory_and_the_harmful_lessons_it_imparts/</a></p> <p>Hobbes, Michael (2014). Stop trying to save the world.  <a href="https://newrepublic.com/article/120178/problem-international-development-and-plan-fix-it">https://newrepublic.com/article/120178/problem-international-development-and-plan-fix-it</a></p> <p><b>What I Learned in Class Report Due by 4:30pm</b></p>
Feb 24	No Class but contact prof if needed	Work independently on your projects!

Feb 29	Learn from your classmates	<b>Submit 7 What I Learned reports before the end of term</b>
March 2	Learn from your classmates	No New Readings
March 7	Learn from your classmates	No New Readings
March 9	Keep learning from your classmates	No New Readings
March 14	You can learn so much from your classmates!	No New Readings
March 16	We all look forward to coming to class to learn from each other	No New Readings
March 21	Learn from your classmates How to Do Peer Feedback Why it is Worth Your Time	No New Readings
March 23	Learn from your classmates	No New Readings
March 28	Learn from your classmates	No New Readings
March 30		<b>Must have paper draft ready for peer feedback Your peer feedback on two classmates' papers due by end of day</b>
Finals Period		<b>Paper Due, Date TBA</b>



## Course-Specific Notes and Policies:

### Electronic Device Policy

Any student whose phone rings during class, or who has more than one audio notification go off in class, is responsible for bringing donuts for everyone at the next class. See the instructor if financial support is needed for this. This policy includes the course instructor.

## Standard University and Waterloo Notes and Policies

### Accommodation for Illness or Unforeseen Circumstances:

The instructor follows the practices of the University of Waterloo in accommodating students who have documented reasons for missing quizzes or exams. See [http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/students/accom\\_illness.html](http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/students/accom_illness.html)

### 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. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage \(https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/\)](https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/) and the [Arts Academic Integrity webpage \(https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/current-undergraduates/student-support/ethical-behaviour\)](https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/current-undergraduates/student-support/ethical-behaviour) for more information.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, 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](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties \(https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/guidelines/guidelines-assessment-penalties\)](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/guidelines/guidelines-assessment-penalties).

**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 \(https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70\)](#). When in doubt please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71, Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72, Student Appeals \(https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72\)](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72).

*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 (uWaterloo):* <http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/>

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:**

*Note for Students with Disabilities:* The AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (NH 1401), 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 AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

**Cross-listed course:**

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

**A respectful living and learning environment for all**

1. It is expected that everyone living, learning or working on the premises of Renison University College will contribute to an environment of tolerance and respect by treating others with sensitivity and civility.
2. Harassment is unwanted attention in the form of jokes, insults, gestures, gossip, or other behaviours that are meant to intimidate. Some instances of harassment are against the law in addition to Renison University College policy.
3. Discrimination is treating people differently because of their race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, ancestry, colour, age, creed, marital status, or other personal characteristics. The Ontario Human Rights Code considers actions and behaviours rather than intentions.
4. If you experience or witness either harassment or discrimination, you may contact the Renison University College Harassment and Discrimination Officer at [c7mcmillan@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:c7mcmillan@uwaterloo.ca) (519-884-4404, ext. 28723).