

Psych 459: Psychology Seminar on Close Relationships

Wednesdays 2:30-5:20; Winter Term 2016; Room STJ 3020

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. John K. Rempel Office: STJ 2018 Phone: 884-8111 ext. 28212 Office Hours: by appointment
Email: rempel@uwaterloo.ca (include your full name and the course ID in the subject line)

Course Objectives

The goal in this seminar is to examine some current theories and research in the social psychological study of close relationships. An equally important goal is to encourage independent thinking and critical analysis. I want to provide you with tools that you can use to effectively gather and evaluate information for yourselves. Finally, it is vital for students to develop effective oral and written communication skills – regardless of people's future goals and aspirations, everyone can benefit from learning how to present ideas and information in a clear, focused, and precise manner.

Course Content and Evaluation

In order to achieve the course objectives, the course is designed around a series of broad concepts and processes that are central to the psychological study of close relationships.

Group Discussions: For the first six classes (*in italics*) I will be leading the discussion. It is your responsibility to read the assigned articles and be prepared to contribute your observations and ideas.

Article Presentations: In each of these first six classes there will be one or two articles that everyone is expected to read for class. In addition at the beginning of each class students will present four additional articles, with each presentation taking no more than 15 minutes. Presentations will be graded (15%).

Class Participation: Given the nature of the course, you are obviously expected to be present and involved in each class. Thus 10% of your grade will be based on your attendance and participation. Exceptions will be made for legitimate reasons (e.g. illness, religious observance, compassionate grounds, etc.) and if you cannot attend a class please let me know ahead of time if possible. Simply attending class without contributing to the discussion is the minimal expectation and it will get you a minimal C-level passing grade. Obtaining a higher participation grade will require a higher level of participation.

Class Presentation: In later classes (**in bold**), students will work in groups of three to four to develop and lead a class session using the following procedures.

1. I have listed general topics that you will need to narrow down and select a more specific set of issues to focus on. You can do this by conducting a literature search and scanning recent abstracts and/or you can ask me for suggestions.
2. Once you have identified some specific topics, you should run them by me in a short meeting. Together we will zero in on a manageable focus and I can offer some suggestions for specific authors or additional articles that you can look up.
3. Your next task is to find one or two longer or two to three shorter key articles that will be read by the class. These articles should be sent to me at least one week before you are to lead the class and I will post them.
4. When you lead the class you need to realize that you will have developed expertise on your topic. In order to convey this knowledge and encourage the development of further ideas, you should do the following.
 - a) You should provide a general overview and introduction of the topic that is being discussed. Clearly you will have read more than your fellow classmates and you should be able to set your specific topic into a broader context. For example, if you are dealing with an aspect of conflict you should provide a brief overview of major issues in the conflict literature and indicate how your specific topic fits into that literature.
 - b) You are expected to give a more detailed overview of the specific theoretical issues or research studies that you are dealing with. You will likely present the results of additional studies that your fellow students will not have read. These will need to be brief and to the point.
 - c) Most importantly, you are expected to generate a meaningful discussion and critical analysis of the topics being discussed. Therefore, you will need to raise provocative and stimulating questions. These questions may occur during your presentation or you may want to ask them at the end. Whatever your procedure, you will need to be prepared to lead the discussion and move people's thinking along.
 - d) You will need to provide a conclusion or summation of the ideas presented in class. This conclusion should include concrete suggestions for directions for future research. Be sure to explain why this research should be done and what you would hope to learn.
5. I welcome creativity in your presentation as a way of fostering engagement and learning. For example, you can use small group discussions, role-plays, music or video clips, questionnaires, etc. to get people thinking, generate a discussion, or make a point. It is also a good idea to prepare a bibliography for the class.
6. This whole process, from choosing a topic and articles to leading the class, will be graded. It is worth 35% of your grade. I will make the final decision on a grade, but the class will have input into the evaluation of your class presentation. Also, each of you will provide a short confidential assessment of your fellow group members. Unless there are very compelling reasons to do otherwise, each person in the group will receive the same grade.

Research Proposal: The third major assignment in this course is a written research proposal. This proposal may be based on the material in one of your presentations or you can choose a different topic. Basically you will be writing the introduction and methods sections of an empirical journal article (*not* the results or discussion sections). This need not be a long paper. Typically introductions are anywhere from 7 to 12 typed pages (double spaced Times New Roman 12-point font with 1-inch margins) and methods sections vary according to the complexity of the measures and procedures. However, this paper will require you to be thoughtful and creative in approaching the challenges of conducting research on close relationships. This proposal can be completed individually or in groups of 2 or 3 and is comprised of three stages.

Stage 1: By the first week of February I expect you to have met with me to finalize a research idea.

Stage 2: On February 24 I expect you to email me an initial draft of *the introduction* to your proposal. This version of your introduction will be graded and is worth 10% of your final grade. I will give you feedback on the ideas, organization, and readability of your introduction.

Stage 3: The final version of your paper, which includes both the introduction and a detailed methods section, is due April 6 and is worth 30% of your grade. My expectations and standards for the final version will be higher than those for the first draft so I recommend that you take the time to edit your paper.

Late Assignments and Academic Offenses

Unless other arrangements have been made, I will deduct 5% per day for late assignments. In addition, I wish to remind you that plagiarism and other forms of cheating are very bad. Here are the official statements:

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

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 Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under St. Jerome’s University Academic Discipline Policy and UW Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#).

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. For students who decide to file a grievance, students should refer to [Policy 70 – Student Petitions and Grievances](#). In such a case, contact Dr. Scott Kline (scott.kline@uwaterloo.ca), Associate Dean of St. Jerome’s University.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 71 – Student Discipline or Policy 70 – Student Petitions and Grievances if a ground for an appeal can be established.

Academic Integrity website (Arts): http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html

Academic Integrity Office (UW): <http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/>

Note for students with disabilities: The [AccessAbility Services \(AS\) Office](#), 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 AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.

Schedule:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	
January	6	introduction and organization
	13	<i>relationship foundations – attachment theory</i>
	20	<i>self-esteem</i>
	27	<i>self theory and close relationships</i>
February	3	<i>trust and power</i>
	10	<i>love (and hate)</i>
	17	*** no class – reading week ***
	24	<i>commitment</i>
March		*** research proposal introduction (first draft) due ***
	2	attraction and partner selection
	9	communication, disclosure, and intimacy
	16	conflict
	23	relationship dissolution
April	30	relationship maintenance and success
	6	*** full research proposal (final version) due ***