

University of Waterloo
Department of Psychology
PSYCH 363
Trauma, Stress, and Resilience in Families

Instructor Information

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T.A. Information

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Course Description

Family Systems Theory posits that the family is an emergent and dynamic entity, comprised of multiple interacting individuals and subsystems, that is ultimately greater than the sum of its components or parts. In settings of trauma, stress and adversity, the family responds in unique ways in order to maintain equilibrium (i.e., families, like individuals, show “resilience”). However, this often comes at a cost to relationships and individual functioning. When considering the family as a fundamental unit of analysis that is intricately tied to the broader social context, a model of helping emerges that seeks to create change in the structural and functional elements of family life, while combatting the tendency to make purely intrapsychic or medical attributions for individual and family struggles. This model of intervention is known as Family Therapy. The purpose of this course is to provide an overview of Family Systems Theory and Family Therapy from a trauma-informed framework, while embedding conversations in contemporary family psychology and developmental science. Students will get exposure to theoretical and applied content in family psychology and family therapy practice, while becoming increasingly versed in understanding how environmental stress impacts the relationships of families from diverse backgrounds.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- A. Develop familiarity with 3 key theoretical models: Family Systems Theory, Family Therapy, & Resilience
- B. Conceptualize the developmental and family ecosystem and understand various “systems” in psychological life
- C. Begin to formulate traumatic stress from a systemic perspective that acknowledges multiple levels of analysis
- D. Develop introductory skills in effective communication and counselling in settings of trauma and stress

Required Text and Readings

1. Walsh, F. (2016). *Strengthening Family Resilience* (Third Edition). Guilford.
2. Chapters & journal articles available online through Learn.

Note: Readings will not be sufficient to do well in this course!!! Critical content (both theoretical and applied) will be delivered during lectures and workshop-style sessions that students will be responsible for. Students must have a plan for making-up missed material.

Course Requirements and Assessments

Your final grade is based on weekly discussion posts, two tests, a midterm assignment and final assignment. A large amount of information is presented in this course, which places heavy demands on higher-level critical thinking. As such, course content will be divided into two, noncumulative midterm tests to encourage students to stay on top of material and to reduce the amount of material covered on any one test. The break-down of grades is as follows:

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
Weekly Discussion	Weekly (Due Sunday by 11:59pm, Learn)	20%
Test # 1	October 10 th (in-class)	20%
Test # 2	December 3 rd (in-class)	20%
Midterm (Article Review)	October 24 th (Due by 11:59pm, Learn)	20%
Final Assignment (Case Study)	December 6 th (Due by 11:59pm, Learn)	20%
Total		100%

Family Therapy Workshops

A very exciting component of this course includes weekly observations of live family therapy sessions, facilitated by Dr. Browne (therapist) and student actors (from Communication Arts, UW). Course students will get an up-close and personal depiction of the therapeutic process and will link these observations with readings and lecture material. Opportunity for analysis and formulation will occur in class, to be carried over into discussion forums every week.

Weekly Discussions

Students are required to participate in an online discussion of the material covered in class this week (both lecture and therapy workshops). A minimum of two posts per week is required (e.g., one personal insight, and one response to another student's comments). The weekly discussion will be graded in two sections: Weeks 1-6 and Weeks 7-13, not only for completeness, but for quality of comments. Each week's discussion posts will be due on Sunday's by 11:59pm. Students will be provided prompts each week for discussion, though students are also encouraged to generate their own questions, observations, and insights.

Tests

Tests are based on assigned readings and in-class material and consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. Questions require knowledge of basic facts and the ability to apply this knowledge to real-world situations. There will be no make-up dates for tests in this course for any reason.

Midterm Assignment: Article Review

Students are expected to review a minimum of three articles that employ a particular methodological and/or statistical approach to answer questions pertaining to family life. They are to review these articles in a coherent and integrated fashion (i.e., not merely a list of what each article did) and discuss the findings of the articles. Students should review statistical methods and discuss the strengths and limitations of the approach. Please see the assignment write-up for a full description.

Final Paper: Case Study

A final assignment requires students to integrate their theoretical, clinical, and research skills by completing a case study of the “family” that they have been observing Dr. Browne conduct therapy with each week. Students will take notes on the mock therapy sessions throughout the course, supplementing the notes with clinical analysis, and conduct a case study (i.e., a clinical formulation) that integrates Family Systems Theory, Family Therapy, Resilience and the trauma-informed framework into your work. This assignment should be uploaded to the Dropbox on Learn by 11:59pm on Dec 6th. Because students have the entire term to work on this assignment, **LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED EXCEPT FOR VERIFIED ILLNESS OR BEREAVEMENT** (see below) – in which case an extension will be agreed upon by the student and instructor. Please see the assignment write-up for a full description.

Text matching software (Turnitin®) will be used to verify that use of all materials and sources is documented. Students who do not want to have their assignment screened by Turnitin may submit their assignment directly to the instructor along with hard copies of cited material in which cited information is highlighted. **PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF WHAT PLAGIARISM IS AND HOW IT MAY BE AVOIDED IN YOUR WORK** (<https://subjectguides.uwaterloo.ca/c.php?g=695453&p=4931525>). Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and assignments that are plagiarized may, at the instructor’s discretion, receive a hefty penalty (e.g., a grade of 0) and be referred to the Dean.

Roles and Responsibilities

The instructor is available to address questions about any aspect of the course. The instructor and/or TAs are available to review tests and to assist with the final written assignment.

Class attendance is mandatory. Students must attend lectures as they will contain information that will not be covered in the readings nor detailed on the slides. Slides are intended to serve as a framework for note-taking (not as a substitute for attendance) and will be posted as pdfs to Learn before each class. Power point files will not be provided.

Students are encouraged to ask questions when material is unclear – either in class or on Learn (do not email the instructor for course content questions, only personal matters). There will be an “Ask the Instructor” discussion board on Learn for the benefit of all students in the course (if you have a question, it is very likely that your peers do as well).

Intellectual Property

Students should be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of the course instructor as well as others. Intellectual property includes items such as:

- Lecture content, spoken and written (and any audio/video recording thereof);
- Lecture handouts, presentations, and other materials prepared for the course
- Questions or solution sets from various types of assessments (e.g., assignments, quizzes, tests, final exams); and

- Work protected by copyright (e.g., any work authored by the instructor or used by the instructor with permission of the copyright owner, course readings, etc.).

Course materials and the intellectual property contained therein, are used to enhance a student's educational experience. However, sharing this intellectual property without the intellectual property owner's permission is a violation of intellectual property rights. For this reason, it is necessary to ask the instructor for permission before uploading and sharing the intellectual property of others online (e.g., to an online repository).

Permission from an instructor is also necessary before sharing the intellectual property of others from completed courses with students taking the same/similar courses in subsequent terms/years. In many cases, instructors might be happy to allow distribution of certain materials. However, doing so without expressed permission is considered a violation of intellectual property rights.

Please alert the instructor if you become aware of intellectual property belonging to others (past or present) circulating, either through the student body or online. The intellectual property rights owner deserves to know (and may have already given their consent).

Electronic Device Policy

Research suggests that students are better able to retain information that is presented in lecture when they hand-write notes and are not tempted by the distractions that are inherent in technology. Though it is preferable for students to attend lectures without phones, laptops, etc., students may use these devices as long as they do not cause a distraction to the instructor or other students. **STUDENTS MAY NOT AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORD MOCK THERAPY SESSIONS.** Students are requested to turn cell phones off during lectures and to avoid chatting with their neighbours, the latter of which is noticeable to the instructor and other students and is distracting.

Course Schedule

Week	Date(s)	Topic	Readings	Assessments
1	Sept 5	Course Overview	N/A	Discussion Post # 1 (Introductions)
2	Sept. 10 Sept. 12	An Introduction to Family Systems Theory and Resilience	Walsh, F. (2016). <i>Strengthening Family Resilience</i> , Third Edition. Chapter 1 & 2 (pp. 3-21). New York: Guilford. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1: <u>Foundation of a Family Resilience Approach</u> • Chapter 2: <u>Family Diversity and Complexity in a Changing World</u> Fiese, B., Jones, B. L., & Saltzman, J. A. (2019). <u>Systems Unify Family Psychology</u> . In B. Fiese (Ed.), <i>APA Handbook of Contemporary Family Psychology (Volume 1; pp. 3-21)</i> . Washington, DC: APA.	Discussion Post #2
3	Sept. 17 Sept. 19	Trauma-Informed Family Therapy Practice	Walsh, F. (2016). <i>Strengthening Family Resilience</i> , Third Edition. Chapter 6 & 7 (pp. 101-153). New York: Guilford. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 6: <u>Assessing Family Resilience: Useful Maps for Practice and Research</u> • Chapter 7: <u>Practice Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen Family Resilience</u> Galano, M. M. & Graham-Bermann, S.A. (2019). <u>Traumatic Stress within the Family</u> . In B. Fiese (Ed.), <i>APA Handbook of Contemporary Family Psychology (Volume 2; pp. 437-456)</i> . Washington, DC: APA.	Discussion Post #3
4	Sept. 24 Sept. 26	Family Stress and The Developmental Perspective	Walsh, F. (2016). <i>Strengthening Family Resilience</i> , Third Edition. Chapter 9 (pp. 181-205). New York: Guilford. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 9: <u>Challenges and Resilience over the Family Life Cycle: A Developmental Systems Perspective</u> Ferguson, K. T. & Evans, G. (2019). <u>Social Ecological Theory: Family Systems and Family Psychology in Bioecological and Bioecocultural Perspective</u> . In B. Fiese (Ed.), <i>APA Handbook of Contemporary Family Psychology (Volume 1; pp. 143-163)</i> . Washington, DC: APA.	Discussion Post #4
5	Oct. 1 Oct. 3	Family Structure - Subsystems & Levels of Organization	Browne, D. T., Plamondon, A., Prime, H., Puente-Duran, S., & Wade, M. (2015). <u>Cumulative risk and developmental health: An argument for the importance of a family-wide science</u> . <i>Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science</i> , 6, 397-407. Walsh, F. (2016). <i>Strengthening Family Resilience</i> , Third Edition. Chapter 3 & 5 (pp. 39-100). New York: Guilford. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 4: <u>Organizational Processes: Relational and Structural Supports</u> 	Discussion Post #5

			Teti, D. (2019). <u>Parenting at Risk & Contemporary Family Systems</u> . In B. Fiese (Ed.), <i>APA Handbook of Contemporary Family Psychology (Volume 1; pp. 503-519)</i> . Washington, DC: APA.	
6	Oct. 8 Oct. 10	Family Function - Relational and Psychological Processes	Walsh, F. (2016). <i>Strengthening Family Resilience</i> , Third Edition. Chapter 3 & 5 (pp. 39-64, 82-100). New York: Guilford. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 3: <u>Belief Systems: The Heart and Soul of Resilience</u> Chapter 5: <u>Communication Processes: Facilitating Meaning Making, Mutual Support and Problem Solving</u> Optional: Davies, P.T. & Coe, J. L. (2019). <u>Family Relationship Dynamics: A Developmental Perspective</u> . In B. Fiese (Ed.), <i>APA Handbook of Contemporary Family Psychology (Volume 1; pp. 503-519)</i> . Washington, DC: APA.	Discussion Post #6 Test #1 – Oct 10th (in-class)
	Oct. 15 Oct. 17	Reading Week – No Class	No Readings ☺	No Assignments
7	Oct. 22 Oct. 24	Recovery from Trauma and Addiction in Families	Walsh, F. (2016). <i>Strengthening Family Resilience</i> , Third Edition. Chapter 10 (pp. 206-231). New York: Guilford. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 10: <u>Loss, Recovery & Resilience</u> Whitaker, D. J. & Rogers-Browne, J. S. (2019). <u>Child Maltreatment and the Family</u> . In B. Fiese (Ed.), <i>APA Handbook of Contemporary Family Psychology (Volume 2; pp. 471-488)</i> . Washington, DC: APA. Godleski, S. & Leonard, K. E. (2019). <u>Substance Use and Substance Problems in Families: How Families Impact and are Impacted by Substance Use</u> . In B. Fiese (Ed.), <i>APA Handbook of Contemporary Family Psychology (Volume 2; pp. 587-602)</i> . Washington, DC: APA.	Discussion Post #7 Article Review – Oct 24th (Learn)
8	Oct. 29 Oct. 31	Family Diversity, Resettlement & Stress	Walsh, F. (2016). <i>Strengthening Family Resilience</i> , Third Edition. Chapter 11 & 13 (pp. 232-264, 296-326). New York: Guilford. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 11: <u>Traumatic Loss & Collective Trauma: Strengthening Family and Community Resilience</u> Chapter 13: <u>Nurturing Resilience in Vulnerable, Multi-Stressed Families</u> Chuang, S. (2019). <u>The Complexities of Immigration and Families: Theoretical Perspectives and Current Issues</u> . In B. Fiese (Ed.), <i>APA Handbook of Contemporary Family Psychology (Volume 2; pp. 437-456)</i> . Washington, DC: APA.	Discussion Post #8
9	Nov. 5 Nov. 7	Overview of Family Therapies and Structural Family Therapy	Lebow J. L. & Diamond, R. M. (2019). <u>Brief History of Couple and Family Therapy</u> . In B. Fiese (Ed.), <i>APA Handbook of Contemporary Family Psychology (Volume 3; pp. 587-602)</i> . Washington, DC: APA.	Discussion Post #9

			<p>Colapinto, J. (2019). <u>Structural Family Therapy</u>. In B. Fiese (Ed.), <i>APA Handbook of Contemporary Family Psychology (Volume 3; pp. 3-19)</i>. Washington, DC: APA.</p> <p>Minuchin, S., Baker, L., Rosman, B. L., Liebman, R., Milman, L., & Todd, T. C. (1975). A conceptual model of psychosomatic illness in children: Family organization and family therapy. <i>Arch of gen psych</i>, 32(8), 1031-1038.</p>	
10	Nov. 12 Nov. 14	Emotion Focused Family Therapy: A Trauma-Informed Approach	<p>Foroughe, M. (2018). <u>Emotion Focused Family Therapy with Children and Caregivers: A Trauma Informed Approach</u> (Chapter 3 & Chapter 4, pp. 45-79). New York: Routledge. (On Learn)</p> <p>Walsh, F. (2016). <i>Strengthening Family Resilience, Third Edition</i>. Chapter 14 (pp. 327-356). New York: Guilford.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 14: <u>Reconnection and Reconciliation: Healing Relational Wounds</u> 	Discussion Post #10
11	Nov. 19 Nov. 21	The Big Picture: Trauma-Informed Practice across Levels of Organization	<p>Ko, S. J., Ford, J. D., Kassam-Adams, N., Berkowitz, S. J., Wilson, C., Wong, M., ... & Layne, C. M. (2008). <u>Creating trauma-informed systems: child welfare, education, first responders, health care, and juvenile justice</u>. <i>Professional Psychology: Research and Practice</i>, 39(4), 396-404. (On Learn)</p> <p>Lieberman, A. F. (2007). <u>Ghosts and Angels: Intergenerational Patterns in the Transmission and Treatment of the Traumatic Sequelae of Domestic Violence</u>. <i>Infant Mental Health Journal</i>, 28(4), 422-439. (On Learn)</p> <p>Walsh, F. (2016). <i>Strengthening Family Resilience, Third Edition</i>. Chapter 8 (pp. 154-180). New York: Guilford.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Chapter Applying a Family Resilience Framework in Community-Based Services</u> 	Discussion Post #11
12	Nov. 26 Nov. 28	Review Period	The instructor, TA, and students will engage in an open discussion to review, synthesize, and integrate all course content. Students are encouraged to prepare questions ahead of time.	Discussion Post #12
13	Dec. 3	Final Test & Assignment	No Readings	<p>Discussion Post #13</p> <p>Test #2 – Dec 3rd (in-class)</p> <p>Case Study – Dec 6th (Learn)</p>

Academic Integrity

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage](#) 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](#).

Concerns about a Course Policy or Decision

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 (Richard Eibach) is available for consultation and to mediate a resolution between the student and instructor: Email: reibach@uwaterloo.ca; Ph 519-888-4567 ext. 38790

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. When in doubt, please be certain to contact Richard Eibach, the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Affairs who will provide further assistance; reibach@uwaterloo.ca.

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](#)

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (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.

Accommodations for Course Requirements

Students requesting accommodation for course requirements (e.g., final assignment) due to illness should do the following:

- Seek medical treatment as soon as possible and obtain a completed [uWaterloo Verification of Illness Form](#)
- Submit that form to the instructor within 48 hours.
- (if possible) 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, the instructor will either:

- Waive the course component and re-weight remaining term work as he/she deems fit according to circumstances and the goals of the course, or
- Provide an extension.

In the case of bereavement, the instructor will provide similar accommodations to those for illness. Appropriate documentation to support the request will be required. Students who are experiencing extenuating circumstances should also inform their academic advisors regarding their personal difficulties. Elective arrangements such as travel plans are not acceptable grounds for granting accommodations to course requirements per the [uWaterloo Examination Regulations and Related Matters](#).

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 LEARN, the outline on LEARN will be deemed the official version. Outlines on LEARN may change as instructors develop a course, but they become final as of the first class meeting for the 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/PSYCH cross-list will count in the Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Psychology rubric.