PSYC*4540-02 ● Practical Applications of Psychology ● Fall 2024

Instructor:
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Office hours: during class time

Course description:
This is a capstone course for students in the BA Psychology program. As the title suggests, the course is intended as an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned in psychology to practical problems they may encounter in their professional and personal lives after graduation.

The coursework, both inside and outside of our weekly meetings, is split between two major activities. The first is a weekly seminar discussion based on assigned readings, and the second is a major project done by a small team of students with common interests. The seminars will take place in the first half of each weekly meeting, followed by an opportunity for teams to work on their projects and consult with the instructor.

Meetings:
Wednesdays 11:30-2:20 in FSA 241

Evaluation:

Seminar Discussant:	20%
Issue Paper:	20%
Project Report:	35%
Project Presentation:	10%
Project Individual Contribution:	5%
Personal Reflection:	10%
TOTAL:	100%

Seminar Discussant:
Seminars involve small groups of students discussing assigned readings on an issue related to applied psychology. New groups will be created randomly every week, each with a maximum of five discussants. At the end of each seminar, you will complete peer-evaluations of the other discussants in your group, using a rubric provided by the instructor. An average of your group members' ratings for you will determine your discussant grade for that seminar. At the end of the semester, your lowest grade will be dropped when tallying your discussant grade (i.e., only your best 8 of 9 seminars will count).

It is important to protect the anonymity of peer-evaluators. For this reason, discussant grades will not be released on a weekly basis. Instead, your up-to-date average will be released every few weeks: after Seminar 3, after Seminar 6, and after Seminar 9.

Peer evaluation runs the risk of collusion among students, and also requires that all students are willing and able to be critical of their peers. If high ratings are being given for mediocre contributions to mediocre discussions, then we have a problem. The instructor thus reserves the right to change, at any time, the way in which discussants are evaluated.

Preparation for each seminar, at a minimum, consists of: (1) reading the Context document at the top of the reading list, which introduces the issue and places it in context, (2) reading all of the assigned readings, (3) thinking about what you have read, and (4) preparing to discuss the issue with your group. Such preparation probably means taking notes and preparing talking points, although this written contribution will not be evaluated (at least not directly). Preparation might also include the search for additional materials of relevance to the issue, especially if it is an issue about which you are passionate, and/or you plan to write your Issue Paper about it.

Attendance Policy:
Attendance is mandatory. It is understood, however, that you may need to miss one class for reasons beyond your control. You are allowed to miss one of the nine seminars without a documented excuse and without making up the work. If you miss one seminar, then your grade will be based on the eight discussions in which you participated. If you attend all nine seminars, your grade will be determined by your best eight grades.

If you miss a second seminar, it must be for a legitimate reason (medical, psychological, or compassionate), and documentation must be provided. If this second absence is deemed legitimate by the instructor, then you must demonstrate that you have read the readings and thought about how they would be discussed (see instructor for details), and your grade will be based on the seven discussions in which you

participated. If, on the other hand, you do not have a legitimate reason for the second absence, then you will receive a Seminar Discussant grade of zero for that seminar.

If you miss a third seminar, no matter the reason, then you will be asked to drop the course.

Attendance is also critical for members of a team who will be working on their project together in the second half of class. Your absence will be noticed by other members of your team and the instructor; this will affect our assessment for your Individual Contribution grade (see below).

Issue Paper:

The Issue Paper is based on one of the seminar issues. Presumably, you will choose the issue that you find most interesting. Chances are that the assigned readings (and our discussions) will only scratch the surface of what psychological science has to say about the issue, and the paper is an opportunity for you to dig deeper as an individual. Further guidance can be found in the *Issue Paper Instructions & Rubric* document, which is available on Courselink.

Papers should be uploaded to the Courselink dropbox by the end of the deadline day (see schedule below). Your paper should be in Word (doc, docx) or Acrobat (pdf) format. Late papers will be penalized 5% per day. Papers will be assessed for plagiarism using Turnitin.

Project:

This course is an Experiential Learning course, and the Project is designed to simulate a workplace setting in which your employer, or the clients of your employer, could benefit from your expertise in psychology. You are tasked with reviewing what psychological research has been done on the topic of interest and reporting back to your employer/client about what you have found.

The Project is an opportunity for a small team of students, with common interests, to learn more about applications of psychology to a practical domain, such as mental health, criminal justice, education/ development, physical health, society, or the workplace. The ideal application would have the following features: (1) there is research evidence available that could inform the work of professionals, and (2) there is reason to doubt that the professionals are informed by the evidence.

At our first two meetings, we will brainstorm ideas for project topics. Students should come prepared to share ideas for potential topics that meet the ideal criteria mentioned above. At our third meeting, we will narrow our longlist by eliminating topics that are not sufficiently popular. Ultimately, we will settle on topics for which there are 5 or 6 students with sufficient interest. These teams will then meet and discuss their common interests in an effort to come to an agreement on the specific application they plan to pursue.

Teams will work on their projects during the second half of our class meetings through Nov 13. During that time, the instructor will be available for consultation. By early October, teams should prepare a written proposal/contract that lays out their plans for the project, including the unique contributions to be made by each team member (and by when those contributions will be completed). Your team should be prepared to make an *informal* presentation of your proposal/contract to the instructor during our Oct 16 meeting. Neither the proposal/contract nor its presentation are graded assignments. The purpose of the appointment is to ensure that the instructor and students are on the same page as far as the expectations for the project.

The Project Report is due on Nov 18 and should be submitted using the Courselink dropbox created for your Group. Detailed instructions about what your report should include can be found on Courselink.

You will make a formal Project Presentation to the entire class at our Nov 20 or 27 meeting. The purpose of the presentation is to share with your classmates what you have been working on, and to hone your communication skills. Detailed instructions about what your presentation should include can be found on Courselink.

All team members will receive the same grade for the Project Report and Project Presentation. You will also be asked to assess the contributions of each of your team members. Your teammates' assessments of you, along with the instructor's observations, will be used to determine your Individual Contribution grade.

Personal Reflection:

This course is an Experiential Learning course, and as such requires that "the experience includes student self-assessment, such as reflection or self-evaluation of knowledge and/or learning progress." The Personal Reflection assignment is an opportunity for you to reflect on your experience working on the Project as a member of a team. It is recommended that you take notes about your Project efforts from the beginning of the semester, and your Reflection should capture how your perspective grew as the Project went from development to completion. Further guidance can be found in the *Personal Reflection Instructions & Rubric* document, which is available on Courselink.

Course schedule & content:

Date	Activity / Assignment	Seminar Issue
Sep 11	Introduction	—
Sep 18	Seminar 1	To each her own: What constitutes progress for women?
	Project topics brainstormed	—
Sep 25	Seminar 2	How do we distinguish a false memory from a lie?
	Project teams formed	—
Oct 2	Seminar 3	Moral psychology: Blaming & shaming
Oct 9	Seminar 4	Personnel selection: The search for the magic test
Oct 16	Seminar 5	Clinical psychology in the public eye
	Project Proposal/Contract due	—
Fri Oct 18	**Issue Paper** due	—
Oct 23	Seminar 6	The downside of neuroscience
Oct 30	Seminar 7	So, you think you can spot a psychopath
Nov 6	Seminar 8	Social psychology, validity, and prejudice reduction
Nov 13	Seminar 9	How the meritocracy picks winners and losers
Mon Nov 18	**Project Report** due	—
Nov 20	**Project Presentations** (in class)	—
Nov 27	**Project Presentations** (in class)	—
Mon Dec 2	**Personal Reflection** due	—

Learning Outcomes:

The table below summarizes the learning outcomes targeted by this course:

Learning Outcome	Facet	Definition	Mechanism of learning and assessment
Critical & Creative Thinking	Depth & Breadth of Understanding	Demonstrates knowledge of key concepts in psychology , and integrates that knowledge across disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries	Readings, Seminar Discussions, Issue Paper, Project
Critical & Creative Thinking	Inquiry & Analysis	A systematic process of exploring issues, objects and works in psychology through the collection and analysis of evidence that result in informed conclusions or judgments	Readings, Seminar Discussions, Issue Paper, Project
Critical & Creative Thinking	Problem Solving	A process in which one works through a series of operations to come to a conclusion	Project
Critical & Creative Thinking	Creativity	Involves the ability to adapt to situations of change, to initiate change and to take intellectual risk	Seminar Discussions, Personal Reflection
Literacy	Information Literacy	The ability to know when there is a need for information, where to locate it and the ability to identify the value and differences of potential resources in a variety of formats	Issue Paper, Project
Global Understanding	Sense of Historical Development	Understanding of psychology in a modern society; its limitations and developments	Readings, Seminar Discussions, Issue Paper, Project
Communication	Oral Communication	Includes interpersonal skills, oral speaking and active listening as they apply to psychology	Seminar Discussions, Project Presentation
Communication	Written Communication	The ability to express one's ideas and summarize theory and research in written form	Issue Paper, Project, Personal Reflection
Communication	Reading Comprehension	The understanding of theoretical and empirical literature in psychology	Readings, Issue Paper, Project
Communication	Integrative Communication	A mental process that integrates existing psychological knowledge to develop and communicate new knowledge	Seminar Discussions, Issue Paper, Project, Personal Reflection
Professional & Ethical Behaviour	Teamwork	Working together in a respectful and collaborative manner to complete tasks	Seminar Discussions, Project
Professional & Ethical Behaviour	Ethical Reasoning	Includes learning to make judgments about whether research has been conducted and used in an ethical manner, as well as exploring how psychological research can be used as a guide for making moral judgments about the behaviour of others.	Readings and Seminar Discussions, particularly related to false memory, moral psychology, disorder marketing, psychopathy, and clinical psychology.
Professional & Ethical Behaviour	Personal Organization / Time Management	An ability to manage several tasks at once and prioritize	Readings, Issue Paper, Project