

**SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY**

PSY 433: Seminar in Psychology – Health Psychology  
3 Credit Hours  
Fall, 2007  
Academic Building IV – Room 205  
Tuesdays & Thursdays – 2:00 pm – 3:20 pm

**Instructor:** David V. Nelson, Ph.D., ABPP (Clinical Health Psychology)  
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**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 1:00 pm – 1:50 pm, 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm  
Thursdays 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm  
And by appointment  
(Faculty/committee meetings are sometimes scheduled during these times,  
so it is best to call or e-mail and confirm appointment; however, you are  
always welcome to drop by any time to see if I am in.)

**REQUIRED TEXT:**

Straub, R. O. (2007). *Health psychology: A biopsychosocial approach* (2<sup>nd</sup>  
ed.). New York: Worth Publishers.

**You will need the textbook. Do not delay in purchasing it.**

**Book Companion Website**

<http://www.worthpublishers.com/straub>

**PURPOSE OF THE COURSE:**

The purpose of this course is to help you understand the rapidly expanding subfield of psychology that focuses on how biological, psychological, and social factors interact and contribute to health promotion, illness prevention, coping with stress, pain, and other acute or chronic diseases, and recovery from and adjustment to serious health problems. It is designed, as well, to give you opportunities to critically evaluate information on health topics and the interactions of psychology and health in order to be a more thoughtful consumer of health and health psychology information. The biopsychosocial model is the predominant focus. The course includes some information about techniques to change health behaviors and related interventions but is not an intervention course for practitioners.

**Goal:** To gain factual knowledge and learn ideas, models, principles, and theories of psychology applied to health matters.

- Learning outcome: You will understand principles of research methods related to studies about psychology and health.
- Learning outcome: You will understand basic functioning of body systems relevant to interactions of psychology and health.
- Learning outcome: You will understand what psychological theorists, researchers, and studies have to say about interactions of stress and coping with health.
- Learning outcome: You will understand what psychological theorists, researchers, and studies have to say about health-enhancing and health-compromising behaviors.
- Learning outcome: You will understand what psychological theorists, researchers, and studies have to say about chronic and life-threatening illnesses.
- Learning outcome: You will understand what psychological theorists, researchers, and studies have to say about health services utilization, pain and related symptom management, and complementary and alternative medicine.
- Learning outcome: You will understand the future challenges for the field of health psychology, the changing nature of medical practice, and career opportunities in the field of health psychology.

**Goal:** To learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, information, models, principles, and theories pertaining to health matters and the interactions of psychology and health.

- Learning outcome: As an individual, you will practice critical analysis and thinking skills and demonstrate these skills in evaluating information about health topics and the interactions of psychology and health obtained through a variety of venues and media.
- Learning outcome: Within a group context, you will practice critical analysis and thinking skills and demonstrate these skills in evaluating information about health topics and interactions of psychology and health obtained through a variety of venues and media.

**Goal:** To apply course material regarding psychology and health for making desired changes in health promotion, management of stress and coping effects on health, disease and symptom management, and related matters.

- Learning outcome: You will understand basic principles of psychological techniques for change or modification as applied to selected health-related interventions within the context of the biopsychosocial model.
- Learning outcome: You will apply basic principles of the biopsychosocial approach to better understand aspects of your own personal health and wellness potential.



what is covered in class per se. However, it is important for you to be sure to cover all of the textbook material and you will be responsible for all of it on the tests. Test format will include multiple choice and true/false.

**Students will need to provide their own #2 pencils and “Scan-Tron” answer sheets (#882-E) for each quiz and exam.**

### **Missed/Make-Up Quizzes/Exams**

There will be **no** make-up quizzes/exams except under extraordinary circumstances (e.g., serious illness documented with health care provider’s note, catastrophic weather). **It is very bad form to miss a test and contact the instructor afterwards about the matter.** At a minimum, an e-mail should be sent to me or a phone message left on my office message system **before** class time on any day there is an extraordinary happening in your life that would interfere with your attendance. **The final exam must be taken as scheduled. You cannot get an A in this course without taking the final exam.**

### **Critical Thinking Exercises**

Periodically, assignments will be given that require critical thinking about an aspect of a health topic to be submitted in about 2-4 typed pages if completed out of class or handwritten if completed in class; the nature of the topic at hand will determine which (i.e., in or out of class) is to be done. *Electronic versions may also be requested; if so, these may be submitted for processing by a plagiarism prevention/detection service such as turnitin.com.* The details of this requirement will be covered as relevant material arises in the course. **No late papers will be accepted.**

Each critical thinking exercise will be worth a maximum of 10 points. Simply doing the exercise and turning in your written response will result in at least 7 points being given. A very thoughtful paper with a well-developed, well-organized line of reasoning that incorporates text and lecture material along with your own personal ideas and thoughts, and which is free of typos, will receive 10 points. Scores otherwise will be in between these: appearing to be “just going through the motions” (7 points) versus carefully thinking, reasoning, writing, and producing a response (10 points).

Be sure to take these exercises seriously. They are designed to further enhance your ability to critically evaluate health-related information. The points add up to a significant amount of the total and could tip the scales one way or another in terms of your final course grade.

### **Personal Health and Wellness Profile/Activities**

During the semester a variety of relatively short activities will be announced that will require you to complete self-report inventories and/or on-line self-assessments pertinent to course material, other personal health-related exploratory activities, and/or reaction papers. These will be announced in an on-going manner throughout the course. They will consist of a mix of in- and out-of-class activities. It is important for you to be in attendance to receive these assignments,

since they will be announced as they become relevant to the course material at hand. Each will be worth about 5-10 points, depending in part on the nature of the activity. **No late assignments will be accepted.**

Points per activity will be assigned the maximum available unless the quality of work reflects little more than “just going through the motions” without additional thoughts or comments being offered. However, by at least doing the activity and going through the motions, the minimum score will typically be 70% of the total (e.g., 7 out of 10 on a 10-point activity). Most students should be able to receive the maximum.

Be sure to take these activities seriously enough to do them. They are designed to enhance your involvement in and understanding of the course content. The points add up to a significant amount of the total and could tip the scales one way or another in terms of your final course grade.

### **Extra Credit**

Extra credit opportunities may be announced at the discretion of the instructor; no extra credit is planned at this time.

### **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY:**

Attendance is expected and will be kept. On the other hand, my philosophy is that students in college are adults who should come to class only if they believe it is in their best interest to do so. If they do come, their attendance should contribute to (or at least not detract from) the learning environment. The university does require reports that depend on taking attendance, so I will take attendance. Tests will cover both text and lectures. **My definition of being absent is missing the roll sheet when it comes around.** If for some reason you need to leave class early, please let me know before the class. Otherwise, please do not leave early, since it can be very distracting to others in the class.

Class participation in small group discussions, brief writing assignments, personal exploratory self-assessments, and/or other activities is encouraged. Because the nature of the subject matter lends itself to people sharing their own personal experiences and insights, I ask you to be respectful of each other. Borderline cases regarding grades (i.e., within a point or two of qualifying for a higher grade) will be decided in your favor only if you have missed no more than three class days and have good participation in class.

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic

work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. **Academic dishonesty in this course will result in a grade of F.**

**Please also note that required papers may be submitted to review by a plagiarism prevention/detection service, such as turnitin.com.**

### **CLASSROOM RULES OF CONDUCT:**

According to University guidelines and general sense of decency, students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Mutual respect and courtesy are the expected standards.

In addition, please turn off **ALL** electronic devices, including cell phones, and keep them in a case and/or totally out of view, unless special arrangements have been made ahead of time with the instructor. **NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES MAY BE USED IN THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT PRE-APPROVAL BY THE INSTRUCTOR. THAT INCLUDES LAPTOPS, CELL PHONES, BLUETOOTH DEVICES, ANYTHING ELECTRONIC. I RESERVE THE PREROGATIVE TO ANSWER ANY CELL PHONE THAT RINGS IN THE CLASSROOM.**

If you must chew gum, please do so in a silent and inconspicuous manner (i.e., no popping and no bubbles).

No tobacco products (including chewing) are to be used in class.

If you are too tired to stay awake, then please stay home in bed. If you fall asleep you may be asked to go elsewhere to sleep.

**When class time begins you are expected to stop reading or doing anything that is not course related.**

See, also, <https://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html> for a more complete description of the SHSU Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.

### **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT:**

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disability that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may adversely affect your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center.

### **RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS:**

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911(a)(2) defines religious holy days as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code. . . ." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will notify the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examination are to be completed.

### **VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM:**

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom. In general, visitors to this course should be cleared by the instructor for some specific purpose directly relevant to the educational experience. Otherwise, only registered students who have paid university/course fees are allowed to be in the classroom.

### **INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION:**

You will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

## COURSE OUTLINE/APPROXIMATE SCHEDULE (Check Blackboard for Updates):

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<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Chapter</b>			
August	21	Introduction	1		
	23	Introducing Health Psychology			
	28	Research in Health Psychology			
	30				
September	4	<b>Quiz 1 (Chapter 1 &amp; 2)</b>	3		
	6	Biological Foundations of Health and Illness			
	11	Stress and Health	4		
	13				
	18	<b>Exam 1 (Chapter 1, 2, 3, &amp; 4)</b>	5		
	20	Coping with Stress			
	25	Staying Healthy: Primary Prevention and Positive Psychology	6		
	27				
October	2	<b>Quiz 2 (Chapters 5 &amp; 6)</b> Nutrition, Obesity, and Eating Disorders	7		
	4				
	9				
	11			Substance Abuse	8
	16			<b>Exam 2 (Chapters 5, 6, 7, &amp; 8)</b>	9
	18				
	23				
	25			Cardiovascular Disease and Diabetes	
30	Cancer	10			
November	1	<b>Quiz 3 (Chapters 9 &amp; 10)</b> HIV and AIDS	11		
	6				
	8				

	13	The Role of Health Psychology in Health Care Settings	12
	15	<b>Exam 3 (Chapters 9, 10, 11, &amp; 12)</b>	
	20	Managing Pain	13
	22	<b>Thanksgiving Holiday</b>	
	27		
	29	Complementary and Alternative Medicine	14
December	4		
	6	Health Psychology Today and Tomorrow	15
	13	<b>Exam 4 – Final Exam (Chapters 13, 14, &amp; 15)</b>	
	2-4 pm		