

# The Psychology of Health

PSYCHOLOGY 220  
Spring Semester 2008

Dr. Bette Ackerman  
Office: 117 Clough, Ext. 3650  
Office hours: MW 10 – 11:20 & TuTh 1:00 – 2:30

## General Course Learning Objectives:

1. *Gaining factual knowledge...with regards to chronic illnesses, behavioral or psychological risk factors, as well as the effectiveness of psychologically based treatment modalities*
2. *Learning fundamental principles and theories regarding the interplay between psychology and health*

## Additional Objectives for Health Psych:

3. *Becoming a more informed consumer of health information*
4. *Encouraging students to make the connections between course work and their personal needs: that is, to take responsibility for making learning relevant and meaningful*
5. *Helping students to appreciate the level of stress in their lives, and to become better at learning to manage their own stress*
6. *Helping students to understand how difficult it is to change behavior*

This course is intended to provide students with a preliminary understanding of the important ways in which psychological states and behaviors are involved in health and illness. There is a certain body of factual information, derived from research studies, which all students will be expected to learn. This includes a basic understanding of chronic illnesses, incidence rates, factors which affect seeking or adherence to treatment, as well as the latest information about behaviors related to maintaining a healthy lifestyle (*see objective 1*). In general, the student should attend to the role of psychology as it attempts to account for risk factors and treatment effectiveness in addition to the teaching of health behaviors and behavior modification (*see objective 2*).

I do not want this to be treated as abstract information, and so I will encourage you to attend to your own risk factors and behaviors (*see objective 3 & 4*). I want you leave college better prepared to think about your own health and how to manage illness. To do this I will ask you to select a research topic related to some illness or health problem relevant to you or to persons close to you, and to explore the implications for your own behavior in the future. I also will attempt to sensitize you to the impact of stress on health and well-being, and to introduce you to several techniques for controlling and managing your own stress. I hope, through this class, to encourage you to question your own health-related behaviors and to give you first-hand experience with the difficulty in modifying behaviors. Above all, I want you to start thinking more broadly about health, prevention, and the life-style that you want to adopt as you transition into the adult world.

NOTE: If relaxation training and behavior modification seem silly to you, I suspect that this really isn't a good course for you to take.

## Text & Readings:

- Brannon, L., & Feist, J. (2007). Health psychology: An introduction to behavior and health, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. (*referred to as **BF** in class schedule*)
- Daniel, E.L. (Ed) (2007). Annual editions: Health 07/08. Dubuque, IA; McGraw-Hill. (*referred to as **AE** in class schedule*)
- Sobel, D.S. (1990). The placebo effect: Using the body's own healing mechanisms. In R. Ornstein & C. Swencionis (Eds.), The healing brain, (pp. 63-74). New York: The Guilford Press. (*pdf file online*)

The text will be the source for most of the technical information presented in the course. This information is often complicated and nuanced, and so a text provides the best format. Students will be expected to be familiar with the major research findings and the problems with the existing research, as well as some of the basic incidence rates. For example, just how common is coronary heart disease? Is it more common than cancer? What are the most likely causes of death for people your age? Further, you should appreciate the relative effectiveness of various psychological treatment strategies: Are anti-smoking TV spots effective? Can alcoholics learn to drink alcohol "safely"? Can behavior affect development of coronary heart disease? Type II diabetes? Cancer survival? We will generally use class time to consider and discuss issues that don't lend themselves to a more factual presentation or to attempt to resolve conflicting evidence.

## Exams:

There will be four exams which will be a combination of multiple choice and short essays. The exams will cover the text, the *Annual Editions* readings, lectures, and other class activities. Multiple choice questions will be used to evaluate your acquisition of the knowledge base while essays will primarily be used to assess your ability to integrate, draw inferences, and/or to reflect on a broader level the implications of what you have learned. The four exam grades will determine 60% of

your course grade. In preparing for the exams you will want to pay particular attention to those research findings which fail to support common health assumptions.

### **Discussions of *Annual Editions* Readings:**

All class members are expected to 1) have read the articles, 2) be prepared to relate the articles to other course material, and 3) have read the submitted discussion question & have thought about their response. 10% of the student's grade will be determined by performance as discussion leaders as well as class participation. I will take notes regarding participation in class discussion, the level of thought behind comments/questions, insight, stimulation of response by classmates, etc.

Students will be responsible for leading the class discussion of the "articles" found in the *Annual Editions* text, and responsibility for articles will be decided in class. Discussion leaders must 1) submit discussion questions to Dr. Ackerman, via e-mail, at least 48 hours before the discussion is to take place, 2) meet with Dr. Ackerman 24 hours before class to review their plans for the discussion, and 3) email the final discussion questions to the class 12 hours before the class meets. Following the discussion I will also ask the class members to evaluate the effectiveness of the discussion leaders.

### **Behavior Modification:**

Each student will design and implement a behavior modification program on some aspect of your own health. The purpose of the behavior modification project (and that of relaxation) is to provide you with first-hand experience with the procedures used to modify health behaviors. You will define and chart the behavior(s) you are attempting to modify through the semester, indicating when various contingencies are implemented. At the conclusion of the semester a summary of the student's personal health assessment & behavior modification should be presented in a 3-5 page paper worth 5% of the course grade. Your grade will be based on the thought and effort that you put into this assignment. Any student who smokes or drinks excessively is strongly encouraged to attempt to stop/lessen smoking/drinking. If you have any other health behavior that you want to modify (problems falling asleep, binge drinking, etc) Dr Ackerman would be happy to work with you.

### **Topic Paper:**

Students will work individually to learn more about some topic related to health psychology to be summarized in a paper. I strongly encourage you to use this opportunity to learn more about some problem that is relevant to you, a family member, or a friend. The paper will require students to delve into the published literature for some disorder or health problem and consider it from a psychological perspective. The topic must have some relevance to psychology, either due to predisposing personality or risk behaviors, psychological complications in the course of the disorder, or treatment implications. Specific instructions will be provided in class. The topic paper will be worth 25% of your final grade.

Several assignments pertaining to the topic have been assigned and are meant to "encourage" students to work on the project throughout the semester. Topics must be approved by Dr. Ackerman. Psychiatric conditions (ie schizophrenia) generally don't lend themselves to this project, but more viable topics include:

AIDS-related dementia or treatment	Alzheimer's (minimizing risks)
arthritis	asthma
chronic fatigue syndrome	cystic fibrosis
epilepsy	leukemia, or other specific cancers
modifying binge drinking	narcolepsy or other specific sleep disturbances
strokes	use of anabolic steroids

**Penalties will be assessed for any late work, including the preliminary assignments leading up to the paper, at the rate of 1/2 letter grade per day.**

### Daily Course Topics, Readings and Other Assignments

			<b>Brannon Chpt. &amp; Exams</b>	<b>Annual Edition Unit</b>	<b>Other Assignments</b>
1	W	<b>Jan 9</b>	Syllabus & Intro		
2	F	11	1. Introducing Health Psychology		
3	M	14	2: Conducting Health Research	Sobel article	
4	W	16			<i>Turn in family medical history</i>
5	F	18		1: Promoting Healthy Behavior Change	
6	W	23	3: Seeking Health Care	9: Consumer Health	
7	F	25			
8	M	28	4: Adhering to Medical Advice		
9	W	30		8: Health Care and the Health Care System	<i>Topic for your final paper due(1-2 paragraphs)</i>
10	F	<b>Feb 1</b>	<b>Exam 1</b>		
11	M	4	5: Defining and Measuring Stress		
12	W	6		2: Stress and Mental Health	
13	F	8			
14	M	11	6: Understanding Stress and Disease		
15	W	13			
16	F	15	7: Understanding Pain		
17	M	18		6: Sexuality and Relationships	<i>Prelim. outline of final paper due</i>
18	W	20	8: Coping with Stress and Pain		
19	F	22			
20	M	25	<b>Exam 2</b>		
21	W	27	9: Behavior Factors in Cardiovascular Disease		
22	F	29			<i>Annotated bibliography of at least 5 sources due</i>
23	M	<b>Mar 10</b>	10: Behavior Factors in Cancer		
24	W	12			
25	F	14	11: Living with Chronic Illness		
26	M	17		7: Preventing and Fighting Disease	
27	W	19	12: Preventing Injuries		
28	M	24		10: Contemporary Health Hazards	
29	W	26	<b>Exam 3</b>		
30	F	28	13: Smoking Tobacco		
31	M	31			
32	W	<b>Apr 2</b>			<i>Annotated outline due</i>
33	F	4	14: Using Alcohol and Other Drugs		
34	M	7		5: Drugs and Health	
35	W	9	15: Eating and Weight		
36	F	11			Watch Fast Food Nation
37	M	14		3. Nutritional Health	
38	W	16			
39	F	18	16: Exercising	4: Ex. and Weight Management	
40	M	21			
41	W	23	17: Future Challenges		<i>Topic papers due</i>
			<i>Awards Convocation &amp; URCAS</i>		
			<b>Exam 4</b> (alt. times will be offered)		

			<b>Brannon Chpt. &amp; Exam</b>	<b>Bette's topics</b>	<b>Annual Edition Unit</b>	<b>&amp; Other Assignments</b>
1	W	Jan. 10	Syllabus & Intro			
2	F	12	Introducing Health Psychology	Moyers film: Healing in China or Healing from Within or The art of Healing (hospitals)		Film:
			<b>Martin Luther King Observance</b>			
3	W	17	2: Conducting Health Research		Sobel article	
4	F	19		<i>Relaxation Training?</i>		Turn in family medical history
5	M	22			1: Promoting Healthy Behavior Change	
6	W	24	3: Seeking Health Care	Hospitalization Moyers film on hospitals: <i>The art of Healing</i>		
7	F	26			<i>6: Sexuality and Relationships</i>	
8	M	29	4: Adhering to Medical Advice			
9	W	31			8: Health Care and the Health Care System	<i>Topic for your final paper due (1-2 paragraphs)</i>
10	F	Feb. 2	<b>Exam 1</b>			
11	M	5	5: Defining and Measuring Stress			
12	W	7			2: Stress and Mental Health	
13	F	9		<i>Relaxation Training</i>		
14	M	12	6: Understanding Stress and Disease			
15	W	14		Moyers Film on PNUI		
16	F	16	7: Understanding Pain			
17	M	19		<i>½ of The Mind, pain clinic</i>		<i>Prelim. outline of final paper due</i>
18	W	21	8: Coping with Stress and Pain			
19	F	23		Moyers Film: Healing from Within		
20	M	26	<b>Exam 2</b>			
21	W	28	9: Behavior Factors in Cardiovascular Disease			
22	F	Mar. 2			7: Preventing and Fighting	<i>Annotated bibliography of at least</i>

					Disease	<i>5 sources due</i>
23	M	5	10: Behavior Factors in Cancer			
24	W	7		Moyers film on cancer & death		
25	F	9	11: Living with Chronic Illness			
			<b>Spring Break</b>			
26	M	19		<i>Aids &amp; STDs</i>		
27	W	21	12: Preventing Injuries	<i>Pandemics? Avian fle, Sars</i>		
28	F	23			10: Contemporary Health Hazards	
29	M	26	<b>Exam 3</b>			
30	W	28	13: Smoking Tobacco	<i>Pandemics? Avian flue, Sars</i>		
31	F	30		<i>Public Health Campaigns</i>		
32	M	Apr. 2			9: Consumer Health	<i>Annotated outline due</i>
33	W	4	14: Using Alcohol and Other Drugs			
			<b>Easter Recess</b>			
34	M	9			5: Drugs and Health	
35	W	11	15: Eating and Weight	Watching Fast Food Nation		
36	F	13				Watching Fast Food Nation
37	M	16			3. Nutritional Health	
38	W	18	16: Exercising			
39	F	20			4: Exercise and Weight Management	
40	M	23	17: Future Challenges			
41	W	25				<i>Final paper due</i>
	F	27	<i>Awards Convocation &amp; URCAS</i>			
	Sat	5/5	<b>Exam 4</b> (alt. times will be offered)			

Write sheet that tells how to summarize an article & then discuss what is relevant to you

For each chapter, discuss what in psychology applies to the topic of health

Chose a particular medical disorder with potential psychological or behavioral impact

- a. determine the biological/biochemical
- a. identify what is known about behaviors or personality putting one at risk
- b. psych needs & impact of the disorder
- c. psychological implications for treatment
- d. do you note a particular psychological approach, theoretical, which is particularly used/ which is not used but which would be applicable?

Chpt Title Topics

### **1. Introducing Health Psychology (20)**

*Lectures: Existing two-day lecture comes from Brannon---Needs redoing.*

*The Mind Body relationship & the nature of health and illness--Gatchel ch1*

### **2. Conducting Research in Psychology and Epidemiology (25)**

Guest Speaker--Epidemiologist

Reading: The Placebo Effect--Sorbell

*Lectures: Existing two-day lecture comes from Brannon---Needs some redoing.*

### **3. Defining and Measuring Stress (35 pages)**

Perception of stress, stressful life events

*Lectures: Currently based on Brannon--redo*

*see chapter ;in Spacapan & Oskamp by Cohen on perception of stress & related*

### **4. Understanding Stress and Illness (27 pages)**

Psychoneuroimmunology

Reading: Kobasa reading (1982) on Hardiness ? see citation in old notes

locate previous reading on psychoneuroimmunology

*Lectures: illnesses related to stress Sarafino p 132*

*Stress and the development of illness see Taylor 6 & 7*

*see Gatchel Cp 6*

### **5. Understanding Pain (29)**

Movie

Reading: Melzak & Walls goes here

*Lectures:*

**6. Coping with Stress and Pain (26)**

social support  
learned helplessness

Reading from Rodin & Langer on control

Reading on social support

*Lectures:*

*see Taylor chapter 8 -- Stress management*

*see Taylor What is pain? The control of pain Psychological Control of discomfort*

*see Spacapan & Oskamp ch 4, The negative side of perceived control*

*Control and Learned Helplessness! see Gatchel & Baum, ch 4*

*Gatchel & Baum on pain and pain management*

*Speaker on stress management? Pain Clinic?*

**7. Identifying Behavioral Factors in Cardiovascular Disease (34)**

Stress and the development of illness

Type A Behavior Pattern

Speaker on behavioral therapies

*Lectures: Current lecture based on Green et al*

*stress and the development of disease see Taylor ch 7*

**8. Identifying Behavioral Factors in Cancer (23)**

Reading from Marsha & one of the original pieces-->discussion

Speaker from UT? from cancer clinic?

*Lectures: REDO!*

**9. Receiving Health Care (33)**

Health Beliefs (attitudes & attitude change)

Speaker on DRG & reimbursement? Insurance issues directing treatment?

Reading :by Cousins

*Lectures:*

*see Sarafino ch 6 see Taylor chapter 3*

*existing lecture on seeking health care*

*Hospitalization ( see Taylor)*

**10. Adhering to Medical Advice (20)**

Modification of health behaviors (behavioral paradigms)

Health promotion programs

*Lectures: part of lecture ready*

*see Taylor chapter 4*

*see cognitive-behavioral treatment techniques in Gatchel & Baum, Ch 10*

*see Prevention and health promotion, ch 13 in Gatchel & Baum*

### **11. Living with Chronic Illness (41)**

Aids: Aids speaker?

Alzheimers : Anna on working with the elderly

*Lectures:*

*communication of feelings? this is all ready*

*see Taylor The management of chronic & terminal illness; part 6*

*Social Support and the Cancer Patient by Taylor in Spacapan & Oksamp*

### **12. Smoking Tobacco (35)**

**Substance abuse**Health promotion programs

*Lectures: lecture already on programs--2 days*

*substance abuse, see Sarafino ch 7see Taylor for control of smoking programs*

*extensive material in Spacapan & Oskamp*

### **13. Alcohol & Other Drugs (37)**

addiction & appetitive disorders

prevention strategies

*Lectures:*

*see Taylor for control program on alch*

*see Taylor for prevention lecture*

*see Gatchel & Baum Ch 12 for appetitive disorders*

### **14. Eating to Control Weight (37)**

Body Image

Review of Weight Loss Programs?

Readings: Crandall & American Psychologist on Bulimia

*Lectures:*

*Nutrition Sarafingo ch 8see Taylor for control programs*

*Speaker: on nutrition???*

### **15. Exercising (28)**

Speaker on Wellness programs & benefits

*Lectures:*

*could always start student presentatiions here*



**16. Health Psychology: Premise and Promise (15)**  
student presentations

*Lectures: see Taylor chapter 18*

Other ideas:

\*\*\*DuPont on the ER & role of professionals--Gatchel & Baum's psychological disorders & psychological assessment in medical settings

Operant Vs Classical conditioning & role in medicine--Murphy???

Sleep & role in illness--speaker from Sleep Disorders unit!

What about someone from UT Day treatment? Jerry would be great.  
Jerry's wife? ooooooh...on children!