

PSYC 466-001, Psychology of Intimate Relationships

Spring 2012

Monday and Wednesday, 3:00-4:15 PM

Instructor: Laura MacNeil, M.A.
Class Location: East Building 201
Email: lmacneil@gmu.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday 2-3pm, Aquia 337
Mailbox: Graduate Student Mailboxes, David King Hall 2nd Floor

Course Objectives

The major goal of this course is to gain an in-depth understanding of the psychological processes involved in intimate relationships, with a strong focus on romantic relationships. There will be a heavy focus on applying the understanding of psychological theory to our own lives through assignments and in-class discussions. There will be a heavy focus on applying psychological theory to our own lives through assignments and in-class discussions.

Required Readings

Textbook:

Bradbury, T. N., & Karney, B. R. (2010). *Intimate Relationships*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Supplemental journal articles and book chapters will also be made available through blackboard.

Course Expectations

This class is organized in the style an advanced seminar, rather than a lecture, and thoughtful participation is an integral portion of it. You are expected to attend class, to have completed readings beforehand, and to contribute to class discussions.

An open mind is also essential for this class. Intimate relationships are an important part of our lives, and I expect that many of you have strong beliefs about them. Readings and class discussions may lead to closer inspection of such beliefs than we, as humans, typically engage in. While I encourage people to think critically about the topics we discuss and expect that there will be disagreements with both how psychologists have approached these topics, and amongst class members, class discussions are an opportunity for scholarly debate, and respect for fellow classmates and opposing viewpoints is a must.

Course Requirements and Grading Procedures

1. Discussion Questions (40 points total, 10%)

Students will submit 10 weekly discussion questions, each worth 1% of your grade, to my blackboard email account—log into PSYC 466 on blackboard, go to the 'mail' option, and send your discussion question to aafam (no .gmu at the end). You will develop your discussion questions from the assigned readings, and they serve two main purposes. First, it is my hope that the thought they entail will help you think critically about the material we learn, and we will discuss how to do that in more depth. Second, student participation is an integral portion of making this class meaningful and this class is meant to be interactive in the sense that both myself, and you as students, will have a say in what aspects of the readings we focus on, and discussion questions are one of the central ways of allowing you as students to direct the focus of our discussions.

The weeks that the discussion questions are due are noted below on the semester calendar.

Discussion questions are to be submitted by **6pm on Sunday**, the day before our Monday class, so that I can integrate them into the lectures for that week, with one exception, the **discussion questions for the first week are due by 8pm on Tuesday January 24th (the evening before our second class)**. Late discussion questions will not be accepted.

2. Reflection Papers (120 points, 30%)

There will be three 2-page reflection papers asking students to apply a specific concept learned in class to their own experiences. Reflection papers will be graded based on two factors: a) Whether they demonstrate a solid understanding of the concept at hand, and b) whether the student has followed the instructions of the reflection paper.

3. Exams (200 points total, 50%)

There will be three in-class multiple choice exams designed to assess your general comprehension of the topics discussed in class. Prior to the date of each exam, I will provide a study guide to help direct people towards relevant concepts that they will need to study and have a good grasp of for the exam. **Your lowest test grade will be dropped, and thus the 50% of your grade that tests account for will be based on your two best test grades.**

4. Final Paper (40 points, 10%)

There will not be a final exam. Instead, student will be required to turn in an extended 3-4 page final reflection paper asking them to consider how various concepts learned in class can be used to help understand their own experiences in intimate relationships, as well as how to consider how this information may be helpful in improving intimate relationships. **A hard copy of this paper will be due in my mailbox in David King Hall by Thursday, December 15th at 5pm. I will not accept emailed papers.**

5. (optional) Extra Credit (up to 12 points, 3%)

You may earn extra credit points for participating in research or attending psychology-related seminars. You can locate studies and seminars through the Sona Systems webpage (<http://gmu.sona-systems.com/>). You will be able to earn a maximum of 12 extra credit points—3 points for each hour of research participation or seminar attended. Note: these points are not percentage points.

I will also award extra credit for excellent class participation. Students who attend class regularly and make thoughtful contributions will be awarded between 1 and 5 extra percentage points to their final grade (i.e. between 4 and 20 points), depending on the degree to which their contributions have helped to enrich class discussions. This can only work in your favor if you participate. Please do not ask me to give you a bonus, as I will consider each student as I am doing the final grades.

Course Policies

Given that the a student's lowest test grade will already be dropped, no make-ups will be given for exams. No exceptions will be made to this policy. Reflection papers must be turned in on hard copy on the day they are assigned, and will not be accepted late.

Grade Calculation

Discussion Questions	40 points (10 x 4 points each)
Reflection Papers	120 points (3 x 40 points each)
Exams	200 points (2 x 100 points each)
<u>Final Paper</u>	<u>40 points</u>
TOTAL	400 points

A+ (97%+); A (93-96%); A- (90-92%); B+ (87-89%); B (83-86%); B- (80-82%); C+ (77-79%); C (70-76%); D (60-69%); F (59% & below)

GMU Honor Code

Students are expected to abide by the GMU Honor Code. Violations of the GMU Honor Code can result in failure of an assignment, depending on the severity of violation. All violations will be reported to the Honor Committee. Please review the honor code: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

Course Technology

Powerpoint presentations will be used during lectures. I may sometimes send information to you via email so you will be required to regularly check your Mason email.

Accommodation of Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Last day to add: January 31st

Last day to drop: February 24th

Important Note: Please keep in mind that the following is a tentative syllabus and topics and assignments can be changed, added, or deleted at any time at the discretion of the instructor to improve the quality of the course. I will do my best to announce such changes ahead of time in class.

Week 1: 1/23 and 1/25 (Discussion Questions (DQ) due by 1/24 at 8pm):

Textbook chapter 1

Reis, H. T., & Aron, A. (2008). Love: What is it, why does it matter, and how does it operate?

Perspectives on Psychological Science, From philosophical thinking to psychological empiricism, 3(1), 80-86.

Aron, E. N., & Aron, A. (1996). Love and the expansion of the self: The state of the model. *Personal Relationships*, 3(1), 45-58.

Week 2: 1/ 30 and 2/1 (DQ due by 1/29):

Textbook pgs. 112-117 on Attachment Theory

Cassidy, J. (2000). Adult romantic attachments: A developmental perspective on individual differences.

Review of General Psychology, Adult attachment, 4(2), 111-131.

Week 3: 2/6 (1st Reflection Paper Due) and 2/8 (DQ due by 2/5):

Textbook pgs. 117-135 on Social Exchange Theory and Social Learning Theory

Rusbult, C. E. (1983). A longitudinal test of the investment model: The development (and deterioration) of satisfaction and commitment in heterosexual involvements. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45(1), 101-117.

Week 4: 2/13 and 2/18 (DQ due by 2/12):

Textbook pgs. 96-106 on Evolutionary Theory

Textbook pgs. 150-189 on Sex, Gender and Intimacy

Ward, J., & Voracek, M. (2004). Evolutionary and social cognitive explanations of sex differences in romantic jealousy. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 56(3), 165-171.

Week 5: 2/20: "Catch up day"

2/22: EXAM 1

Week 6: 2/27 and 2/29 (DQ due by 2/26):

Textbook pgs. 200-228 on Attraction

Meston, C. M., & Buss, D. M. (2007). Why humans have sex. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 36(4), 477-507.

Week 7: 3/5 and 3/7 (DQ due by 3/4):

Textbook pgs. 229-244 on Mate Selection

McKenna (Yael Kaynan), K. Y. A. (2008). MySpace or your place: Relationship initiation and development in the wired and wireless world. *Handbook of relationship initiation.*, 235-247.

Week 8: 3/12 and 3/14: SPRING BREAK! – NO CLASS!

Week 9: 3/19 and 3/21 (DQ due by 3/18):

Murray, S. L. (1999). The quest for conviction: Motivated cognition in romantic relationships.

Psychological Inquiry, 10(1), 23-34.

Murray, S. L. (2005). Regulating the risk of closeness: A relationship-specific sense of felt security.

Current Directions in Psychological Science, 14, 74-78.

Week 10: 3/26 and 3/28 (DQ due by 3/25):

Textbook pgs. 285-294, 297-303, 308-311 on Communication, Intimacy, and Maintaining Intimacy
Rempel, J. K., Holmes, J. G., & Zanna, M. P. (1985). Trust in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49(1), 95-112.

Wieselquist, J., Rusbult, C. E., Foster, C. A., & Agnew, C. R. (1999). Commitment, pro-relationship behavior, and trust in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77(5), 942-966.

**Week 11: 4/2: "Catch up day" (2nd Reflection Paper Due)
4/4: EXAM 2**

Week 12: 4/9 and 4/11 (DQ due by 4/8):

Textbook pgs. 303-308 on Forgiveness

Fincham, F. D., Hall, J., & Beach, S. R. H. (2006). Forgiveness in Marriage: Current Status and Future Directions. *Family Relations*, 55(4), 415-427.

Tashiro, T., Frazier, P., & Berman, M. (2006). Stress-Related Growth Following Divorce and Relationship Dissolution. *Handbook of divorce and relationship dissolution.*, ONLY pages 361-369 and 376-377 *Note that this is not the entire article*

Week 13: 4/16 and 4/18 (DQ due by 4/15):

Sprecher, S., Felmlee, D., Metts, S., Fehr, B., & Vanni, D. (1998). Factors Associated with Distress Following the Breakup of a Close Relationship. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 15(6), 791-809.

Baumeister, R. F., & Dhavale, D. (2001). Two sides of romantic rejection. *Interpersonal rejection.*, 55-71.

Week 14: 4/23 and 4/25 (DQ due by 4/22):

Gottman, J. M. (1998). Psychology and the study of the marital processes. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49, 169-197. ONLY pages 179-193 *Note that this is not the entire article*

Textbook pgs. 499-504, 508-526 on Couples Therapy

**Week 15: 4/30: "Catch up day" (3rd Reflection Paper Due)
5/2: EXAM 3**

No final exam. Final paper due in my mailbox in David King Hall by Monday, May 14th at 5pm.