

PSYCHOLOGY 24200.03: HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY**Spring 2026****Mondays/Wednesdays 7:00-8:15 PM ET****Room: West Bldg W619****Instructor:** Felix Yirdong, M.A.**Email:** felix.yirdong31@login.cuny.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 8-10AM (By appointment)

**Office hours are based on appointment. Request for appointments (virtual or in-person) should be via my email with the subject line "Health Psychology". Alternatively, you can use this [calendly link](#) to book an appointment with me as well.

Course Description & Objectives:

Welcome to **HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY!** This course is designed to introduce students to the basic principles of health psychology from both a theoretical and applied perspective. Health psychology is devoted to understanding how social, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional factors influence the maintenance of health, development and progression of disease, and adjustment to illness. Throughout the course of the semester, we will cover: theories of health behaviors, stress and coping, illness perception and prevention, intervention research, treatment and medical decision making among others. We will be viewing this through the lens of culture, carefully considering health disparities throughout the course.

Course Prerequisites:

Introductory Psychology and at least one other 3 cr. psych course ENGL 120 – Expository Writing.

Required Text:

- Shelley E. Taylor. (2018). *Health Psychology (Tenth Edition)*. McGraw-Hill Education, 2 Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10121. ISBN10: 1506373712
- Psychology of Health - Biopsychosocial Approach. (2019).
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.79036>

This course will use an open [access textbook](#), which has a Creative Commons license and is freely available online. Students interested in a hardcover textbook as a reference for this course, can purchase the recommended textbook as supplemental material. All additional readings for this course will be provided by the course instructor.

Here is a link to a supplemental material for the class (free flashcards):

<https://edge.sagepub.com/sandersonhealthpsych3e>

Learning Objectives:

In this class, you will:

- Understand the major theoretical models of Health Psychology and its application to studies in the field

- Develop knowledge and understanding of key issues in the field, i.e. “real world” applications, including stress and coping, health behavior/behavior change, and social relationships and health
- Develop an understanding of how research methods are used to study theoretical models of health and behavior
- Gain knowledge about the role of psychologist in health promotion and treatment interventions
- Understand how to critically examine health issues that impact individuals and society, such as health disparities and sociocultural factors

Course Format: This course will be taught in person unless otherwise specified.

This course will include class lectures, readings from the textbook, a class group presentation, and class activities/discussions. Occasionally, there may be some additional reading material to supplement the textbook however, the instructor will provide these materials to the students. Lectures will include information from outside sources (e.g., scholarly journals). PowerPoint of lectures maybe posted to Brightspace.

Office Hours:

To accommodate all students’ requests for appointments, office hours are strictly by appointment on Thursdays between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. If students’ concerns are similar, this period may be used for a group tutorial which would be open to all students. **Email is the best way to get in touch with the me**, and please allow **at least 48 hours** for a response. Always mention the course name “Health Psychology” in your subject line. If I do not respond, send me a follow-up email and I will get back to you. Students are advised to plan as last-minute (i.e. less than one day) questions about exams or assignments are not guaranteed immediate response.

Attendance:

Attendance of course lectures is **compulsory and would constitute 20% of your final grade which**, includes active participation in class discussions and activities.

NB: All assessment (i.e., quizzes, exams, group presentations, etc.) would occur in-person. Students are strongly encouraged to take note of these dates on the course schedule. I do not guarantee a make-up exam. I understand that unexpected circumstances may arise and, in such case, feel free to notify me if you think it may impact on your participation in the class or assessment in anyway. If you are unable to attend class for any reason(s), please feel free to email me as soon as possible.

Brightspace:

Brightspace will be used to post course-related documents (e.g., syllabus, grades, rubrics) and all course announcements, so students are encouraged to check Brightspace regularly to ensure timely receipt of important information. The course instructor will not directly send course materials to students.

Classroom Policies: Members of the learning community (you – student and I – instructor) are expected to maintain respect in the classroom and while engaging in class related activities (e.g.,

break out groups, discussion boards). Timely arrival to class is encouraged to benefit from the lectures.

Ground rules:

- We (instructor and students) will all treat each other with respect. Disrespect, harassment, or hateful/derogatory language of any kind will not be tolerated whether in-person or online. Genuine mistakes and misunderstandings may occur and if that happens apologize and class will move forward as usual.
- There are no “stupid” or “best” questions. Raise your hand if you want to contribute or ask any question(s) and I will be happy to engage with you, explain or repeat information if needed.
- Your success and academic excellence are my priority as your instructor. My goal is to support you and foster an enabling environment where students can engage in class to the best of their ability. Please do your best not to disrupt class or your peers. This includes turning your phone/ mobile devices on silent, keeping conversations to a minimum during lectures or taking them outside the class, entering lecture hall quietly/quickly if late.
- Engage in respectful dialogue with classmates and collaborate to develop a shared understanding, with the aim of finding common ground and broadening perspectives.
- Avoid framing helpful discussions as debates or positioning one another as opponents, with the aim of “winning” or proving others “wrong”. It impedes effective learning in classroom.
- Dialogue and debates hold a special space in our learning experiences, but they are best utilized when all students involved have clarity on the ground rules that governs the learning engagements, and consent to participate as a form of communication.

Grading:

Grading will be based on final exams (40%), quizzes (25%), attendance and participation (20%), case presentation (15%), and an extra credit assignment (5%).

Exams (40%)

Students will sit for only one final cumulative exam at the end of the semester – see course schedule. Exams will be conducted in-person during the class period and will begin promptly at 7:00pm. Exams will consist of multiple-choice questions and short-response questions. Exam questions will be based on class lectures, assigned text and any supplemental resources that are utilized (e.g., additional readings, videos). Following the posting of exam grades, students may reach out to the course instructor to review test results. However, these discussions will be conducted by appointment only. Students will not be able to discuss exam questions via email. Students have **seven days** following grade posting to schedule an exam review meeting with the course instructor.

Make up exams: Make-up exams will not be offered unless the student is able to provide a documented, and legitimate excuse or due to extenuating circumstances. In this case, the student must contact the instructor at **least 72 hours before the scheduled exam** to (a) inform the instructor and (b) reschedule the exam date. In the case of unexpected absence (such as sickness), students must contact the course instructor to provide a documented or legitimate

excuse. The course instructor will verify that the absence is considered excused. The course instructor will decide whether or not make-up exams are permitted. Make up exams must be completed within **seven days** of the original exam date (unless student has extenuating circumstances). Make up exams may differ in content and/or format from the exam that was given to the rest of the class. The student is required to complete the exam on the scheduled make-up date unless they provide a legitimate, documented excuse.

Attendance and Participation (20%)

Throughout the course, students are encouraged to actively participate in class discussions in a thoughtful manner, giving room to other students to also participate. Periodically, students will be given short assignments based on related class materials. You may be asked to write and submit activities on Brightspace or to respond to a few questions about a video or a reading. Participation assignments will open on Brightspace at the end of class and will be due by the beginning of the following class.

Quizzes (25%)

There will be three (3) quizzes throughout the semester. Quizzes will contain short-answer questions, multiple choice questions, and case scenarios. At the end of the semester, *your lowest quiz grade will be dropped*. All quizzes will be in-person during lectures hours.

Case Presentation (15%)

For this activity students will be required to work in groups and select a preferred topic of interest related to topics covered in class. Format of group presentation may follow one of the following:

- 1) critically select a peer-reviewed meta-analysis or systematic review on your topic of interest and discuss their findings, limitations of the study, and recommendation for future research.
- 2) present a state of the field for a topic of interest related to the class. Students must identify a research question, appraise the literature to determine the trajectory of practice and care, history of treatment modalities and efficacy, and recommendations for future studies.
- 3) select a recently peer-reviewed article on a topic of interest and discuss their rationale, aims, methodology, results, discussion, limitations, and directions for future studies.
- 4) chose a preferred topic of interest and make a class presentation on specific research questions and aims.

Students will be randomly assigned to groups by the instructor; however, it is the responsibility of the group to decide on their preferred task for the class presentation. Each student will be graded individually based on their level of contribution to the overall assignment and their demonstrated competency during class presentation.

NB: All topics and tasks for the class presentation must be approved by the instructor. Students are encouraged to set-up a meeting with the instructor at their earliest convenience for approval of their preferred topics.

Extra Credit (5%)

There will be 2 main opportunities for extra credit.

1. Course surveys
 - There will be a course survey posted on Brightspace during the semester.
2. Reflection paper
 - Students would have the opportunity throughout the semester to choose **ONE** of the listed readings to critically examine and write a reflection paper. Reflection paper should cover the main arguments in the paper, strengths, weaknesses, potential biases, how and why the authors arrived at their conclusion, and how arguments from the journal connect with your learning experiences so far (if any). Your paper should be 1 page long (1.5-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman, 1-inch margins).

Selected Readings:

- Aldwin, C. M., & Brustrom, J. (1997). Theories of coping with chronic stress: Illustrations from the health psychology and aging literatures. In *Coping with chronic stress* (pp. 75-103). Boston, MA: Springer US.
- Baum, A., & Posluszny, D. M. (1999). Health psychology: mapping biobehavioral contributions to health and illness. *Annual review of psychology*, 50(1), 137-163.
- Castelnuovo, G., & Schreurs, K. M. (2019). Pain management in clinical and health psychology. *Frontiers in psychology*, 10, 1295.
- Cohen, S., Murphy, M. L. M., & Prather, A. A. (2019). Ten Surprising Facts About Stressful Life Events and Disease Risk. *Annual review of psychology*, 70, 577–597.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-102857>
- Crosswell, A. D., & Lockwood, K. G. (2020). Best practices for stress measurement: How to measure psychological stress in health research. *Health psychology open*, 7(2), 2055102920933072. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2055102920933072>
- Dessie, Z. G., & Zewotir, T. (2024). HIV-related stigma and associated factors: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 12, 1356430.
- Eccleston, C., Morley, S. J., & Williams, A. D. C. (2013). Psychological approaches to chronic pain management: evidence and challenges. *British Journal of Anaesthesia*, 111(1), 59-63.
- Hagger, M. S. (2010). Self-regulation: an important construct in health psychology research and practice. *Health Psychology Review*, 4(2), 57-65.
- Harrell, J. P., Hall, S., & Taliaferro, J. (2003). Physiological responses to racism and discrimination: An assessment of the evidence. *American journal of public health*, 93(2), 243-248.
- Hobson, J. M., Moody, M. D., Sorge, R. E., & Goodin, B. R. (2022). The neurobiology of social stress resulting from Racism: Implications for pain disparities among racialized minorities. *Neurobiology of pain (Cambridge, Mass.)*, 12, 100101.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ynpai.2022.100101>
- Kazarian, S. S., & Evans, D. R. (2001). Health psychology and culture: Embracing the 21st century. In *Handbook of cultural health psychology* (pp. 3-43). Academic Press.

- Krantz, D. S., Grunberg, N. E., & Baum, A. (1985). Health psychology. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 36, 349–383. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.ps.36.020185.002025>
- Leventhal, H., Weinman, J., Leventhal, E. A., & Phillips, L. A. (2008). Health psychology: The search for pathways between behavior and health. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.*, 59(1), 477-505.
- Marks, D. F., Murray, M., Locke, A., Annunziato, R. A., & Estacio, E. V. (2024). Health psychology: Theory, research and practice.
- Murray, M., & Chamberlain, K. (Eds.). (1999). *Qualitative health psychology: Theories and methods*. Sage.
- Nieuwenhuijsen, E. R., Zemper, E., Miner, K. R., & Epstein, M. (2006). Health behavior change models and theories: contributions to rehabilitation. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 28(5), 245-256.
- Polanco-Roman, L., Galán, C. A., Willis, H. A., Sntana, A. M., Satinsky, E. N., Howard, L. Y., & Zhou, E. (2025). Racism-based traumatic stress symptoms and risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors among Black and Latine adolescent. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0001901>
- Rüdel, K., & Diefenbach, M. A. (2008). Current issues and new directions in psychology and health: Culture and health psychology. Why health psychologists should care about culture.
- Schwartz, S. M., Trask, P. C., Shanmugham, K., & Townsend, C. O. (2004). Conducting Psychological Research in Medical Settings: Challenges, Limitations, and Recommendations for Effectiveness Research. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 35(5), 500.
- Smith, K. V., & Thew, G. R. (2017). Conducting research in clinical psychology practice: Barriers, facilitators, and recommendations. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 56(3), 347-356.
- Stephenson, E., & DeLongis, A. (2020). Coping strategies. *The Wiley encyclopedia of health psychology*, 55-60.
- Suls, J. M., Luger, T., & Martin, R. (2010). The biopsychosocial model and the use of theory in health psychology. *Handbook of health psychology and behavioral medicine*, 15-27.
- Taylor, S. E. (1997). Health psychology. The science and the field. *HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY*, 45, 1.
- Taylor, S. E. (2020). The developing field of health psychology. In *Handbook of Psychology and Health, Volume IV* (pp. 1-22). Routledge.
- Yardley, L., & Marks, D. F. (2003). Research methods for clinical and health psychology.
- Yirdong, F., Anim, M. T., Nkyi, A. K., & Ocansey, F. (2023). Religious coping and depressive symptoms in people living with HIV in Ghana. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 26(1), 34-48.

Note: all extra credit points will be added to your total exam score.

This course will abide by Hunter College's grading scale. Course grades will not be rounded up. You will receive the exact grade based upon the below final grade calculation. Please contact me about grades only if you believe there has been a clerical error.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage
A+	97.5-100.0	B-	80.0-82.4
A	92.5-97.4	C+	77.5-79.9
A-	90.0-92.4	C	70.0-77.4
B+	87.5-89.9	D	60.0-69.9
B	82.5-87.4	F	0.0-59.9

Hunter College Policies

Academic Integrity:

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

Students are expected to submit original work. Where resources and sources of information are used, credit must be given to the original source. For help when working on assignments, students are encouraged to consult with the campus writing center, other students in the class, and me. This course follows the university-wide Honor Code, and you are trusted to NOT cheat or plagiarize. Cheating and/or plagiarism will result in an automatic F and will be reported to the Psychology Department. Cheating is non-negotiable and not fair to students who work hard to understand the material. Students are expected to develop and demonstrate originality in their academic work. The use of generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) to complete or write assignments in place of students' effort constitutes academic dishonesty. Any violations of this policy will be referred to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Office.

From the Office of Accessibility:

All request for accommodation should be submitted at least *two weeks* in advance of the intended date and prior to the first quiz. In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, this university is committed to ensuring educational accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (emotional, medical, physical, and/or learning) consult the Office of Accessibility, located in Room E1214B, and speak to me directly to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772-4857 or (212) 650-3230.

Sexual Misconduct:

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and

gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

- a. **Sexual Violence:** Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).
- b. **All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct:** Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Sophie Kravet (Sophie.Kravet@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counselling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct:

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/diversityandcompliance/repository/files/cuny-policy-on-sexual-misconduct.pdf>

Hunter College Counseling Services:

In this course, we will be discussing some problems that students, their friends, or their family members sometimes have. Although these problems are common among students, in a few cases the problems may cause students significant distress or may interfere with their performance in school or with their social relationships. If you have any significant concerns about mental health, you should know about the resources that are available to you for help.

The *Hunter College Counseling and Wellness Services* (CWS) is an excellent source of information and assistance concerning these problems. The phone number there is 212-772-4931, and they are available for non-emergency consultations from Mon-Fri from 9am – 5pm. Students also can visit the CWS website at www.hunter.cuny.edu/student-services/pcs for further information. If you or someone you know is in a crisis and in immediate need of help (i.e., if you or someone you know is thinking of harming self or others), please call 911 or report to the nearest emergency room.

Additional Resources

Free printing (In-Person):

Every student is allotted 300 free pages of printing per semester at the Student Resource Center on the 2nd floor of the Thomas Hunter Building, Room 202

Technical Support (Go here for computer, Blackboard, email support): Location: Hunter North, Room 303

Email: studenthelpdesk@hunter.cuny.edu

Phone: (212) 650-3624

Long-term Laptop Loans

Laptops are available to Hunter students on loan:

<https://ww2.hunter.cuny.edu/students/student-life/emergency-support-andresources/laptoploan/>

Mobile Hotspot Loans

Mobile Hotspot devices are available to Hunter students on loan:

<https://ww2.hunter.cuny.edu/students/student-life/emergency-support-andresources/internet-wifi-resources/>

Writing Center:

Location: Library - 7th Floor, Silverstein Student Success Center

Drop-in Hours: Monday to Thursday - 10AM-7PM; Friday - 10AM-4PM

For help with any writing assignments, you can book a live video session through:

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/rwc>

Undergraduate Advising (Psychology Department):

You can schedule a virtual advising session with a psych advisor via

www.hunter.cuny.edu/navigate/students or email psychadv@hunter.cuny.edu. For quick inquiries.

Career Development Services:

Advice on employment opportunities and internships, resume and cover letter writing, career fairs and networking opportunities. <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/student-services/cds>

Welcome to the almost end of this syllabus!!! Congrats on having made it here and paying close attention. For 1 extra credit point on your first exam, provide a fun fact about yourself by midnight on Wednesday, 01/28 using this link:

COURSE CALENDAR - 2026

The course syllabus is a general plan for the semester and is subject to change. Changes to the syllabus will be announced to the class by the instructor in class or on Brightspace as needed.

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Monday, 01/26	Introduction & Syllabus		Review syllabus before class
Wednesday, 01/28	What is Health Psychology?	IntechOpen, Chapter 1 (pg. 1 -6) Shelley, Chapter 1 (pg. 2 – 4)	
Monday, 02/02	Scientific Evidence, Research Methods, and Application in Health Psychology	Shelley, Chapter 1 (pg. 9 – 12)	
Wednesday, 02/04	Contemporary Perspectives: Psychosocial and Cultural	Watch	
Monday, 02/09	Understanding Stress	Shelley, Chapter 6	Cohen et al. (2019) Crosswell et al. (2020)
Wednesday, 02/11	Stress and Coping Stigma, Discrimination, and Stress	Shelley, Chapter 6 (pg. 142-144)	
Monday, 02/16	COLLEGE CLOSED		
Wednesday, 02/18	Stress and Coping Stigma, Discrimination, and Stress - II	Shelley, Chapter 6 (pg. 142-144)	Guest Lecture: Dr. Juddy Gomez
Monday, 02/23	Stigma and Illness: HIV	Shelley, Chapter 6 (pg. 146)	
Wednesday, 02/25	Quiz 1 7-8:15 pm		
Monday, 03/02	Coping with Chronic Illness	Shelley, Chapter 11 & 12	Video 1
Wednesday, 03/04	Cancer Terminal Illness and Bereavement	Shelley, Chapter 11 & 12	Video 2
Monday, 03/09	Promoting Resilience Treatment Adherence in Chronic Illness	Shelley, Chapter 7, (pg. 137)	
Wednesday, 03/11	Social Support and Health Outcomes - I	Shelley, Chapter 7, (pg. 151-157)	
Monday, 03/16	Social Support and Health Outcomes - II	Shelley, Chapter 7, (pg. 151-157)	
Wednesday, 03/18	Experience and Management of Pain	Shelley, Chapter 10, (pg. 201 - 214)	

Monday, 03/23	Quiz 2 7-8:15 pm		
Wednesday, 03/25	Health Disparities		
Monday, 03/30	Motivational Interviewing		Video
Wednesday 04/01 – 04/09	SPRING BREAK		
Monday, 04/13	Theories of Health Behavior Change - I		
Wednesday, 04/15	Theories of Health Behavior Change - II		
Monday, 04/20	Intervention Development: Translating Research into Practice		
Wednesday, 04/22	Communicating unexpected news to patients and family		Video Video 2
Monday, 04/27	Quiz 3 7-8:15 pm		
Wednesday, 04/29	Mental Health Day – No Class		
Monday, 05/04	Future Directions in Health Psychology	Shelly, Chapter 15, (pg. 325)	
Wednesday, 05/06	Health Psychology as a Profession	Shelly, Chapter 15, (pg. 325)	
Monday, 05/11	Class Presentation		
Wednesday, 05/13	Class Presentation		
Monday, 05/18	No class		
Wednesday, 05/20	FINAL EXAM 6 - 8:15 pm		
Monday, 05/25	NO CLASS - COLLEGE CLOSED		