

HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY & BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE
Spring 2008, Psyc 360-500, Tues & Thurs 11:10-12:25, Psychology 108

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TEXT: Shelley E.Taylor (2006). *Health Psychology*. 6th Edition, New York: McGraw-Hill.

WHAT IS HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY? Health Psychology is a specialty within psychology that addresses the role of behavioral and lifestyle factors in health and illness. The field of Health Psychology is founded on the biopsychosocial model and includes "any scientific or professional application of psychological concepts or methods to any problem arising in the health system, not only the care giving system, but the public health, health education, health planning, health financing, health legislation and other such components of the total system" (Stone, 1979). The emergence of this field marks the expansion of psychology beyond the traditional concerns of mental health to the broader health care arena.

WHY SHOULD I TAKE THIS COURSE? The current health care system is based on the biomedical model that is founded firmly in biology. During the early 1900s, the biomedical model made significant contributions to reduce the spread of contagious diseases (e.g., TB, pneumonia, influenza, typhoid), which were the leading causes of death during that era. However, by the 1950s, the incidence of these diseases declined dramatically, while the incidence of noncontagious diseases linked to behavior and lifestyle factors (e.g., heart disease, cancer, etc.) was rising. In the 1990s, 50% of mortality from the 10 leading causes of death are attributable to lifestyle factors. Clearly, psychological factors can no longer be ignored by medicine and our health care system must begin to address the critical role played by psychosocial factors. This course will explore the complex interaction between the biological, psychological, and social systems that contribute to health and illness.

GOALS: I have several course goals for my students: 1) increasing your factual knowledge of health psychology, 2) improving your critical thinking skills, 3) stimulating you to question your attitudes about health and illness, 4) educating you to be an informed and concerned citizen in the domain of health care, and 5) improving your personal health and wellness.

GRADES: Your grade will be determined by your performance on 3 exams (100 points each, 300 points subtotal), 2 projects (50 points each, 100 points subtotal), yielding a total of 400 points. The 3rd exam will be scheduled during the final exam period. Exams will assess your understanding the textbook and lecture. Exams will take the entire class period and will consist of 50 multiple-choice questions. You will need a gray scantron and a number 2 pencil for each exam. You will also have the opportunity to earn 18 extra credit opportunity points (see section below). Your final class grade will be based on the total number of points obtained on the exams, projects, and extra credit opportunity points. A curve will be used to derive the final grades.

EXAMS:

2/14	Exam 1	100 points
3/27	Exam 2	100 points
5/2	Final (Friday 3-5:00)	100 points

MAKE-UP EXAMS: Make-up exams will only be given if a student can provide proof of a university recognized excused absence as specified in the Texas A&M Regulations. Make-ups must be taken within 2 weeks of the regularly scheduled exam and will consist of 5 short-essay questions.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is not monitored, but I recommend that you regularly attend and take complete notes.

WRITTEN PROJECTS: You will complete two written projects (50 points/each, total = 100 points), which must be turned in by the due date listed below.

1) Modification of Health Behavior: Identify a health behavior that you would like to modify (e.g., flossing, exercise, fruit and vegetable intake, smoking, drinking etc.). (a) You will be asked to measure this behavior, so you will need a concrete operational definition (e.g., number of miles jogged, servings of vegetables, and the number of cigarettes smoked). (b) You will need to keep a daily self-observation log by time of day, contextual stimuli, and internal stimuli with separate columns for each that will allow you to easily monitor the antecedent stimuli (external and internal), the target behavior, and the consequences of the behavior (external and internal). (c) During your first 5 days, simply monitoring your baseline level of this behavior along with its antecedents and consequences. (d) Based on the patterns revealed in your self-observation data log, and your understanding of the cognitive-behavioral modification techniques in your text, you will design a cognitive-behavioral modification program to modify the behavior (e.g., altering exposure to antecedent cues, altering the consequences of the behavior) to either increase or decrease the target behavior over the following week or two. Again, you will need to keep a daily self-observation log to monitor the impact of your modification program relative to your baseline. (e) Finally, you need to write an evaluation of the effectiveness of the modification program. (Chapters 3, 4, and 5, due 2/5)

2) Stress and Coping:

Part A: Stress Appraisal. After completing your readings and attending the lectures on stress, keep a log of events that most people would think might produce stress (minor hassles to major annoyances) for at least three days. In addition, you will be asked to rate your subjective experience of distress on a 0 to 5 scale, with 0 being relaxed and 5 being the most distressed imaginable. You will be asked to turn in your stress log and ratings with this assignment. In addition to the stressful events, consider any other factors that might have influenced the effects of these events (e.g., positive events, social support, cognitive appraisal, coping strategies). Write a 2 page essay that discusses the contents of your log in relation to the following points.

- a) Apply the Lazarus & Folkman model to explain whether these events were actually related to the subjective experience of stress or rigidly determined by the event itself.
- b) Discuss whether there were factors that either amplified or buffered the effects of these stressors. What were they? Why do you feel they reduced your perceptions of stress?
- c) Discuss the role that perceived control might have played in your perception of stress.
- d) Discuss how acute stressors interacted with chronic stressors.
- d) Which theory of stress provides the most complete account of your experience?

Part B: Assessing Coping Strategies. Monitor your stress and coping for another two days to provide you with more information for your analysis. In addition to your log of stressful events and your subjective experience of distress, consider any other factors that you discussed in your earlier assignment along with an analysis of your coping strategies. Write a 1-2 page essay that addresses the following points:

2/19-2/21	WHAT IS STRESS?	Chapter 6, 152-180
2/26-3/4	MODERATORS & MANAGEMENT OF STRESS	Chapter 7, 184-213
3/6-3/18	PNI: AIDS, CANCER, & ARTHRITIS	Chapter 14, 378-417
March 8-16	***** SPRING BREAK *****	
3/20-3/25	UTILIZATION OF HEALTH CARE	Chapter 8, 214-237
3/27	!! EXAM 2 !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!	
4/1-4/8	PAIN AND ITS MANAGEMENT	Chapter 10, 262-286
4/10-4/15	CHRONIC & TERMINAL ILLNESS	Chapter 11, 287-314 Chapter 12, 315-341
4/17-4/29	HEART DISEASE, HTN, STROKE, & DIABETES	Chapter 13, 342-378
5/2	!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! FINAL EXAM (Wed 3-5:00 pm) !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!	

American Disability Act: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe that you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Rm 126 of the Koldus Building (phone= 979-845-1637).

Aggie Honor Code: “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.” Upon accepting admission to Texas A&M University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor System. Students will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the Texas A&M University community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor System. For additional information please visit: www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/

On all course work, assignments, and examinations at Texas A&M University, the following Honor Pledge shall be preprinted and signed by the student:

“On my honor, as an Aggie, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work.”