

Current Issues Capstone Section 03 PSYC 190

Spring 2025 In Person 3 Unit(s) 01/23/2025 to 05/12/2025 Modified 01/21/2025

Contact Information

Instructor:	Jennifer Gregg, Ph.D.
Class Days/Time:	Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00 - 10:30am
Class Location:	DMH 359
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Office Hours:	Thursdays 1:00 - 2:30pm

Course Description and Requisites

Integrative survey of current issues in psychology, how they developed and likely future directions. Completion of the research methods requirement prior to enrollment in this course is recommended.

Prerequisite: PSYC 100W and senior standing.

Co/Prerequisite: PSYC 118 or PSYC 120

Letter Graded

Classroom Protocols

This classroom is a professional environment for you, and should be treated that way. There is a lot of interaction in this class, both with the professor and with your fellow students, so professionalism on your part is very important. **Turn your phone on silent before class begins and never, ever take your phone out during class.**

My office is room DMH 317. If I am not in my office, please email me. I will have regular office hours as posted at the top of this syllabus. If you cannot make one of these times, you can e-mail me or see me after class to set an appointment. I want to be available to you. The best time to catch me is right after class, but let me know if you need to see me at another time. With office hours it is first come, first served. If you do not want to wait or were not able to see me, please set a time with me individually. During office hours we can discuss course questions, psychology as a career, or other topics of interest to you.

Please be respectful of the thoughts, opinions, and experiences of others. Many of the topics in this class may have personal significance to some students. Please make a special effort to listen to one another.

A note about AI

The papers submitted in this class should be completely your writing - every word should be typed into the document by you, taken from your brain. You will need to cite the articles we read and the sources you use for your paper/presentation. If you get information from any AI source (e.g., Chat GPT) it needs to be cited, which is tricky because it gets information from (typically) unknown sources. Also, there are AI detection services, and I plan to use them. If you turn in AI-generated content as your own, I will submit it to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development and let them figure it out.

Program Information

Program learning outcomes (PLOs) are skills and knowledge that students will have achieved upon completion of the Psychology BA degree. Each course in our curriculum contributes to one or more of these PLOs. The PLOs for the Psychology BA degree are:

1. Knowledge Base of Psychology. Students will be able to demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.
2. Research Methods in Psychology. Students will be able to design, implement, and communicate basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretations.
3. Critical Thinking Skills. Students will be able to use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and a scientific approach to address issues related to behavior and mental processes.
4. Applications of Psychology. Students will be able to apply psychological principles to individual, interpersonal, group, and societal issues.
Values in Psychology. Students will value empirical evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and recognize their role and responsibility as a member of society.

Course Goals

The two primary goals of the course are (1) to provide students with a general understanding of the various constructs thought to be related to psychological well-being, and (2) to develop an ability to think critically about these constructs and the empirical study of them.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

CLO1: have a familiarity with the main constructs thought to be related to psychological well-being

CLO2: think critically about the empirical study of constructs related to psychological well-being

CLO3: understand, interpret, and apply knowledge gained from empirical studies of constructs related to psychological well-being

Course Materials

This course will not utilize a textbook, but instead students will utilize peer reviewed studies and readings provided by the instructor for each topic. Reading will be found on the course Canvas page.

Course Requirements and Assignments

The following assignments will make up your grade:

1. Well-Being Response Papers (14 Total)

In order to allow you to think critically about the readings and assignments for this course, you will turn in a 2-page, double-spaced reaction paper for each week's Well-Being assignment, and its relation to the reading you did for class. **You must turn in the paper electronically by 8:00am and bring a paper copy in class.**

In order to receive full credit, response papers based on Well-Being assignments **must include all of the following**:

1 – your personal reaction to the activity and what you found

2 – a description of the key points of **all** the assigned readings with a an application to your experience (i.e., did your experience match the research results, etc)- be sure to include at least two critical questions you can pose to the class. The emphasis should be on questions that will generate discussion, but they can be any type of question you want.

3 – sharing your experience and observations with other students in class (Note: a presentation is typically a requirement for Psyc 190. Instead of a formal presentation, you will present to the class 14 times by summarizing the articles and your results each week in class).

If you turn the paper in after I collect them in class, you will have a 10% penalty, with a 10% drop in grade possible each day after.

2. Individual Research paper

You will be required to write a 10- page paper on any of the constructs studied in the class. You can write your paper on one of the topics below if you wish, or select from any of the other topics in the class. Your paper should include a comprehensive literature review and must be written in APA style.

Optional extra topics:

Curiosity

Grit

Flow

Hope

Each paper should include:

1. **Scholarly** definition(s) of the topic (no webpages, dictionary, etc.)
2. Summary of **research literature** on the topic
3. How topic relates to other constructs studied in the class based on the literature
4. Any research or literature on how topic can be used to improve well-being

Even though these are fun things to think about, you should research thoroughly and take this assignment seriously. Your paper should be based on the **research literature**, and **should not contain references from webpages or other non-academic sources**.

Final Activity

This course will adopt a final, culminating activity which will be held during the finals examination time period. This culminating activity is required and will build on previous experiences in the course.

✓ Grading Information

Grading is based on the sum of the following:

14 response papers, 10 points per paper (CLO1, CLO2, CLO3)

Lowest paper dropped

130 points total

+

1 term paper (CLO1, CLO2, CLO3)

100 points

230 points possible in the course

Breakdown

The grading policy for the course will be the following:

	A = 100 -93	A- = 92.9-90%
B+ = 89.9-87%	B = 86.9-83%	B- = 82.9-80%
C+ = 79.9-77%	C = 76.9-73%	C- = 72.9-70%
D+ = 69.9-67%	D = 66.9-63%	D- = 62.9-60%
F = 59.9-0% Unsatisfactory		

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings	Due
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Week 1			
1-23-25	Overview of the Course		
Week 2 Module 1: Why Study Well-being?			
1-28-25	Introduction to Well-Being as a Concept and Goal, Defining & Measuring Well-Being	Seligman, M.E.P. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. American Psychologist, 55 (1), 5-14.	Response Paper 1 – Serious introduction Intervention
1-30-25		AND Mauss, I.B., Tamir, M., Anderson, C.L. & Savino, N. (2010). Can seeking happiness make people unhappy? Paradoxical effects of valuing happiness. Emotion, 11, 807-815.	
Week 3 Module 2: Positive Emotions			
2-4-25		Fredrickson, B.L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden and build theory of positive emotions. American Psychologist, 56, 218-226.	Response Paper 2 – Intensely Positive Experiences Intervention
		AND Burton, C. M., & King, L. A. (2004). The health benefits of writing about intensely positive experiences. Journal of research in personality, 38(2), 150-163.	

2-6-25			
Week 4 Module 3: Strengths			
2-11-25	Strengths-Based Approach	<p>Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2009). Character strengths: Research and practice. <i>Journal of college and character</i>, 10(4), 1-10.</p> <p>AND</p>	Response Paper 3 – Strengths in a new way Intervention
2-13-25		<p>Proyer, Gander, Wellenzohn, & Ruch (2015). Strengths-based positive psychology interventions: a randomized placebo-controlled online trial on long-term effects for a signature strengths- vs. a lesser strengths-intervention. <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>.</p>	
Week 5 Modules 4 & 5: Gratitude & Gratefulness			
2-18-25	Counting blessings	<p>Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: an experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. <i>Journal of personality and social psychology</i>, 84(2), 377.</p> <p>AND</p>	Response Paper 4 – Counting Blessings Intervention
2-20-25		<p>Kerry, N., Chhabra, R., & Clifton, J. D. (2023). Being Thankful for what you have: a systematic review of evidence for the effect of gratitude</p>	

		on life satisfaction. Psychology Research and Behavior Management, 4799-4816.	
Week 6 Modules 4 & 5: Gratitude & Gratefulness			
2-25-25		McNulty, J. K., & Fincham, F. D. (2012). Beyond positive psychology? Toward a contextual view of psychological processes and well-being. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 67(2), 101.	
2-27-25		AND Regan, A., Walsh, L. C., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2023). Are some ways of expressing gratitude more beneficial than others? Results from a randomized controlled experiment. <i>Affective Science</i> , 4(1), 72-81.	
Week 7 Module 6: Awe			
3-4-25	Awe	Ballew, M. T., & Omoto, A. M. (2018). Absorption: How Nature Experiences Promote Awe and Other Positive Emotions. <i>Ecopsychology</i> , 10(1), 26-35. AND Tyrväinen, L., Ojala, A., Korpela, K., Lanki, T., Tsunetsugu, Y., & Kagawa, T. (2014). The influence of urban green environments on stress relief	Response Paper 5 – Nature Immersion Intervention

3-6-25		measures: A field experiment. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 38, 1-9.	
Week 8 Module 7: Meaning and Purpose			
3-11-25	Meaning and Values	<p>Ryan, R.M. & Deci, E.L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. American Psychologist, 55, 68-78.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>King, L. A. (2001). The health benefits of writing about life goals. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27(7), 798-807.</p>	Response Paper 6 – Best Future Self Intervention
3-13-25			
Week 9 Module 8: Savoring			
3-18-25	Savoring/Mindfulness	<p>Quoidbach, J., & Dunn, E. W. (2013). Give it up: A strategy for combating hedonic adaptation. Social Psychological and Personality Science, 4(5), 563-568.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Armenta, C., Bao, K. J., Lyubomirsky, S., & Sheldon, K. M. (2014). Is lasting change possible? Lessons from the hedonic adaptation prevention model. In Stability of happiness (pp. 57-74). Academic Press.</p>	Response Paper 7 – Give it up Intervention

3-20-25			
Week 10 Module 9: Mindfulness Meditation			
3-25-25	Savoring/Mindfulness	Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. <i>Journal of Personality & Social Psychology</i> , 84, 822-848. AND Oman, D., Shapiro, S. L., Thoresen, C. E., Plante, T. G., & Flinders, T. (2008). Meditation lowers stress and supports forgiveness among college students: A randomized controlled trial. <i>Journal of American College Health</i> , 56(5), 569-578.	Response Paper 8 – Mindfulness Meditation Intervention
3-27-25			
Week 11			
4-1-25	spring break		live meaningfully :)
4-3-25			
Week 12 Module 10: Loving Kindness Meditation			

4-8-25	Meditation: Loving Kindness	Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J., & Finkel, S. M. (2008). Open hearts build lives: positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. <i>Journal of personality and social psychology</i> , 95(5), 1045.	Response Paper 9 – Loving Kindness Meditation Intervention
4-10-25			

Week 13 [Module 11: Generosity and Kindness](#)

4-15-25	Generosity	Dunn, E., Aknin, L.B. & Norton, M.I. (2008). Spending money on others promotes happiness. <i>Science</i> , 319, 1687.	Response Paper 10 – Random Acts of Kindness Intervention
4-17-25		AND Lyubomirsky, S, Sheldon, and Schkade. "Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change." <i>Review of General Psychology</i> 9.2 (2005): 111.	Final Term Paper Due 4/17 11:59pm

Week 14 [Module 12: Forgiveness](#)

	Forgiveness	McCullough, Michael E., Lindsey M. Root, and Adam D. Cohen. "Writing about the benefits of an	
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4-22-25		interpersonal transgression facilitates forgiveness." Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 74.5 (2006): 887.	Response Paper 11 – Finding Benefits Intervention
4-24-25		AND McCullough, M. E., & Witvliet, C. V. (2002). The psychology of forgiveness. Handbook of positive psychology, 2, 446-455.	

Week 15 [Module 13: Social Connection](#)

4-29-25	Social Connection	Epley, N., & Schroeder, J. (2014). Mistakenly seeking solitude. Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 143(5), 1980.	Response Paper 13 – Small Talk Intervention
5-1-25		Diener, E. & Seligman, M.E.P. (2002). Very happy people. Psychological Science, 13, 81-84.	

Week 16 [Module 14: Love](#)

5-6-25	Social Relationships & Love	Aron, A., Melinat, E., Aron, E. N., Vallone, R. D., & Bator, R. J. (1997). The experimental generation of interpersonal closeness: A procedure and some preliminary findings. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 23(4), 363-377.	Response Paper 14 – Love Map Intervention
5-8-25		AND	

		Holt-Lunstad J., Smith, T. B., & Layton, J. B. (2010) Social relationships and mortality risk: A meta-analytic review. PLoS Med 7(7)	
5-20-25 8:30 - 10:30am	Final Exam		