Health Psychology – Spring 2024
Tuesdays – 2:00-4:45pm

Instructor: Brianna R. Altman, Ph.D.
Office: 1 Spring Street
Phone: 908-839-2541 (cell)
Email: Brianna.Altman@Rutgers.edu

Course Objectives
This course is designed to introduce students to the field of health psychology, including an overview of psychology & health, stress, coping, health promotion, substance use, health disparities, weight management and nutrition, positive psychology/spirituality/meaning, pain, chronic illness and complementary and integrative medicine, health services and adherence, heart disease and stroke, cancer, HIV/AIDS, and the future of health psychology. There is a focus on applications to clinical practice, including individual, group, and community-level interventions, working related clinical systems, and dissemination & implementation science.

Textbook and Readings
Sarafino, E., & Smith, T. (2017). Health psychology, 9th edition. New York: Wiley. Additional readings will be assigned each week (see Readings portion of document) to provide a health disparities, diversity, and health equity perspective.

Tentative Class Structure
1. Mindfulness and/or relaxation exercise and discussion/skills building (2-2:15pm)
3. Content lectures (2:15-3:15pm) [15 minute student presentation, 45 minute Brianna lecture]
4. Break (3:15-3:30pm)
5. Case Presentations (3:30-3:45pm)
5. Skills training: Lecture (3:45-4:10pm), Practice (4:10-4:30pm)
6. Discussion and wrap up (4:30pm-4:45pm)

Course Requirements and Evaluation of Student Performance (Grading)
1. Reading Reflections (15%)
For five classes, you are expected to post at least two thoughtful questions/comments from the readings that occurred to you while reading the assignments. At least one should be a response to another student’s comment/question. They should be about 2-4 sentences in length. These postings are designed to stimulate discussion and will help us maintain a seminar format for the class; they must be posted by 10pm on the Monday before class. You may critique particular readings, based on theoretical or methodological grounds; raise new conceptual questions; suggest directions for future research and innovation; relate the readings to outside readings or readings from other weeks; discuss the relevance of the readings to your own research or applied interests. Topics related to health disparities and health equity are encouraged.
2. Class Participation (15%)
Please participate regularly in class discussion by bringing in ideas, comments and observations based on the assigned readings and other materials you encounter. Participate in think, pair shares, as well as weekly skills practice. **Two comments per class** per student, are requested. Attendance policy will be reviewed in class.

3. **Class Discussion Leadership (15%)**
   You will be assigned to co-lead the class discussion on one topic for **one 15 minute lecture**. For this discussion, you are encouraged to bring in additional materials (e.g., other readings, demonstrations, video, research, etc.) Topics will be assigned in the first class. To prepare for this co-led class, feel free to talk with me beforehand. The presentations can take various formats. The main goal of the presentation and accompanying discussion is to stimulate thought about the topic, give some evidence of your efforts to grapple with the course material, and facilitate your (and our) understanding of the topic. You may decide to present an overview of the topic area, discuss in depth the current readings, or focus more deeply on a particular area within the topic. One possible format is to identify and critically analyze an empirical article (either from the assigned readings or your own research) that relates to the assigned topic. You can describe how the article relates to the assigned topic and readings and lead a discussion regarding the rationale for the study and its findings and conclusions. Another format is to discuss the relevance of the assigned topic and readings to a theoretical or practical problem that interests you. You may list this lecture on your CV.

4. **Clinical Application and Case Presentation (15%)**
   Each student will use a clinical intervention or tool learned in class in clinical work and will present this case to the class, similar to a brief presentation to a medical or healthcare team; an approximately **5 minute presentation** detailing presenting problem, brief history, diagnosis, intervention, and result of treatment/current status/recommendations to the medical team. Dates will be assigned in first class.

5. **Health Psychology Paper (25%)**
   You are asked to engage in some sort of systems change/social justice/voting work this semester and write a ~5 page paper about how it aligns with health psychology (i.e., discuss impact on health psychology and/or public health, discuss a health behavior theory, and discuss its implications for health disparities). This can be a few steps removed (e.g., voting impacts healthcare policy which impacts health behaviors and disparities). **Note:** If you’d still like to write a 7 page review paper and submit for publication, please let me know; a 2 page report about your systems change activity this semester will still be due as part of the assignment. **Due: 04/02.**

6. **Health Policy Brief (15%)**
   You are asked to produce a **one page health policy brief** (10%) and distribute to appropriate leadership or legislators (5%). This can be the same or a different topic than your paper. You can list this on your CV. **Due: 4/23.**

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**Classroom Culture**

**Statement on Disabilities:** Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-
guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

**Statement on Academic Integrity:** The University’s academic integrity policy, to which this class will adhere, can be reviewed at: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/

**Names and Pronouns:** Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name as well as your gender pronoun preference. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

**Virtual Classroom Culture:** This course will primarily take place in-person but may utilize a virtual classroom as needed throughout the semester. In these cases, please turn your camera on for about 50% of each class. With the preference for camera on more often than not to encourage engagement, learning, and discussion, though the allowance for camera off due to unpredictable home environment, caregiving, wellbeing, limit setting, gender disparities in perceived camera readiness, etc. If you are not able to turn on your camera for 50% of each class, please discuss with me.

**Respect for Diversity:** It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit, and that all diversity of our clients be discussed and addressed with thoughtfulness and compassion. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. I have implicit biases and blind spots, and while it should not be your job to correct these, your feedback and suggestions about how to make this class more compassionate and accessible are encouraged and appreciated, and can be provided during office hours, via email, anonymously via note under my office door. SIRS feedback will also be collected and incorporated at midway and the end of the semester.

**Religious Holiday Policy:** University policy excuses absences due to religious observance or participation in Rutgers-approved activities, and permits students to make up work missed for these circumstances.

*This is a living syllabus document subject to change throughout the semester based on pertinent public health topics and student feedback.*
### Schedule of Topics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Week #</th>
<th>Chapter and Topic, Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/16</td>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>1 Overview of Health Policy and Health Disparities and terms/theory, <em>Overview</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>3 &amp; 4 Stress, Biopsychosocial Factors and Illness, <em>CBSM training</em> &lt;br&gt;Case: Brianna Example</td>
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<td>1/30</td>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>5 Coping with and Reducing Stress, Stress Management, Mindfulness, <em>Mindfulness training</em> &lt;br&gt;Content: &lt;br&gt;Case:</td>
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<td>2/06</td>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td>6 Health Behavior/Health Promotion, <em>Smoking cessation training</em> &lt;br&gt;Content: &lt;br&gt;Case:</td>
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<td>2/13</td>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td>7 Substance Use (also, Chapter 2, Module 4), <em>Motivational Interviewing Training</em> &lt;br&gt;Content: &lt;br&gt;Case:</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/20</td>
<td>Class 6</td>
<td>SES/Gender/Diversity/ Spanish speaking psychotherapy, <em>Acceptance and commitment therapy training</em> &lt;br&gt;Content: &lt;br&gt;Case:</td>
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<td>2/27</td>
<td>Class 7</td>
<td>8 Nutrition, Weight Control, Diet, Exercise, Sleep, <em>CBTi training</em> &lt;br&gt;Content: &lt;br&gt;Case:</td>
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<td>3/05</td>
<td>Class 8</td>
<td>Positive Psychology/ Spirituality/ Meaning, <em>MCP training</em> &lt;br&gt;Content: &lt;br&gt;Case:</td>
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<td>3/19</td>
<td>Class 9</td>
<td>11 &amp; 12 The Nature of Pain, Controlling Pain, <em>Pain psychology training</em> &lt;br&gt;Content: &lt;br&gt;Case:</td>
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<td>3/26</td>
<td>Class 10</td>
<td>13 Chronic Illness, Complementary and Integrative Medicine, <em>Yoga</em> &lt;br&gt;Content: &lt;br&gt;Case:</td>
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<td>4/02</td>
<td>Class 11</td>
<td>9 &amp; 14 Health Services/Adherence, HIV/AIDS, Superstitious thoughts, <em>Behavioral activation training</em> &lt;br&gt;Content: &lt;br&gt;Case:</td>
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<td>4/09</td>
<td>Class 12</td>
<td>14 Cancer, <em>Practice cases/tape</em> &lt;br&gt;Content: &lt;br&gt;Case:</td>
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<td>4/16</td>
<td>Class 13</td>
<td>14 (cont.) Heart Disease and Stroke, <em>Practice cases/tape</em> &lt;br&gt;Content: &lt;br&gt;Case:</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/23</td>
<td>Class 14</td>
<td>15 Future of Health Psychology &lt;br&gt;Content: Any rescheduled presentations &lt;br&gt;Case: Any rescheduled cases</td>
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Readings
*Please note that readings may change at the professor’s discretion.*

01/16 Class 1, Introduction: Health Psychology

Sarafino, Chapter 1


01/23 Class 2, Stress and Illness

Sarafino, Chapter 3 & 4


01/30 Class 3, Coping

Sarafino Chapter 5


02/06 Class 4, Health-Related Behavior/Health Promotion

Sarafino, Chapter 6


02/13 Class 5, Substance Use

Sarafino Chapter 7


02/20 Class 6, SES/Gender/Diversity/Stigma


**02/27 Class 7, Nutrition, Diet, Exercise**

Sarafino, Chapter 8


**03/05 Class 8, Positive Psychology/Spirituality/meaning**


**03/19 Class 9, Pain**

Sarafino, Chapters 11 and 12


**03/26 Class 10, Chronic Illness/Complementary and Integrative Medicine**

Sarafino, Chapter 13


Sarafino, Chapter 9


*04/09 Class 12, Cancer*

Sarafino, chapter 14 (second half)


*04/16 Class 13, Heart Disease and Stroke*

Sarafino, chapter 14 (first half)


**04/23 Class 14, Future of Health Psychology**

Sarafino, Chapter 15

