

Psychology of Intimate Relationships, 3 credits
13:830:399:80
Thursdays 12:00 PM to 2:40 PM
Course Conducted Online via Zoom
Spring, 2021

Instructor: Steven Clark, Psy.D.

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Office Hours: Office hours for Dr. Clark are by appointment.

I. Course Description:

Welcome to the Psychology of Intimate Relationships. This course will explore the psychology of close (romantic) human relationships. Examples of topics covered are the biological bases of our need for relationship and of attraction, how relationships form and how they come apart, the value of both awareness of the self and empathy for the other in maintaining high quality relationships, and the impact of wider social and cultural factors.

This course aims to engage you both academically and personally. We will explore what the research tells us about relationships, but will be actively applying what we are learning in experiential ways. There is no factor more central to life satisfaction than the nature and quality of our closest relationships, and we can apply the knowledge base available to us to do a better job. You are likely to find that the literature contains much that may influence the way you look at relationships and at yourself.

II. Goals & Objectives:

1. To provide an overview of the research on the psychology of relationships and their underlying theories.
2. To explore specific content areas such as our need for relationships, attraction, attachment, factors involved in partner choice, understanding both our own emotions and those of others, maintaining and enhancing the quality of relationships, common problems, relationship dissolution and serious problems such as infidelity, domestic violence and addictions.
3. To apply these content areas to one's own life in order to deepen understanding of the material and to potentially improve one's own relationships and enhance capacities for reflective thinking.
4. To place our current understandings of intimate relationships in a historical and cultural framework.
5. To enhance critical thinking skills, particularly in applying research findings and clinical observations to an area long regarded as a mystery and somehow exempt from usual processes of teaching and learning.

III. Organization of the Class:

- My goal is to engage you in learning in a variety of ways, placing your learning and grade in your own hands as much as possible.
- The class will be conducted online via zoom, mostly as a plenary session but I will strive to create time for small group meetings and discussion as technology and time allow.

IV Emotional Demands:

Some assignments in the course may be emotionally demanding. This is especially true of some of the project choices and some of the small group experiential exercises and discussions. We are aiming to engage you on multiple levels, to build emotional as well as intellectual intelligence. But such work is best done if you stay within the boundaries of what feels right for you. If you become upset in response to assignments, discuss this with your instructor. If you need to debrief an assignment, make some adjustments in it, pull back from participation in some elements of the course or would like my help in recommending resources for personal therapy or other ways of taking care of yourself, see me before or after class or make an appointment.

IV. Required Readings:

The text for the class will be:

Bradbury, T.N., & Karney, B.R. (2013). *Intimate relationships* (2nd ed.). New York: Norton.
It is available in the bookstore and through online booksellers.

Other required articles and book chapters will be available on the course website.

V. Recommended and Resource Readings:

Coontz, S. (2006). *Marriage, a history: How love conquered marriage*. New York: Penguin.

Fredrickson, B.L. (2013). *Love 2.0: Creating happiness and health in moments of connection*. New York: Penguin.

Gottman, J., & Silver, N. (2015). *The seven principles for making marriage work*. (2nd ed.). New York: Crown Publishing.

Haidt, J. (2006). *The happiness hypothesis: Finding modern truth in ancient wisdom*. New York: Basic Books.

Hanson, R. (2009). *Buddha's brain: The practical neuroscience of happiness, love and wisdom*. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

Jacobson, N., & Gottman, J. (2007). *When men batter women*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Johnson, S. *Love sense: The revolutionary new science of love*. New York: Little Brown & Co.

Panksepp, J., & Biven, L. (2012). *The archaeology of mind: Neuroevolutionary origins of human emotions*. New York: Norton.

Tatkin, S. (2012). *Wired for love*. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

Vaughn, D. (1990). *Uncoupling: Turning points in intimate relationships*. New York: Vintage

VI. Course Website:

Go to <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/>, log in using your netID and password, then click on the class website. We will be making extensive use of this website. Your readings and assignments will be posted here, as well as the most-up-to-date syllabus. Please check the website frequently for any announcements and updates.

VII. Grading:

Grades will be based on class attendance, three multiple-choice exams, an individual project, and weekly assignments related to readings and course content. The breakdown will be as follows:

Attendance/Participation	5 points/class attended up to total of:	75 points
Hourly Exams	3 in-class multiple-choice exams: (3 given, lowest score dropped)	100 points
Individual Project	Assignment chosen from options:	50 points
Individual Assignments	5 points each	75 points
Total Available Points:		300 points

Number of Points	Grade
270 – 300	A
255 – 269.99	B+
240 – 254.99	B
225 – 239.99	C+
210 – 224.99	C
180 – 209.99	D
Below 180	F

Attendance: The points assigned to this category reflect how important it is that you come to class and participate. Please arrange your schedule so that you can be present online for the full time from 12:00 to 2:40 on Thursdays. If you do need to miss a class, please let me know.

Hourly Exams: There will be three of these with the lowest score dropped and your points for this category being the sum of the highest two scores. Each exam will consist of 25 questions.

Individual Project: There are a number of different course project options, allowing you to choose from a range of topics. I encourage you to make a choice based on your own interests and goals. Topics are listed under the “Resources” section of the Sakai site. Each topic has its own folder beginning with “Course Project Option.” *You only need to choose one project.* These will be due on May 6th. A rubric used for grading projects will be available in the project folders, and you should check your paper against the rubric’s requirements to earn maximum points.

Individual Assignments: On a weekly basis, I will provide you with an assignment based on the material from the lecture and reading assignments. These assignments will be posted on canvas and you will be given several days following a lecture to complete them. The purpose of these assignments is to allow me to assess how well each of you is grasping the material and to provide immediate feedback on an individual level.

VIII. Additional course policies:

- **Attendance & missed classes:** Attendance is essential. I expect that a great deal of the learning in this class will come from what we do together. Class activities, discussions, demonstrations and videos can't be replicated outside of class.
- **Missed Exams:** Since the lowest score of the three exams will be dropped, if you have to miss an exam, the average of your other two exams will count as your exam score. In the rare event that you miss two out of three exams, discuss these extraordinary circumstances with your instructor and we will figure out a solution.
- **Academic Accommodations:** Students requiring accommodations should notify the course instructors and provide the necessary documentation supporting the need for accommodations.
- **Academic Integrity:** University policies on cheating and plagiarism will be adhered to. The University's academic integrity policy can be reviewed at (<http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>)

IX. Course calendar (Subject to adjustment if needed.)

Date	Class	Topic
January 21	1	Introduction to the course The importance of our relationships to our health and wellbeing Brief history of marriage
January 28	2	Conceptual Frameworks: The lenses through which we view and research relationships
February 4	3	Developing Emotional Strength: Emotional Awareness and Self-Regulation
February 11	4	Sex, Sexuality and Gender Roles
February 18	5	Attraction and Mate Selection Exam #1
February 25	6	Personality and Personal History
March 4	7	Communicating Closeness
March 11	8	Conflict in Relationships
March 18		SPRING BREAK -- NO CLASS
March 25	9	Breaking Up Is Hard To Do: How Relationships Come Apart and How To Survive a Break-Up

		Exam #2
April 1	10	Couples Therapy
April 8	11	Couples Therapy part 2
April 15	12	Serious Dilemmas in Intimate Relationships: Domestic Violence, Infidelity
April 22	13	Topics on Diversity and Couples: Race, Culture, and Religion
April 29	14	Diversity Part 2 Exam #3
May 6	15	Course Wrap-up Final Project Due

X. Readings and Assignments by Week: (May be altered or adjusted)

Week 1

Introduction to the Class

January 21, 2020

Bradbury and Karney text, Chapter 1

Week 2

Conceptual Frameworks

January 28, 2020

Bradbury and Karney text, Chapter 3

Week 3

Developing Emotional Strength: Emotional Awareness and Self-Regulation

February 4, 2020

Watch YouTube Video: Alfred and Shadow, A Short Story about Emotions

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJOjpprbfE&list=PLAQ_JBEFaeUy0t_I3qzEof8goqtz5RxRd&index=29

Watch Ted Talk: Brene Brown – “The Power of Vulnerability”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCvmsMzlF7o>

Week 4

Sex, Sexuality and Gender Roles

February 11, 2020

Bradbury and Karney text, Chapter 4

Week 5

Attraction and Mate Selection

February 18, 2020

Bradbury and Karney text, Chapter 5

Fisher, H. (2009). Why him? Why her? *Psychotherapy Networker*, May/June

Week 6

Personality and Personal History

February 25, 2020

Bradbury and Karney text, Chapter 6

Week 7

Communicating Closeness

March 4, 2020

Bradbury and Karney text, Chapter 7

Catron, M.L. (2015). "To fall in love with anyone, do this." *New York Times*, January 9.
The 36 Questions (handout related to above article)

Week 8

Conflict in Relationships

March 11, 2020

Bradbury and Karney text, Chapter 8, pp. 262-284

Watch YouTube Video: Gottman's "Four Negative Patterns that Predict Divorce"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJDN3PKZ1KE> (Part 1)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5OdpPodpNY> (Part 2)

Week 9

Breaking Up Is Hard To Do

March 25, 2020

Vaughn, D. (1990). *Uncoupling: Turning points in intimate relationships*. New York: Vintage, pp. 3-27.

Week 10

Couples Therapy

April 1, 2020

No Reading

Week 11

Couples Therapy

April 8, 2020

No Reading

Week 12

Serious Dilemmas in Intimate Relationships: Domestic Violence, Infidelity

April 15, 2020

Bradbury and Karney text, pp 284-297

Watch Ted Talk: Leslie Morgan Steiner – "Why Domestic Violence Victims Don't Leave"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1yW5IsnSjo>

Watch Ted Talk: Esther Perel – "Rethinking Infidelity"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P2AUat93a8Q>

Week 13

Topics on Diversity and Couples

April 23, 2020

Reading to be determined

Week 14

Diversity Part 2

April 29, 2020

Week 15

Group Presentations

May 6, 2020