

Senior Seminar II: Contemporary Applications

Welcome to the capstone experience of the psychology major! In the first course in this sequence (PSYC 490), you surveyed historical developments and read the original works of prominent theorists in the history of psychology. In this second course (PSYC 491), you shall read, critique, and discuss several contemporary applications of those foundational paradigms. This writing-intensive course will function as a discussion-based seminar. As Thoreau put it (*Walden*), “To read well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit is a noble exercise.”

Catalog Description:

(EPW) (Prerequisites: Senior standing; a grade of C or higher in PSYC 490) This seminar, designed for students with a major or minor in Psychology, will entail critical reading, analysis, and discussion of selections from the current scholarly literature, focused on important topics of the day. Emphasis will be placed on the synthesis of major psychological paradigms, including continued treatment of the central themes addressed in PSYC 490. Spring only.

Faculty Information:

Instructor: John C. Norcross, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor & Chair of Psychology
Office hours: Mon 9:30 - 11:00, Tues 9:30 - 11:00, Thurs 9:30 - 11:00, and by appointment
Office: 224 Alumni Memorial Hall
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Your TA: Nickalia Beckford (nickalia.beckford@scranton.edu; 929-282-5054 until 8:00 pm)

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Deepen your *knowledge of contemporary applications of the foundational theories in psychology* as evidenced by acceptable performance on quizzes, preparation of papers, and participation in discussions (Psychology goal 1 of Knowledge Base in Psychology)
2. Demonstrate your ability to *critically analyze* recent books and scholarly articles in psychology as evidenced by preparation of papers and participation in discussions (Psychology goal 2 of Scientific Inquiry & Critical Thinking)
3. Develop your *speaking and leadership skills* in a small group as evidenced by acceptable co-facilitation performance and seminar discussion (Psychology goal 3 of Professional & Ethical Development)
4. Demonstrate your *writing skills* appropriate for professionals in the behavioral sciences as evidenced by preparation of multiple expository papers (Psychology goal 3 of Professional & Ethical Development as well as the goals of EPW)

Books (all available in paperback; listed in the order you will read them):

- Kaag, J. (2020). *Sick souls, healthy minds: How William James can save your life*. Princeton.
Miller, W. R. (2018). *Listening well: The art of empathic understanding*. Wipf & Stock.
Van der Kolk, B. (2015). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in trauma*. Penguin.
Banaji M. R., & Greenwald, A. G. (2016). *Blindspot: Hidden biases of good people*. Bantam.
Comas-Diaz, L., & Rivera, E. (Eds.) (2020). *Liberation psychology: Theory, method, practice, and social justice*. American Psychological Association.

Fair Warning/Informed Consent:

The assigned books are written for a mature, educated audience with a strong background and interest in psychology. In particular, the Van der Kolk book addresses trauma and traumatizing events in a frank manner, and the Kaag book addresses depression and suicidality. If you have reason to avoid reading on either topic, then please notify me privately so that I can assign you different readings in place of the most sensitive parts of those books.

Performance and Evaluation:

Your performance in this capstone course will be assessed through your participation in discussions, written assignments, quiz performance, and class co-facilitation. Well-informed engagement in class discussions that move forward our understanding and application of the readings is the main point of the seminar.

Regular attendance and participation are essential for learning the material and for attaining a passing grade. Indeed, approximately one-fourth of your final grade will be determined by the quality and quantity of your in-class participation, as jointly assessed by yourself, your peers, and your professor. Missed classes will harm our class discussions. The criteria by which you will be evaluated are demonstration of: regular attendance; familiarity with assigned readings; content mastery; communication skills; ability to listen actively and disagree constructively; synthesis/integration; creativity; and application of the material. Plan to attend class; this is not a good one to fail. You are on the verge of graduation, and this course is required to graduate in the psychology major.

You will write at least six papers. The minimum length of the papers is 750 words; the maximum length is 1,000 words. Guidelines for their preparation are attached. All written assignments will be evaluated on a 10-point scale. Feedback will be provided by the professor, and your writing should improve across the semester. Late papers are not accepted.

In addition to the papers, you will co-facilitate a class with the professor. You do *not* prepare a formal paper for the class that you co-facilitate; instead, you will prepare six substantive discussion questions. Guidelines for cofacilitating the class are attached.

Six multiple-choice quizzes will be administered at the beginning of the respective classes. These quizzes are designed to reward your reading and to evaluate your comprehension of the material; that is, the quizzes demonstrate and celebrate your learning! Your best scores on four of these quizzes will count toward your course grade. A missed quiz is a dropped quiz. There are no make-up quizzes, but you can take a quiz before the scheduled class if you anticipate missing it.

For all graded assignments (quizzes, papers, class participation), we will follow the conventional grading scheme in which attainment of 90% and more of the possible points falls into the A range, 80% and more into the B range, and 70% or more into the C range.

Thus, you can earn up to 160 possible points:

- class participation, including attendance (40 possible points)
- six papers (60 possible points)
- best four of six quizzes (40 possible points)
- one class co-facilitation (10 possible points)
- discussion questions/preparation for co-facilitation (10 points)

Course Policies:

This course is designed as a senior seminar for psychology majors, and your behavior should reflect the commitment and experience of a psychology senior. You are responsible for all announcements made and material covered in class. Much of the learning in the seminar happens in a group of your peers, and missed class content obviously cannot be recaptured. Missed quizzes are not made up, and late papers are not accepted. If you know in advance that you will miss a class, then please deliver or email your paper *before* that class begins.

The goals of this seminar can be found in the very word *educate*. It originates from a Latin word that means “to draw out.” In addition to the notion of an educator as someone who pours in knowledge, we shall see and draw out the potential of our peers (Cohen, 2022).

Kindly refer to the University’s *Academic Code of Honesty*. Plagiarism or dishonest behavior on your part will result in a grade of F for the course and the CAS Dean’s Office will be notified.

We will follow all promulgated University policies concerning students with disabilities, sexual harassment and misconduct, and responsible employee reporting. Consult those policies as needed at www.scranton.edu/studentlife/studentaffairs/student-conduct/university-policies.shtml and www.scranton.edu/academics/provost/academic_policies.shtml

You are encouraged to participate fully and civilly in class. You are not competing for grades but cooperating for learning. At the same time, we will not tolerate disruptive or offensive behavior that is antithetical to our university ideals or that is contrary to a conducive learning environment.

The Writing Center helps students become better writers. Consultants work one-on-one with students to provide feedback at any stage of the writing process. To meet with a consultant, stop by during the Writing Center’s regular hours of operation or call 570-941-6147 to schedule an appointment.

Phones and laptops are *not* allowed during class. If you must attend a class remotely for health reasons, your camera and microphone must be on during all discussions. Ebooks are allowed during discussion but should be used with care.

This syllabus is subject to revision. Any revisions will be announced in class and on Brightspace. You may also receive announcements through Brightspace, so please regularly check your e-mail account.



Course Outline and Assignments:

Date	Required Reading	Assignment
Jan. 28	Welcome, Introduction, Capstone	
Feb. 4	Kaag chapters 1- 2	Quiz 1
Feb. 11	Kaag chapters 3 - 4	Paper 1
Feb. 18	Kaag chapters 5 – 6	Paper 2
Feb. 25	Miller chapters Preface - 10	Quiz 2
March 4	Miller chapters 11 - 16	Paper 3 (reaction paper or Try It! summaries) Quiz 3
March 11	Van der Kolk chapters 1 - 3	
March 18	Spring Break; no class	
March 25	Van der Kolk chapters 7 - 10, Epilogue	Paper 4
April 1	Banaji chapters Preface, 1 – 3	Quiz 4
April 8	Banaji chapters 4 – 6	Paper 5
April 15	Banaji chapters 7 – Appendix 1	Quiz 5
April 22	Comas-Diaz pages 3 - 49	Quiz 6
April 29	Comas-Diaz pages 98 – 108, 169 – 182, 265 - 280	Paper 6
May 6	Closure, Evaluation, Celebration	Paper 7 (letter to freshmen)



Guidelines for Cofacilitating

Ψ Each student will cofacilitate one class meeting with the professor. You *do not* prepare a paper for the class that you cofacilitate, but you *do* complete the quiz if one is scheduled for that day.

Ψ Read the assignment and prepare at least six typed discussion questions *before* meeting with the professor. Refer to Table 1 for possible ways of phrasing your questions. At least two of those questions should be application questions (i.e., asking students to apply their newly acquired knowledge to real-world situations and scenarios).

Ψ Select a song or music video to play before the beginning of class. The song or video must meet wholesome requirements. Submit along with your discussion questions, the URL of the song or video.

Ψ Meet with the professor at least 72 hours before you are scheduled to cofacilitate in order to receive a copy of the professor's notes. After the class, return the notes to the professor.

Ψ Play a song or music video for approximately three minutes before the class begins to a minute after the formal start time. Choose something that (1) you like, (2) is relatively positive, and (3) a grandparent might find awkward but not offensive. The song is designed to get the class into the proper zone – engaged, open, receptive, collaborative.

Ψ The professor will begin the class with announcements and end the class as well. In between, you are primarily responsible for facilitating the class discussion.

Ψ You typically have time to ask five to seven discussion questions during the class period. Ask at least three of the discussion questions you prepared and a few from the professor's notes.

Ψ Your task is to facilitate discussion, not to lecture. Accordingly, engage your peers in addressing the questions, as opposed to answering the questions yourself. When facilitating, hold back on your own thoughts and privilege those of your fellow students.

Ψ When posing a question, please provide a context and introduction for it. Give a sentence or two explaining it or placing it in the context of the assigned readings.

Ψ Many of the interesting points in the reading will generate multiple questions. However, when posing questions in class, please ask one at a time. Avoid asking multiple-part questions.

Ψ We seek informed discussion and respectful debate among graduating psychology majors. If your peers respond with a simple "I agree" or "I don't see it that way," gently prompt and encourage them to elaborate on their responses. E.g., "What makes you say so?" "Could you elaborate on your reasons?"

Ψ Try to involve *all* students in the class discussions; draw out contributions. Do not let a single student dominate. Instead, call on different students; ask quiet students for their opinions; and go around the seminar table once or twice, asking everyone for a focused response.

Ψ Thought-provoking questions require time to answer. Pause before expecting or requesting responses; we all need time to formulate answers to questions of any complexity. Offer encouragement, maintain eye contact, and let the question stand for 10 seconds.

Ψ Reward and praise students for contributing. A simple "thank you" typically suffices. The reward is contingent on a genuine effort to contribute, not on providing a "correct" or superb answer.

Ψ Fret not about getting through all the questions. Focus instead on facilitating a lively, quality discussion.

Ψ Your cofacilitation will be graded on the same scale as your papers: 10/9 (an A) is excellent work; 8 (a B) is good work; 7 (a C) is satisfactory work; and 6 (a D) is below standards.

Ψ The grading criteria for evaluating the cofacilitation are: Facilitation; preparation; organization; interest; engagement; initiative; peer feedback.

Ψ Your six discussion questions will also be graded for content, up to a maximum of 10 points. We seek substantive, interesting, thought-provoking questions that evidence clear understanding of the reading and its application to psychology and modern life.

Ψ Spend a few minutes with your professor immediately after class to review peer feedback, rate your own performance, discuss the experience, and receive written feedback on your performance.

Guidelines for Written Assignments

Papers are to be typed (double-spaced) and are due at the beginning of class. Please record your word count at the end of each paper and place your name on the *back of the last page*. Avoid cover sheets, references/works cited, and extra blank pages (save trees!).

Alternatives to the standard papers are encouraged for written assignments (as approved by the professor in advance). A letter to incoming psychology majors is required for your final paper.

The papers afford you a rich opportunity to grapple with the readings, to reflect on their implications, and to integrate this information with previous psychology courses (including Senior Seminar I), research and clinical practice, and personal experiences. Your written work should be concise, lively, and thoughtful. *Stimulating* will assume equal precedence with *scholarly*.

The purpose of these written assignments is *not* to abstract or summarize the readings. Assume that you, your classmates, and I have read the material. Instead, you are asked to react and respond to the material. Please write in a substantive and scholarly manner commensurate with someone graduating college with 40+ credits in psychology. Restrict yourself to a single paragraph on the author's writing style; focus on substance, content, and application across your entire time as a Psychology major.

Establish a balance between depth and breadth in your papers. The number of reactions or arguments in your papers will ideally range between four and eight. This range will ensure that each of your points receives sufficient coverage or depth, without ruminating on a single topic.

Typical reactions include: Identify and elaborate on a favorite or impactful quote (including page numbers); comment on the writing and rhetorical style in a single tight paragraph; describe in a few sentences what you found interesting, perplexing or complicated in the reading; review the sufficiency of the research evidence presented by the author; provide one (and only one) personal example to illustrate a central point; offer compelling reasons for why you agree or disagree with the author. Write in your own voice.

What to **avoid** in the papers? Introductions to the book. Summaries of the reading. Speculations on what eminent psychologists would say about the reading. A series of "I liked/didn't like" or emotional reactions to the readings.

Some additional helpful hints on preparing your reaction papers:

(1) Let Us Know You Read It: Some of the more frequent means of doing so are thoughtful analyses, inclusion of quotes, and reference to specific or unusual details. Select points throughout the assigned pages, in contrast to a single chapter, to demonstrate that you absorbed the entire assignment.

(2) Let Us Know You Thought About It: Scholarly impressions of the material, the positives and the flaws of the work, agreement or disagreement with the author -- all are ways of expressing your analytical reasoning. Avoid the pedestrian summary; stretch your mind and wrestle with the material.

(3) Let Us Know You Related It to Something: The "something" is varied and includes research studies, controversial issues in psychology, and current events. The written assignments should reflect operative knowledge in addition to declarative knowledge.

(4) Let Us Know You Are Engaged in Active Questioning: Knowledge acquires its vitality through active questioning; try to penetrate the core of the material, become caught up in constructive inquiry. (Refer to Table 1 for suggestions on wording your questions to enhance our critical thinking.)

(5) Let Us Know You Are Improving Your Writing: Your skill in writing reaction papers should develop over the semester. Please learn from written feedback provided on your papers, from general comments presented in class, and from your own efforts to sharpen your skills.

For paper #3 on Miller's *Listening Well*, you may write either a reaction paper OR a summary of your experiences with the Try It! exercises in the book. For the latter, formally record your experiences/collect data from your conversations on two or three of the Try Its.

Your final paper (# 7) is required and consists of A Letter to Incoming Psychology Students. The letter (to be shared with incoming psychology majors) will summarize your experiences, offer some advice, and perhaps share some regrets about your years as a University of Scranton psychology major. Tis a goodbye letter to the University of Scranton.

Craft it as a letter and address it to "Dear Incoming Psychology Major." It should be more than 750 words. Please type it neatly and proofread it completely. Either sign your letter at the end or put your name on the back of the last page. We request your letter in two forms: Send it as an attachment to donna.rupp@scranton.edu and bring a hard copy to our last class meeting.

Feel free to write anything, with two caveats. First, do not mention any professor by name. Mention experiences, courses, club activities, and the like that may indirectly identify individual faculty, but no names -- whether in a positive or negative vein. Second, say it all with sincerity and respect. The dual purposes are to reflect on your experiences here and to guide incoming students.



Table 1. Guiding Critical Thinking

Generic Questions	Specific Thinking Skills Induced
What are the strengths and weaknesses of . . . ?	Analysis/inferencing
What is the difference between . . . and . . . ?	Comparison-contrast
Explain why . . . (Explain how . . .)	Analysis
What would happen if . . . ?	Prediction/hypothesizing
What is the nature of . . . ?	Analysis
Why is . . . happening?	Analysis/inferencing
What is a new example of . . . ?	Application
How could . . . be used to . . . ?	Application
What are the implications of . . . ?	Analysis/inferencing
What is . . . analogous to?	Identification of and creation of analogies and metaphors
What do we already know about . . . ?	Activation of prior knowledge
How does . . . affect . . . ?	Analysis of relationship (cause-effect)
How does . . . tie in with what we learned before?	Activation of prior knowledge
What does . . . mean?	Analysis
Why is . . . important?	Analysis of significance
How are . . . and . . . similar?	Comparison-contrast
How does . . . apply to everyday life?	Application to the real world
What is a counterargument for . . . ?	Rebuttal to argument
What is the best . . . , and why?	Evaluation and provision of evidence
What is a solution to the problem of . . . ?	Synthesis of ideas
Compare . . . and . . . with regard to . . .	Comparison-contrast
What do you think causes . . . ? Why?	Analysis of relationship (cause-effect)
Do you agree or disagree with this statement: . . . ?	Evaluation and provision of evidence
What evidence is there to support your answer?	
What is another way to look at . . . ?	Taking other perspectives

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