Psychology 564: Research on Interpersonal Processes

Course Description

This course challenges you to engage with the core topics, foundational theories, and empirical methods of the vibrant and emerging field of close relationships. One basic premise of the course is that high quality social relationships do not just emerge out of thin air and last forever. Instead, and much more fascinating, they are dynamic and ever-evolving, made and maintained because of critical interpersonal processes at play with each social interaction. In this course, we will discuss a variety of relationship phenomena, focusing on fundamental processes in dyadic relationships (primarily romantic relationships). Special emphasis will also be given to learning and critically evaluating the methodological tools that are used to study ongoing relationships.

This advanced course is a capstone for your undergraduate studies in psychology. All students in the class have satisfactorily completed PSYC 101, Statistics (i.e., PSYC 210 or 215), and Social Psychology (PSYC 260). Prior or current enrollment in Research Methods (PSYC 270) is strongly recommended.

These prerequisites are essential because the goal is for you to understand the science of interpersonal processes in addition to the concepts that are relevant to interpersonal processes: this course is designed to have an intensive research focus. Readings from the course will be drawn primarily from professional research journals, and most will present original empirical reports. Moreover, you will collaborate with your classmates as research investigators to work with original data from a common empirical dataset that assesses a wide range of self-reported and behavioral constructs representative of interpersonal processes. Your main assignment will be to extract variables from this common data set to test your own, theoretically-grounded hypotheses using inferential statistics.

By the end of the semester, you will present your research projects in two forms. First, you will write an empirical report of your hypotheses and findings in APA style, revised through multiple drafts over the semester. Second, you will present your research in class as a conference-style presentation. Other in-class activities, such as group exercises and personal reflections, will help you learn from each other in addition to learning from the formal course material.

Ultimately, by gaining an appreciation for the science of close relationships, my hope is that you will develop an understanding of how to optimize your own health and happiness.
### Overview of the Semester

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<th>Class / Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Goals for Research Project</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 23, 25</td>
<td>The science of relationships</td>
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<td><strong>Attachment Theory and Emotion-Driven Interpersonal Processes</strong></td>
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<td>Sept. 6</td>
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<td>Communication and expression of emotion</td>
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<td><strong>Interdependence Theory and Cognition</strong></td>
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<td>Self (and Partner)</td>
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<td>Oct 20</td>
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<td><strong>Evolutionary Theory, Sex, and Commitment</strong></td>
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<td>Oct. 25, 27</td>
<td>Evolutionary Theory</td>
<td>Begin statistical analysis, consider results</td>
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<td>Nov. 1, 3</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Polished Method; draft of Results</td>
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<td>Nov. 8, 10</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Learn how to write a good Discussion and give a good presentation</td>
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<td><strong>Synthesis of Knowledge and Skills</strong></td>
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### Course Format

I see learning and teaching as fundamentally collaborative processes, in which we must all participate actively. Indeed, we will all collaborate together as co-Investigators to work with the common dataset from which you will each develop your own research projects. My hope is that you will learn at least as much from working with your peers both in and out of the classroom, and from Jenna Clark, the Graduate Research Consultant for this class, as you will from the readings and from me.

As you might expect, in-class discussions are a centerpiece of an advanced class like this. Although I will give mini-lectures at least weekly, most often we will be learning through in-depth discussions of the course readings and, more importantly, the questions and issues these readings raise. We will use three strategies to stimulate this level of engagement:
1. Read the assigned readings no later than the **DAY BEFORE** the class in which we will be discussing them. **Allow sufficient time** to process the readings, because you’ll submit one Article Reading Assignment prior to class on each of these days.

2. Article Reading Assignments will be uploaded to Sakai’s Drop Box prior to class on each of these days. The assignments are designed to help you focus on some of the key takeaways for the readings, and deepen your processing of the material. You only need to submit one each week but I advise that you use this form as a guide for each of your weekly readings. Critically, your completion of this assignment helps the rest of your classmates, too.

3. Be prepared each class meeting to describe and discuss each of that week’s readings. **Occasional Quizzes** on the readings will be given without advance notice.

It should go without saying that this is the kind of class that requires regular attendance from all of us. Please come to each class meeting. If you are unavoidably absent, the grading policy (described below) covers that by dropping the lowest score on two assignments.

This class will be a balance between learning and discussing content (described above), and learning and discussing *methods for studying* relationships. This latter approach will be most emphasized by your overarching primary assignment for the semester, which is to develop, implement, analyze, and write up a research project on a topic relevant to this course. The final assignment you will submit – your term paper -- will be an APA-style report of your research.

To further enrich the collaborative learning process, throughout the semester we will use a peer review system to strengthen your writing for the term paper, which will evolve through multiple drafts. Each of you will choose (or be assigned) one peer in the class with whom you will regularly share ideas and writing. Your responsibility as a **Writing Partner (WP)** is to comment on your partner’s ideas and writing in a thorough and constructive manner. Using this peer review system – in conjunction with feedback from me – your term paper will develop through multiple iterations, eventually working up to a complete empirical paper, in APA-style. By submitting early drafts of your term paper, you will have the opportunity to incorporate the constructive feedback you receive from both me and your writing partner into your final term paper. At the end of the semester, you will have the opportunity to share your ideas and results with the class in a conference-style presentation. I will provide you with additional details on the specific requirements for the term paper, peer reviewing, and the in-class presentations in the weeks to come.

As you peruse this syllabus and begin reading for this course, keep an eye out for topics that especially interest you; these can be good starting points for your term paper. As soon as you have some interests in mind, come by during my office hours and I’ll give you whatever leads and advice that I can.

In this course, you will be working with a Graduate Research Consultant, Jenna Clark, who will assist you with your research project, covering data collection as well as developing and testing your own hypothesis. The GRC program is sponsored by the Office for Undergraduate Research
I encourage you to visit this website to see other ways that you might engage in research, scholarship and creative performance while you are at Carolina.

Your learning of both the content and methods over the first 2/3 of the semester will come together in a synthesis at the end of the semester, as you wrap up your individual research project, present it to your peers so they can learn from you about a topic on which you have become an expert, and help provide constructive feedback to your writing partner as well as to your peers as they present their research to the class. Your questions and active engagement in your peers’ presentations will help them sharpen their ideas as they complete their final paper as well. To that end, at the end of each peer presentation day, I will ask you to submit brief “What I learned” assignments.

Course Requirements

To summarize, this course requires that you (1) come prepared to be an active class participant, (2) complete the Engaged Learning Community assignments, (3) develop an original hypothesis for your Term Paper and test it using the common dataset that we collect collaboratively, (4) write a Term Paper in APA Style that develops over multiple drafts, (5) conduct thoughtful peer reviews of another student’s writing, and (6) present your empirical project in-class. The final exam will allow you to demonstrate what you have learned.

Your final grade will be based on your achievements on these requirements weighted as follows:

- Engaged Learning Community Assignments (e.g., Bring your own article; ARAs; WILAs) = 35%
- Term Paper = 40%
- Peer Reviewing = 10%
- In-class Research Presentation = 5%
- Final exam = 10%

Complete Calendar of Readings and Assignments

All required readings will be available on the Sakai website for the class. To access the site, go to http://sakai.unc.edu.

THE FUNDAMENTALS

August 23, 25  Methodology / Thinking Dyadically

*Artifact to class 8/23
*Ethics completion form submitted by 8/25


Class handout: How to read a scientific article, Part I – reading for class

August 30, September 1  Student-Generated Instructional Content

*Documentation of selected article submitted prior to Aug 30 class start
*What I Learned Assignments submitted at the end of each class

Class handout: How to read a scientific article, Part II – Reading for your own research
See “Bring your own research article” assignment.

ATTACHMENT THEORY AND EMOTION-DRIVEN INTERPERSONAL PROCESSES

September 6: FOUNDATIONAL THEORY: ATTACHMENT
*Article reading assignment due by class start
* Research topic submitted by email to Dr. Algoe by class start (see assignment)


September 8  Negative emotional processes
*Article reading assignment due by class start


September 13, 15  Positive emotional processes
*Article reading assignment due by class start on Sept. 13
*Bibliography base assignment due by class start on Sept. 15


**September 20, 22 Communication / Expression of Emotion**

*Article reading assignment due by class start on Sept. 20*

*Hypothesis and variables assignment due by class start Sept. 22*


**September 27, 29 Student-Generated Instructional Content**

See “Stating your hypothesis” assignment

See “Optimizing resources” assignment

**INTERDEPENDENCE THEORY AND COGNITION**

**October 4, 6 FOUNDATIONAL THEORY: INTERDEPENDENCE**

*Version 2 article reading assignment due by class start Oct. 4*

*Draft of Introduction due to writing partner and Dr. Algoe (via Sakai) by class start Oct. 4*

*Critique of writing partner’s Introduction submitted by class start Oct. 6*


→ This is an award address, and do read it all, but especially pay attention to the Interdependence Theory section that starts on p. 5, *so you learn what I.T. actually is.*


**October 11, 13** Cognition and Motivation
*Version 2 article reading assignment due by class start Oct. 11
*Draft of Method due to writing partner and Dr. Algoe (via Sakai) at class start Oct. 13


**October 18** Self (and Partner)
*Version 2 article reading assignment due by class start Oct 18
*Clarification questions to writing partner regarding Method due by noon Oct 18


**October 20** Fall break, no class

**EVOLUTIONARY THEORY, SEX, AND COMMITMENT**

**October 25, 27** FOUNDATIONAL THEORY: EVOLUTION
*Version 2 article reading assignment due by class start Oct. 25
*Preliminary data analysis results brought to class Oct. 27


November 1, 3 Sex
*Version 2 article reading assignment due by class start Nov. 1
*Analysis results to class Nov. 3
*Polished draft of Method with first draft of Results due FRIDAY, Nov. 4 at noon.


November 8, 10  Taking the long view
*Version 2 article reading assignment due by class start Nov. 8
*Written critique of writing partner’s full Methods+Results draft due by class start Nov. 10


SYNTHESIS OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

November 15, 17, 22  Student-Generated Instructional Content
*What I Learned Assignments due at the end of each class
*Full draft of paper, including Discussion, due to writing partner and Dr. Algoe (via Sakai) by class start on Nov. 22

See “Research presentation” assignment.

November 24  Thanksgiving break – no class

November 29, December 1, 6 Student-Generated Instructional Content
*What I Learned Assignments due at the end of each class
*Written critique/comments of writing partner’s full manuscript due by noon Dec. 1
*Final paper due by 5pm on Tuesday December 6.

See “Research presentation” assignment.

Dec 15, 8:00am  Final exam

Additional background readings that may be of interest:


Engaged Learning Community Assignments

The Bring Your Own Research Article Assignment is 10 points, due prior to class Aug 30, with details documented in the handout posted on Sakai.

All Article Reading Assignments (ARAs) are worth 2 points:
- 0 = not submitted
- 1 = submitted but insufficiently completed
- 2 = submitted and sufficiently complete

There are multiple readings for each of the 10 “content” days, and I encourage you to use the same guide for each class reading on a given day, to increase your comprehension and processing of the reading. However, you only need to upload one completed ARA per content day. The purposes of the upload are for me to get a sense of how the readings are going for everyone, for you to ensure you are prepared to contribute to class discussion, and for me to account for your participation and engagement in our learning community. Because of these latter two goals, the ARAs are not graded if you do not also show up for class, and assignments submitted late will not be graded. There are 10 of them, and you may drop the grade for any two of them, for any reason (e.g., missed class, didn’t complete the assignment, didn’t score as well as you would have liked) – that is, I will only take the score for your best 8. Because of this flexibility I’ve incorporated for you, there is not an opportunity for make-up ARA submissions.

The 10 dates on which ARAs are due, prior to class, as noted in the detailed calendar, above:
Sept. 6, 8, 13, 20; Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25; Nov 1, 8

All “What I Learned” Assignments (WILAs) are worth 2 points:
- 0 = not submitted
- 1 = submitted but insufficiently completed
- 2 = submitted and sufficiently complete

Curiosity rules in this course. These assignments are given on days when you and your peers will be presenting on your research interests. Those days are excellent opportunities to learn from your peers about different content and methods than what you’re investigating, to help them improve their projects by answering questions you might have, and for you to think about and learn how to give a good verbal presentation of research findings. (This is a highly transferrable life skill!) I’ll give you a WILA at the beginning of class and it can help guide your listening and learning. You submit your completed WILA at the end of the class. Everybody wins.

It might be apparent, but bears stating that you cannot complete a WILA if you are not in class. There are 8 WILA (peer presentation) days, and you may drop the grade for any one of them, for any reason (e.g., missed class, didn’t complete the assignment, didn’t score as well as you would have liked) – that is, I will only take the score for your best 7. Because of this flexibility I’ve incorporated for you, there is not an opportunity for make-up WILA submissions.

The 8 dates on which WILAs are due, prior to class, as noted in the detailed calendar, above:
Aug 30, Sept 1 // Nov. 15, 17, 22, 29; Dec. 1, 6
Summary Checklist of Assignments and Dates for Primary Project

As you know, I have structured the course to guide you through an independent research project from start to finish. Some of these assignments take much less time than others, but all are important steps to keep you on track. By the end of the semester, you’ll be able to take pride in the way your final product emerges as a result of taking these smaller steps along the way.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment name</th>
<th>How</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 25</td>
<td>Ethics training documentation</td>
<td>Upload to Sakai by noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 6</td>
<td>Research topic</td>
<td>Email to Dr. Algoe before 8am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 15</td>
<td>Bibliography base</td>
<td>Upload to Sakai by 8am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 22</td>
<td>Hypothesis and variables</td>
<td>Bring to class*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 27</td>
<td>Stating your hypothesis</td>
<td>Upload to Sakai by 8am; bring to class*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 29</td>
<td>Optimizing resources</td>
<td>Upload to Sakai at end of class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 4</td>
<td>Draft of Introduction</td>
<td>Upload to Sakai and send to WP by 8am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 6</td>
<td><em>Critique of WP’s Introduction</em></td>
<td>Upload to Sakai and send to WP by 8am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 13</td>
<td>Draft of Method</td>
<td>Upload to Sakai and send to WP by 8am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 18</td>
<td>Clarity of Qs to WP re: Method</td>
<td>Upload to Sakai and send to WP by noon</td>
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<td>Oct 27</td>
<td>Preliminary data analysis</td>
<td>Bring results to class*</td>
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<td>Nov 3</td>
<td>Data analysis results</td>
<td>Bring results to class*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 4</td>
<td>Polished Method+Draft of Results</td>
<td>Upload to Sakai and send to WP by noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 10</td>
<td><em>Critique of WP’s Method+Results</em></td>
<td>Upload to Sakai and send to WP by 8am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 15</td>
<td>Research presentation</td>
<td>Be prepared by class start</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 22</td>
<td>Full draft of paper, including Disc</td>
<td>Upload to Sakai and send to WP by 8am</td>
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<td>Dec 1</td>
<td><em>Critique of WP’s full paper</em></td>
<td>Upload to Sakai and send to WP by noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 6</td>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>Upload to Sakai by 5pm</td>
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WP = Writing Partner; *assignments in italics count toward your “peer review” grade.*
*“...and be prepared to discuss with peers”.*

Timely submission of each assignment counts as 1 percentage point toward your final term paper or peer-reviewing grade. That’s 14 out of 40 percentage points for your term paper, and 4 out of 15 percentage points for your peer-reviewing grade, and yes, those are 18 points toward the 100% of your final course grade. Check out the dates and plan ahead -- you are more than welcome to submit these early so you make sure to collect the points.

Note that I do not award those points if the assignment is submitted late, because that defeats the purpose: the due date is there to help you (and your writing partner) learn at the appropriate pace for you to succeed in the class.

If you are unavoidably absent from a class on any of the “bring to class” days, you may upload to DB with a note to me. However, please try to limit absences on these days (and all methods days) because your peers need you. These are important opportunities to sharpen your ideas and help others do the same.
Additional Notes and Policies

Participation and attendance: Your regular and punctual class attendance is expected for all class sessions. If a student does not attend a class, the responsibility falls on the student to obtain notes from a peer, find out what was covered, find out about tests/assignments, etc. Missing class regularly will likely result in a poor overall class grade because much of your grade will come from in-class material.

No electronic devices. In order to facilitate your active engagement during our in-class meetings, as well as enhance your ability to learn and remember the material presented, I ask that you please put away your laptop, phone, tablet, and any other electronics beforehand. Please do not use any electronic devices for the duration of class unless I explicitly ask you to do so. I know this one is a hard pill to swallow for some, but I promise that I have your best interests at heart (see here and here for summaries on the research). Exceptions to this policy will be offered for those who need accommodations due to a documented disability (see below for more information) and in select other cases.

Late assignments: Exact due dates and times for each assignment are listed in two different sections of the syllabus, above. If you feel you have extenuating circumstances for submitting a “primary project” assignment (i.e., assignments listed in the checklist) on time, you may request up to a 24-hour extension by emailing me before the deadline and stating the amount of extra time needed and why. Otherwise, as stated above, late submissions will not receive completion points.

Make-up exam: This course has one exam: the final. I will only give a make-up final exam if it is missed due to an unavoidable (e.g., illness, death) and documentable (e.g., doctor’s notes, death certificate) event. Athletes, musicians, or others with UNC-related obligations that require absence from class on this exam day should notify me immediately with your schedule and verification from your coach/other University official so that arrangements can be made. There will be no make-ups for in-class activities that go toward your community engagement grade (e.g., article presentation) – NO EXCEPTIONS.

Academic access and accommodations: In compliance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is committed to providing equal access to all programming. Students with disabilities seeking accommodations are encouraged to contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities at (919) 962-8300 or http://disabilityservices.unc.edu. I am available to discuss any disability-related needs during office hours or by appointment.

Academic Dishonesty: Any instances of academic dishonesty detected in this course will be treated as a serious matter and will be referred to the Dean’s office and/or Honor Court for action. If you are uncertain about what constitutes academic dishonesty, see me or go to http://instrument.unc.edu for more information and definitions. Of particular note: It is not acceptable to count one research project and paper for two different classes. If you think your research project and paper sounds similar to one you are working on for a different class, make an appointment to discuss it with me at my office hours.