

Course Syllabus
Faculty of Health
Department of Psychology
PSYC 4190 M
Health Psychology Seminar:
Critical Approaches to Health Psychology
Winter, 2024

Instructor Information

Instructor: Michaela Hynie
Office: Kaneff Tower, 849
Office Phone: 416 736 2100 x22996
Office hours: Monday 4:00 to 5:00 or by appointment
Email: mhynie@yorku.ca

Course Location:

Mondays, 11:30 to 2:30

Ross S203

Course Prerequisite(s): Course prerequisites are strictly enforced.

- HH/PSYC 1010 6.00 (Introduction to Psychology), with a minimum grade of C.
- HH/PSYC 2020 6.00 (Statistical Methods I and II) or substitute
- HH/PSYC 2030 3.00 (Introduction to Research Methods) or substitutes
- HH/PSYC 3170 3.00 (Health Psychology)
- Students must be in an Honours program in Psychology and have completed at least 84 credits (excluding (EDUC) education courses)

Course website: [Eclass](#)

Course Description

Health psychology in North America has often used social cognition as a way of understanding the psychology of physical health. Critical psychology challenges this emphasis on individual decision making, divorced from social and political context. The goal of this seminar is to stimulate discussion and foster understanding of other critical models of health psychology, those that emphasize social context, political systems, and power relations.

The course will focus on the theories and methods of critical health psychology, community health psychology and public health psychology, approaches to health psychology that share an emphasis on how the broader social context constructs and shapes health and illness experiences, behaviours and outcomes, both locally and globally.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- 1) Understand the main models of, or approaches to, the psychology of health and well-being
- 2) Critically assess how social and policy discourse construct our understanding of health and well-being

- 3) Understand a range of methodological approaches used in critical and ecological approaches to health psychology

Specific Learning Objectives

- 1) Define the key elements of a critical approach to health psychology
- 2) Understand how different approaches to health psychology evolved in recent history and the factors that led to their development
- 3) Understand the relationship between qualitative methods and critical psychology approaches
- 4) Develop a deep understanding of the role of social construction in representations of health and illness, health behaviour and health promotion
- 5) Apply a critical lens to health messages and policies, with an emphasis on meaning, equity and justice
- 6) Identify strategies for community engagement in health promotion

Required Text

There is no single text. Rather, required readings are journal papers that are identified in the syllabus

Course Requirements and Assessment

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
Assignment 1: Subjective Experiences of Health and Illness	January 29	15%
Presentation 1: Subjective Experiences of Health and Illness	January 29	5%
Group Summary 1: Subjective Experiences Themes	February 5	5%
Assignment 2: Representations of Health and Illness	March 4	15%
Presentation 2: Representations of Health and Illness	March 4	5%
Group Summary 2 : Representations of Health and Illness Themes	March 11	5%
Assignment 3: Community Health Promotion	April 1	15%
Presentation 3: Community Health Promotion	April 1	5%
Group Summary 3: Community Health Promotion	April 8	5%
Reflection paper 1	January 15	5%
Reflection paper 2	February 12	5%
Reflection paper 3	March 18	5%
Group participation		10%
Total		100%

Description of Assessments

ASSIGNMENTS (45%)

Maximum 5 pages, double spaced

Each assignment asks you to go in depth into one primary research study, one theory, one health issue, and one method. The assignments are highly focussed, brief and very structured to guide and encourage reflection and sharing of ideas.

The assignments are intended to meet four goals. 1) To read primary research from different critical health psychology perspectives. 2) To give you a chance to read about and apply the research methodologies typically used in these approaches. 3) To apply one of the theoretical papers we have been discussing in class to a “real world” example. 4) To shape your discussions with the other students in the class. To support the fourth goal, the assignments are linked to the three class presentations (see below).

INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATIONS (15%)

Maximum 3 Powerpoint slides, 5 minutes

Students will work in small groups by topic, and present their assignments as “case studies” to their group to provide a range of examples of different issues in different contexts. Presentations will be very brief and relatively informal. Each presentation will be about 5 minutes, maximum 3 Powerpoint slides and will be worth 5%. These are due the same day as the assignment. They can be recorded in advance and you may show the recording rather than presenting live, if that is more comfortable for you.

In each presentation, describe the health issue, identify key themes, and include direct quotes to support the themes that emerge in the academic paper and/or the “raw data” to which you applied your analysis (an autobiographical report, news article, documentary, etc.).

GROUP SUMMARIES (15%)

Maximum 3 Powerpoint slides, 5 minutes

In your groups, you will have about an hour to work together to identify common themes across the papers you presented and identify and reflect on contradictions that emerge. Each group will present their summary as a presentation to the rest of the class at the beginning of class the following week, so please decide how you would like to present it (Who will do what? How will you divide it up?). You will submit these summaries individually even though they are collective so that those who wish to submit their own individual summary instead can do so. The final summary presentation will be recorded and uploaded as a video, rather than done live.

Assignment 1: Exploring lived experience of health and illness (15%) & Presentation 1 (5%): Due January 29

Group Summary 1 (5%): Due February 5

In this assignment, we explore how people make meaning from personal experience of illness. The methodology associated with this assignment is interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). The theoretical paper you will be drawing from is Crawford (2006).

This assignment involves reading and reporting on a first-person account of illness or a health-related experience. This can be taken from a blog or magazine article, or an in-depth newspaper article ideally written in first person by the individual experiencing the condition. It must be autobiographical (the person must be describing their own experience in their own words) and have enough detail to allow for analysis of the underlying nature and meaning of the experience. You will be reporting on the aspects of the experience as described by the individual and how it aligns with and differs from that described in an academic paper using IPA to address the phenomenology of the same illness or experience.

Assignment 2: Identifying social representations (15%) & Presentation 2 (5%): Due February 19

Group Summary 2 (5%): Due February 26

In this assignment, you will be exploring how social discourse constructs shared representations of illness and health. The methodology you will be applying is discourse analysis (DA). The theoretical paper you will be drawing from is Mayes (2014).

The goal of this assignment is to explore and document how representations of health and illness are constructed through language; how we speak about them. You will be analyzing media as an indicator of social representations. You will therefore be analyzing a newspaper article or report that is of sufficient length to give you data to work with. You will be comparing your analysis to an academic paper that uses discourse analysis to describe the same illness or experience.

Assignment 3: Community health promotion (15%) & Presentation 3 (5%): Due April 11

Group Summary (5%): Due April 8

The focus of this assignment is to find literature on a health promotion intervention at the community level. The methodology will be community based research (CBR)/participatory action research (PAR). The theoretical paper you will be drawing from is Richard, Gauvin and Rain (2011)

Your task will be to identify a health promotion campaign that focuses on changing health behaviour by changing the local environment or community; this can be a media campaign, a public health intervention or something that is written up in a report or an academic paper. You will assess the intervention in terms of an ecological model of health, identifying the contextual, social and political factors that contribute to these behaviours. Compare the intervention and/or your analysis with an academic paper using PAR or CBR to assess the same issue and/or behaviour.

REFLECTION PAPERS (15%)

The readings in this class are challenging and form the basis of your assignments. As a seminar course, the goal is to support co-learning, so you will be discussing the main arguments of these papers in your groups. To assist in interpreting the papers, you have been provided with worksheets to help identify key issues and concepts. Use the discussion to help you develop your reflections; you can submit either shared or common reflections. The reflection papers are

focused on theories that are not covered in the assignments, to ensure that you have a chance to discuss these theories in groups.

The short reflections of 300 words are expected to demonstrate that you read and understood the articles and ideally should be completed in class but you can take 24 hours if you want more time to reflect.

- **Reflection paper 1, January 15:** What does it mean to do ‘critical’ health psychology and how is that different from how health psychology is typically practiced?
- **Reflection paper 2, February 12:** How does the theory of social determinants of health address issues of health inequities (as cause, effect or both)?
- **Reflection paper 3, Marcy 18:** How does critical health literacy differ from the traditional definition of health literacy?

GROUP PARTICIPATION (10%)

Your group partners will rate your presentations, and your participation in the group assignments, to ensure that all members participate rather than taking advantage of other students’ work. I will also be assessing your participation in class, whether through posting comments or making verbal contributions.

Grading as per Senate Policy

The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments and tests* will bear either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 90, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.). For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar -

Late Work/Missed Tests or Exams

Students with a documented reason for missing a course test, such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., which is confirmed by supporting documentation (Attending Physician Statement which can be found at: <http://registrar.yorku.ca/pdf/attending-physicians-statement.pdf>) may request accommodation from the Course Instructor. Further extensions or accommodation will require students to submit a formal petition to the Faculty.

Assignments submitted late will have 5% deducted. Check that your assignment is visible on eClass after you have submitted it! If it is submitted as draft that is okay, as long as it is visible.

Add/Drop Deadlines

For a list of all important dates please refer to: [Important Dates](#)

Important dates	Fall (F)	Year (Y)	Winter (W)
Last date to add a course without permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Sept. 20	Sept. 20	Jan. 22
Last date to add a course with permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Sept. 28	Sept. 28	Jan. 31
Last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (also see Financial Deadlines)	Nov. 8	Feb. 8	Mar. 11

Important dates

Course Withdrawal Period (withdraw from a course and receive a “W” on the transcript – see note below)

Fall (F)

Nov. 9 -
Dec. 5

Year (Y)

Feb. 9 -
Apr. 8

Winter (W)

Mar 12 -
Apr. 8

Electronic Device Policy

The class includes in-class writing assignments and note taking. Ideally you will do those on a computer in class and submit directly into Moodle.

Attendance Policy

You are expected to attend class and each others’ presentations. Many of the class assignments include an in-class element so attendance is necessary.

Academic Integrity for Students

York university takes academic integrity very seriously, please [visit an overview of Academic Integrity at York University](#).

The following links will assist you in gaining a better understanding of academic integrity and point you to resources at York that can help you improve your writing and research skills:

- [Information about the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#)
- [Online Tutorial on Academic Integrity](#)
- [Information for Students on Text-Matching Software: Turnitin.com](#)
- [Resources for students to help improve their writing and research skill](#)

Test Banks:

The use of test banks is not permitted in this course and may be considered a potential breach of academic honesty. This includes but is not limited to: buying or selling test banks.

Electronic Devices During a Test/Examination:

Electronic mobile devices of any kind are not allowed during a test or examination. Students are required to turn off and secure any electronic mobile device in their bag which is to be placed under the chair while a test/exam is in progress. Any student observed with an electronic device during a test/exam may be reported to the Undergraduate Office for a potential breach of Academic Honesty.

Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

While all individuals are expected to satisfy the requirements of their program of study and to aspire to do so at a level of excellence, the university recognizes that persons with disabilities may require reasonable accommodation to enable them to do so. The [York University Accessibility Hub](#) is your online stop for accessibility on campus. The [Accessibility Hub](#) provides tools, assistance and resources. Policy Statement

Policy: York University shall make reasonable and appropriate accommodations and adaptations in order to promote the ability of students with disabilities to fulfill the academic requirements of their programs.

The nature and extent of accommodations shall be consistent with and supportive of the integrity of the curriculum and of the academic standards of programs or courses.

Provided that students have given sufficient notice about their accommodation needs, instructors

shall take reasonable steps to accommodate these needs in a manner consistent with the guidelines established hereunder.

For Further Information please refer to: [York university academic accommodation for students with disabilities policy](#)

Calumet and Stong Colleges' Student Success Programming:

[Calumet](#) and [Stong](#) Colleges aim to support the success of Faculty of Health students through a variety of **free programs** throughout their university career:

- [Orientation](#) helps new students transition into university, discover campus resources, and establish social and academic networks.
- [Peer Mentoring](#) connects well-trained upper-year students with first year and transfer students to help them transition into university.
- [Course Representative Program](#) aims to build the leadership skills of its Course Reps while contributing to the academic success and resourcefulness of students in core program classes.
- [Peer-Assisted Study Session \(P.A.S.S.\)](#) involve upper-level academically successful and well-trained students who facilitate study sessions in courses that are known to be historically challenging.
- [Peer Tutoring](#) offers one-on-one academic support by trained Peer Tutors.
- Calumet and Stong Colleges also support students' [Health & Wellness](#), [leadership and professional skills development](#), [student/community engagement and wellbeing](#), [career exploration](#), [Indigenous Circle](#), [awards and recognition](#), and [provide opportunities to students to work or volunteer](#).
- Please connect with your Course Director about any specific academic resources for this class.
- For additional resources/information about our student success programs, please consult our websites ([Calumet College](#); [Stong College](#)), email scchelp@yorku.ca, and/or follow us on Instagram ([Calumet College](#); [Stong College](#)), Facebook ([Calumet College](#); [Stong College](#)) and [LinkedIn](#)
- Are you receiving our weekly email (Calumet and Stong Colleges - Upcoming evens)? If not, please check your Inbox and Junk folders. If you do not find our weekly emails, then please add your 'preferred email' to your Passport York personal profile. If you need support, please contact ccscadm@yorku.ca, and request to be added to the listerv.