

Psychology G4695. The psychology of close relationships. Fall 2005.

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I. Bulletin description

G4695. The psychology of close relationships (seminar).
3 pts. E Rafaeli. Tuesday 4:10 – 6:00, 405 Schermerhorn Hall

Prerequisites: Research Methods, statistics, and social psychology.

Introduction to leading theoretical perspectives employed by social psychologists in the study of close romantic relationships. Exploration of relationship-relevant constructs (e.g., love, commitment, intimacy, breakups) through the lenses offered by these different theories, and with a critical reading of recent research findings in this field.

II. A full description of the content of the course

This course is designed as an overview to the field of close relationships. We will utilize major theories of close relationships, including evolutionary, attachment, interdependence, and cognitive approaches, as well as perspectives from neighboring fields (such as sociology and clinical psychology). Topics covered include relational needs; attraction, jealousy and infidelity; communication; relationship development, maintenance and trajectories; individual differences in relationship styles; and relationships and health. Methodological issues will be discussed within the context of each topic.

The first segment of this course will be devoted to identifying the nature and functions of relationships, from several theoretical perspectives; it will also introduce major dimensions of individual differences in relational styles. Next, we will examine several domains of relational processes, including behaviors (e.g., support vs. hindrance, conflict) and cognitions (e.g., representation, attribution, empathy). We will then touch on the interface between relationships and both physical and psychological well-being. We will conclude by considering relationships within the broader context of family and of society.

III. The rationale for giving the course and its role in the curriculum

The purpose of this seminar is to introduce participants to the leading theoretical perspectives employed by social psychologists in the study of close romantic relationships. This course should help answer both description and process questions about close relationships. A central concern of this seminar will be identifying the social and psychological factors that govern them. We will survey the literature on the needs for close relationships, their development, their adaptive and maladaptive consequences, and the motivations, cognitions, and behaviors of individuals in close relationships.

PSYC G4695 is a graduate seminar, designed particularly for students who wish to learn about close relationships from a social and clinical psychology perspective. It helps to meet a serious need in our curriculum for seminars in Group III (Social, Personality, and Abnormal). It fulfills the following degree requirements:

- For Psychology graduate students, G4695 provides credit toward the "two seriously graded advanced seminars" requirement of the Master of Arts in Psychology.
- For the Psychology major or concentration in the College and in G. S., for the Psychology minor in Engineering, and for the Psychology Post-bac, G4695 meets the Group III (Social, Personality, and Abnormal) distribution requirement.
- G4695 will meet the social science requirement of GS, provided that students obtain the necessary permissions and have taken the prerequisite psychology course.
- For the Barnard Psychology major, PSYC G4695 might fulfill the senior seminar requirement.

IV. The reading list and weekly syllabus (subject to revision)

*** please note: the reading list is still under development. Not all readings listed here will be selected; on average, 3 – 4 papers will be assigned each week ***

9/6/2005 Course overview

Berscheid, E. (1999). The greening of relationship science. *American Psychologist*, 54, 260-266.

9/13/2005: Relationship science; attraction and relationship formation

Jones, J.T.; Pelham, B.W.; Carvallo, M., Mirenberg, M.C. (2004). How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Js: Implicit Egotism and Interpersonal Attraction. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 87, 665-683.

Buss, D.M. (1995). Evolutionary psychology: A new paradigm for psychological science. *Psychological Inquiry*, 6, 1-30.

Fodor, J. (1998). The trouble with psychological Darwinism. *London Review of Books*, 20, 11-13.

Harris, C. R., & Christenfeld, N. (1996a). Gender, jealousy, and reason. *Psychological Science*, 7, 364-366.

Harris, C. R., & Christenfeld, N. (1996b). Jealousy and rational responses to infidelity across gender and culture. *Psychological Science*, 7, 378-379

9/20/2005: Attachment

Collins, N. & Feeney, B.C. (2000). A safe haven: An attachment theory perspective on Support seeking and caregiving in intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 1053-1073.

Fraley, R. C., & Shaver, P. R. (1998) Airport separations: A naturalistic study of adult attachment dynamics in separating couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 1198-1212

Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. R. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 511-524.

Pietromonaco, P.R. & Feldman-Barrett, L. (1997). Working models of attachment and daily social interactions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73, 1409-1423.

9/27/2005 Interdependence theory, communal and exchange orientations

Clark, M.S., & Mills, J. (1979). Interpersonal attraction in exchange and communal relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 12-24.

Kelley, H.H., et al. (2003). An atlas of interpersonal situations. Chapters 1-4, pp. 3-109.

Kelley, H.H., et al. (2003). Entry #7: Chicken, pp. 203-215.

Kelley, H.H., et al. (2003). Entry #2: Mutual partner control, pp. 142-149.

Kelley, H.H., et al. (2003). Entry #3: Corresponding mutual partner control, pp. 150-161.

Kelley, H.H., et al. (2003). Entry #13: Investment, pp. 285-303.

10/4/2005 Individual meetings to develop research proposals

10/11/2005 Cognitive perspectives on relationships

Aron, A., & Aron, E. N. (1997). Self-expansion motivation and including other in the self. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research, and interventions* (2nd ed., pp. 251-270). London: John Wiley & Sons.

Holmberg, D., & Veroff, J. (1996). Rewriting relationship memories: The effects of courtship and wedding scripts. In G. J. O. Fletcher & J. Fitness (Eds.) *Knowledge structures in close relationships: A social psychological approach* (345-368). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

McNulty, J. K., & Karney, B. R. (2004). Positive expectations in the early years of marriage: Should couples expect the best or brace for the worst? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86, 729-743.

Murray, Sandra L.; Holmes, John G. (1999). The (mental) ties that bind: Cognitive structures that predict relationship resilience. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*. 77(6), 1228-1244.

10/18/2005 Relationship development and maintenance

Johnson, M. P. (1999). Personal, moral, and structural commitment to relationships: Experiences of choice and constraint. In J. M. Adams & W. H. Jones (Eds.) *Handbook of interpersonal commitment and relationship stability* (pp. 73-87). New York: Kluwer.

Morse, K. A., & Neuberg, S. L. (2004). How do holidays influence relationship processes and outcomes? Examining the instigating and catalytic effects of Valentine's Day. *Personal Relationships*, 11, 509-527.

Stanley, S.M., & Markman, H.J. (1992). Assessing commitment in personal relationships. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54, 595-608.

Weigel, D. J., & Ballard-Reisch, D. S. (2002). Investigating the behavioral indicators of relational commitment. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 19, 403-423.

10/25/2005 Sex in close relationships

Davis, D., Shaver, P. R., & Vernon, M. L. (2004). Attachment style and subjective motivations for sex. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30, 1076-1090.

Paul, E. L., & Hayes, K. A. (2002). The casualties of 'casual' sex: A qualitative exploration of the phenomenology of college student hookups. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 19, 639-661.

Hinchliff, S., & Gott, M. (2004). Intimacy, commitment, and adaptation: Sexual relationships within long-term marriages. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 21, 595-609.

11/1/2005 Regulation and representation

Fletcher, Garth J. O.; Simpson, Jeffrey A.. (2000). Ideal standards in close relationships: Their structure and functions. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 9(3), 102-105.

Thomas, Geoff; Fletcher, Garth J. O. (2003). Mind-Reading Accuracy in Intimate Relationships: Assessing the Roles of the Relationship, the Target, and the Judge. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*. 85(6), 1079-1094.

Fletcher, Garth J. O.; Thomas, Geoff; Durrant, Russil (1999). Cognitive and behavioral accommodation in close relationships. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships*. 16(6), 705-730.

11/8/2005 – Election day holiday (no class meeting)

11/15/2005 Support and hindrance in close relationships

Bolger, Niall; Zuckerman, Adam; Kessler, Ronald C. (2000). *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*. 79(6), 953-961.

Rafaeli, E. & Gleason, M.E.J. (2004). Skilled support in stressed relationships: A review and proposal for intervention.

Rafaeli, E., Cranford, J.A., Green, A.S., Shrout, P.E. & Bolger, N.: A daily diary study of social hindrance and social support: Comparing domain specific, combined effects, and asymmetrical crossover models

11/22/2005 Empathy and forgiveness

Ickes, William. (1993). Empathic accuracy. *Journal of Personality*. 61(4), 587-610.

Straus, M. A. (1999). The controversy over domestic violence by women: A methodological, theoretical, and sociology of science analysis. In X. B. Arriaga & S. Oskamp (Eds.) *Violence in intimate relationships* (pp. 17-44). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Thomas, Geoff; Fletcher, Garth J. O.; Lange, Craig (1997). On-line empathic accuracy in marital interaction. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*. 72(4), Apr 1997, 839-850.

Verhofstadt, Lesley L.; Buysse, Ann; Ickes, William; De Clercq, Armand; Peene, Olivier J. (2005). Conflict and support interactions in marriage: An analysis of couples' interactive behavior and on-line cognition. *Personal Relationships*. 12(1), 23-42.

11/29/2005 Relationships, physical and mental health

Sarason, B. R., Sarason, I. G., & Gurung, R. A. R. (1997). Close relationships and health outcomes: A key to the role of social support. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research, and interventions* (2nd ed., pp. 547-573). London: John Wiley & Sons.

Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K. (1999). Norman Cousins Memorial Lecture 1998. Stress, personal relationships, and immune function: health implications. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, 13, 61-72.

Helgeson, Vicki S.; Novak, Sarah A.; Lepore, Stephen J.; Eton, David T. (2004). Spouse social control efforts: Relations to health behavior and well-being among men with prostate cancer. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships*. 21(1), 53-68.

Sher, Tamara Goldman; Baucom, Donald H. (2001). Mending a broken heart: A couples approach to cardiac risk reduction. *Applied & Preventive Psychology*. 10(2), 125-133.

12/6/2005 Summary and project presentations

V. Course requirements

The initial two or three classes will provide a foundation in close relationship research, and will consist of introductory lectures led by the instructor followed by group discussion. During the weeks that follow, we will discuss the topics listed below. All members of the seminar will read the articles listed, and will post a reaction paper (described below) to the class bulletin board by the Sunday night preceding each class. Each meeting will be led by two or three members of the seminar, who will begin with a brief summary of the articles assigned, and then present to the group a set of questions (drawn from the postings to the bulletin board) designed to facilitate a discussion of the central issues in the readings. They will then post a summary of the class discussion to the bulletin board before the next class meeting. Each member is expected to take at least one turn as discussion leader.

Class participation and reaction papers

Students should be familiar with all assigned readings each week, and come to class prepared to discuss their thoughts on the material, having written a reaction paper by the preceding Sunday night, at the latest. The "reaction paper" should include at least one comments on each of that week's readings. Comments might include criticisms of the research, ideas for future research, or general thoughts on integrating the current week's reading with other assigned materials or with ideas discussed in class previously. Basically, these are notes of thoughts that occur to you as you read the materials, and that you would like to have brought up in our class discussion.

Class participation is a very important part of the learning process in this course. Students will be allowed one un-excused absence during the semester. If you are absent, be sure to read the papers and submit a reaction paper on them by the next week, at the latest. Also, remember to get the next week's reading assignment and discussion questions from one of your fellow students so that you will be prepared for the discussion.

You will be evaluated on the quality of your contributions. Here are some ideas of what high quality comments may involve:

- A consideration of issues addressed in assigned readings and previous class discussions and lectures;
- A unique, but relevant, perspective;
- A contribution to moving the discussion and analysis forward;
- An increment on others' comments;
- A transcendence of the "I feel" syndrome. That is, it includes some evidence, argumentation, or recognition of inherent tradeoffs.

Discussions and leading them

Each week, two or three students will be responsible for leading class discussion. This will entail several responsibilities: (a) First, you should read the assigned material very carefully, with an eye toward discussion topics you might introduce in the event that our discussion wanes; (b) Second, you should select (and run by me) and then read a couple of additional articles that are relevant for that week and come to class prepared to describe them to the rest of us. I do not expect your presentation to be rehearsed or power-pointed, but I do expect it to be well organized and thorough.

You should complete your preparation by Monday evening preceding your designated class period, so that you may refer any questions to me during my office hours, which are on Tuesday morning (10:30-11:30). (c) Third, you will meet again after class, and combine your notes into a unified summary of the class discussion, to be posted to the class bulletin board before the next class.

Final paper

A central goal of this course is to give you a running start on becoming a relationship researcher. For that purpose, I will expect you to identify areas in which the current state of theorizing and research leaves important theoretical or empirical issues unresolved. Our discussions will be geared toward identifying fruitful avenues for research which addresses these limitations. You will write a paper in which some area of the research relevant to this class is reviewed, a problem is identified, and a study is proposed which addresses this problem. Think of this as a grant proposal (ideally one that you will actually set out to pursue). Write it in APA style, including an abstract, followed by an introduction, method section, proposed analyses, and references. Imagine reasonable budgetary constraints (i.e., be practical about this). Attach an excel sheet specifying the budget, and note where you would submit this grant.

Graduate students will be expected to propose more ambitious, multi-study programs investigating their topic of choice. Undergraduate students will be expected to develop a single-study proposal, commensurate with their statistical and methodological background.

During two or three weeks in the middle of the semester, we will workshop the topics you chose for your final paper. Use these workshops as a chance to get feedback on your read of the theory and on the design of your proposed study or studies.

A draft of the proposal will be due before your mid-semester presentation. The draft, along with my and the class's comments on your oral presentation will count as 10% of your grade. The final paper (due December 6th) will count as 50% of your grade; I will want to see that you have incorporated the reviews on the draft and the workshop presentation of the paper.

Grades will be computed according to this breakdown

15% Reaction papers

15% Participation in discussions

10% Discussion leading

10% Draft and workshop of proposal

50% Final paper (research proposal)