



PSYC 334 0101 – Interpersonal Relationships

University of Maryland – Winter 2014

WHAT IS RELATIONSHIP SCIENCE AND WHAT DO RELATIONSHIP SCIENTISTS DO?

Although researchers disagree on what exactly defines a close relationship, they do agree that relationships are central to our lives; friends, parents, siblings, romantic partners, social networks, and acquaintances, have an enormous influence on our thoughts, feelings and behavior.



The purpose of this course is to help you understand the processes that regulate human social relationships, though the lens of the scientific method. It will include an overview of social-psychological theories of relationships research and an exploration of the current literature. In other words, relationship scientists try to understand the psychological processes that underlie close relationships in human life (e.g., how we form and break bonds, how we define love or commitment, how we experience emotions like jealousy). Topics include: attraction, intimacy, love, attachment, family, friendship, sexuality, interdependence, communication, dissolution and loss, marriage, sexuality, and others.

The scientific study of relationships is more difficult than it sounds because we all have our own subjective intuitions and experiences (and personality traits), and our beliefs are also influenced by the cultures we grow up with (e.g., nations, religions, gender, histories). In many cases the assumptions we have about relationships turn out to be wrong, and in other cases the research helps us more fully understand why the assumption was correct all along. There is a tremendous reason to use science to study relationships... the more we understand about ourselves and those around us the more effective we can be at achieving our own personal goals (e.g., having a satisfying sex life) and advancing society (e.g., mitigating the negative effects of divorce).



This course will teach you the scientific process that relationship psychologists use to study human thoughts, feelings and behavior and give you the opportunity to practice applying that process in a number of ways. You will learn how we (a) gather and critically evaluate research findings in the existing research literature,

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(b) integrate those findings into coherent and testable theories that explain objective observations, (c) conceptually design new ideas for research that test those theories and extends our knowledge, and (d) effectively communicate our theories and findings to a wide range of audiences. The result of the process is a more accurate and objective (rather than intuitive) understanding of the psychological processes that influence us - and that is what prepares you to apply your scientific understanding to explain and influence a wide range of complex, challenging and controversial social issues.

Examples of how you will practice thinking and behaving like a relationship scientist:

- Participate in activities that require you to use the scientific process and the results from research studies in your understanding and discussion of “real world” applications and events.
- Complete critical writing assignments that put you in the shoes of a relationship scientist and challenge you to engage in the process of scientific thought and practice.
- Develop a scholarly analysis paper that integrates your progressive learning of the scientific process and practice in the “real world” and develops new research ideas on topic of interest to you.

REQUIRED TEXT

Text: Miller (2012). *Intimate Relationships* (6th ed). New York: McGraw-Hill
ISBN-10: 0078117151 ISBN-13: 978-0078117152

COURSE GOALS/LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learning objectives for this course are based on the Department of Psychology’s learning outcomes for all courses, which include developing students’ abilities in the following areas:

- 1) **Research Methods:** Understand basic research methods in social psychology, including design and interpretation. In other words, you should learn to think like a scientist who studies human behavior.
 - a. Formulate testable predictions/hypotheses.
 - b. Incorporate existing theoretical frameworks into new areas.
 - c. Recognize limitations in applicability of results.
 - d. Demonstrate technological competency and information literacy related to research methods.
- 2) **Critical Thinking:** Apply creative and critical thinking to behavior and mental processes.
 - a. Use critical thinking and reasoning to recognize, develop, defend, and criticize arguments and other persuasive appeals.
 - b. Be a good “consumer” of social science research.
 - c. Distinguish between different types (and varying quality) of research.
 - d. Understand how psychological research is portrayed (accurately or inaccurately) in the mainstream media.
- 3) **Communication:** Communicate effectively in a variety of formats.
 - a. Develop effective writing skills.
 - b. Develop interpersonal skills with peers and collaborators.
- 4) **Content:** Demonstrate familiarity with the content of the course: a sampling of the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in social psychology.

As you can see, the overarching goal for you in this course is to develop an understanding process by which Social Psychologists apply the scientific method to understand and influence human thought and behavior.

COURSE FORMAT, GUIDELINES, AND REQUIREMENTS

1) **Course material.** There will be a substantial amount of reading required for this course. Rather than a traditional in-class lecture format, the course material will be taught through an online **blog** format. This means that the material will be (mostly) written rather than spoken, and will be published on a website available to students who register for the course. The blog format “lecture” material is meant to a) supplement the textbook content, b) consolidate information from various internet sources, including www.scienceofrelationships.com, and c) provide a platform for interactive learning between myself (the teacher) and you (the students). **You are responsible for any and all course material covered, announcements, etc.** on the course blog, the textbook, and Canvas (ELMS). Be sure to exchange contact information with at least two classmates. Even though we will not be having in-class meetings, you are still encouraged to meet with each other, either in person or through electronic media (e.g., Skype) to discuss the material and form study groups.

I will hold “office hours” both online and in my actual office, during the week. The online office hour will be in a web conference format and specific details will be announced shortly.

**Note: the web address for the course blog is <http://umdpsyc334.blogspot.com/> but the blog is not public. In order for you to have access to this blog, you MUST provide me with an active email address (ideally, your UMD email address). I will send you an invite through email to view the blog. If you cannot access the blog for any reason, please let me know by contacting me through Canvas or at dselter@umd.edu.

**Also note: while some Internet forums may tolerate “trolling” (in other words, intentionally and willfully attempting to cause discord or friction through hateful or rude speech), those behaviors will not be tolerated in my course. You are expected to treat each other with respect. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to demonstrate civility with one another, the teaching assistants, or me will be subject to referral to the Office of Student Conduct or to the University Campus Police. You are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct.

However, I will also add that a key element of the scientific method is the ability for individuals to be provocative and to challenge conventional wisdom. Do not assume that the textbook author or I are the absolute final word on the field of interpersonal relationships, and do not hesitate to question previous research findings. In addition, do not assume that your students cannot **benefit** directly from your ideas, even if you strongly disagree. The ideal environment for scientific growth is one in which we can be critical while being constructive, provocative while being respectful, professional while being easy-going. Do not be afraid to challenge authority (in this case, academic scientists), and also do not hesitate to place crude and/or offensive behaviors under the scientific microscope. Social psychology is the study of human life, and human life is X-rated. To approach a full understanding of what people feel, think, and do, it will inevitably include addressing some aspects of human nature that are uncomfortable. Political correctness and self-censorship are the enemies of science.

2) **Participation/Contribution.** Rather than in-class discussion or attendance, your participation will be gauged by the contributions you make to the blog. There is a comments section, and I expect you to use it as a way of maintaining engagement with the material. You will be expected to contribute 7 posts to the comments section on the blog throughout the course. There are 14 units of material altogether, so you are only required to contribute to half of the blog posts in order to get full participation credit. There are several ways to satisfy this requirement. That is, there are several ways in which you can contribute to the blog. I have

listed some ideas in the introductory blog post. See there for more information. All told, this will be worth approximately 10% of your final grade.

3) **Textbook Readings.** The textbook provides the basic information and material in the field of relationship science, and it will help assist you in learning, but it will not (by itself) make you an expert. Reading each assigned textbook chapter in addition to the blog lecture material will help you better understand the topics, help you do well on exams, and help you get ideas for your projects. You are also responsible to read the corresponding [Science of Relationships](#) articles that I link to in each blog post. There may be additional readings (journal articles and articles from the popular press/media), which will be announced as the semester progresses.

4) **Final Analysis Paper.** A 6-8-page, typed, double-spaced paper is due on Friday January 17th at 9pm. The paper counts for 35% of your final grade. The task for the final paper is to investigate a new phenomenon within the realm of interpersonal relationships that interests you and **has not yet been studied**. In your paper, you must include testable ideas for how to approach the study of that phenomenon as a relationship scientist would.

The inspiration for this paper can come from a variety of different sources, including articles in the popular press/media (newspapers or magazines), or in a popular movie/film, etc. For example, you may have observed a behavioral pattern in your own relationship that you wish to approach from a scientific perspective (relationship psychologists often do this!). Or, you may have observed that characters in a popular film (e.g., *Closer*) display certain behavioral patterns that have not yet been studied by relationship scientists, and you wish to write a paper that explores that understudied phenomenon. Or, you may have heard bold yet unsubstantiated claims made in the popular media (e.g., newspapers or magazines) and then you can develop new research that would explore the validity of those claims.

You will be charged with conducting a literature review with research that is relevant to your topic/phenomenon, coming up with conceptual and operational definitions for your variables that can be measured, developing hypotheses and justifications for your predictions, design (conceptually) a study/experiment to test your hypothesis, and explaining the anticipated results, drawing conclusions and implications for understanding human social behavior.

Keys to doing well on the final paper:

- Accuracy. Define and describe concepts, theories, and phenomena correctly and clearly, and make sure the examples you cite are actually demonstrating the concepts.
- Clear and coherent writing. Use proper grammar, spelling, capitalization, diction, syntax, punctuation, organization, etc. and use APA style referencing/citations correctly as well!
- Edit and revise. It is also a good idea to have a friend, family member, or classmate read over drafts of your paper (especially someone who is unfamiliar with psychology). It is also beneficial to have either the TAs or myself look over specific parts of your paper, as well as the UMD Writing Center (for technical feedback). We can give excellent feedback on your writing.
- Start early. Begin thinking about what phenomenon you'd like to study in your paper within the first 1-2 months of the semester. Feel free (and encouraged) to stop by during my office hour to ask for feedback. If you procrastinate too much, you may find there's not enough time left at the end of the semester to get good feedback and revise your paper.



Students who have not had as much experience with academic writing are encouraged to take advantage of the resources available on campus. The Writing Center offers individual appointments to help you draft, proof and complete writing assignments. Even experienced writers can benefit! To schedule an appointment, and to see the other resources available to you, visit <http://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter>.

5) **Quizzes & Final Exam.** There will be 12 quizzes (worth 35% of your final grade in total) administered online through Canvas (ELMS) following your completion of each unit of material (e.g., Social Cognition, Breakups & Divorce), except the last unit on Marriage & Maintenance (which will be covered on the final exam). You will be given deadlines to complete each unit of material and the corresponding quiz, but they will not be given at a specific time, thus giving flexibility based on students' individual schedules. As an example, you may have until January 7th to complete the unit on attraction, which includes the quiz. You will be responsible for budgeting your own time. The schedule is meant to assist you, but you are not confined to it. You can (and you are encouraged to do so) get started early on the next unit if you finish that day's work early. Don't wait until the next calendar day on the schedule to work on the next unit.

Quizzes are meant to take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete, and they will be timed (meaning that once you begin the quiz, you will have a fixed amount of time to finish). They will include both multiple choice and short answer questions and will cover any material discussed on the blog or in the textbook unless I specify otherwise. Quizzes are **not** cumulative, **however**, some concepts/facts fit into more than one unit (e.g., attachment and jealousy), and may appear on a quiz more than once. If that is the case, I will usually mention it again on the blog. Alternatively, it may appear a second time in the textbook. The quizzes will be open-book but I strongly suggest that you prepare for the quizzes as if they are closed-book, otherwise you will spend too much time looking up information and you will not be able to finish the quiz in time. There will also be a final exam (worth 20% of your final grade), which will be cumulative and contain a higher number of questions. Note: I encourage you to go over the quiz questions with the TAs and/or myself, and/or classmates, especially if your grade does not match your performance goals.

UNIVERSITY & DEPARTMENT POLICIES

As a member of this campus community I expect that you are aware of, and will adhere to, all relevant policies that relate to this course. All university policies can be found at www.president.umd.edu/policies.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is the foundation of science and the policies will be strictly enforced. Any indication of academic dishonesty (including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism and falsification) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct (www.osc.umd.edu) without hesitation. That includes the worksheet and learning check submissions. Please see the Department of Psychology's policy statement on academic integrity (attached) for more details.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students requiring specific academic accommodations should contact me with the appropriate documentation from DSS during the first week of the semester (www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS).

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

University policy “provides that students should not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs; students shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances...It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended missed work or delays for religious observances in advance. Notice should be provided as soon as possible but no later than the end of the schedule adjustment period.” If your work will be delayed for a religious holiday, notify me at the start of the course if possible.

PROBLEMS

If you are experiencing a problem with the course or if you foresee a problem, PLEASE talk to me before it gets any worse. We will be much more sympathetic if the problem is small and if we have forewarning.

MUTUALLY-DERIVED EXPECTATIONS

I believe it is essential that we, as members of a learning community, agree upon what is expected of each other and ourselves. As a course instructor, my role is to design and manage a learning environment that is rigorous, engaging and focused on evidenced-based teaching practices. As a student, your role is to take personal responsibility for your learning and actively engage in all aspects of the course. What you see here comes directly from working with students in previous semester, and we'll discuss these in class so that we can add or clarify anything that I've missed:

YOU, AS A STUDENT, HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPECT THAT:

- > All work is evaluated by reasonable, objective and transparent criteria intended to assess learning
- > All students are treated with equality, professionalism and respect
- > I will be prepared and on-time for every class meeting and scheduled appointment
- > I will maintain a classroom conducive to active learning, discussion and critical thinking
- > I will, when possible, integrate contemporary examples, videos and activities to reinforce learning
- > I will be available to assist with coursework and offer referrals to campus resources upon request
- > I will read and respond to your emails within 24 hours on weekdays
- > I will do my best to answer any questions you have, and if I don't know the answer, I'll do my best to work with you so we can find it (in other words, I won't just make stuff up).

I, AS AN INSTRUCTOR, HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPECT YOU WILL:

- > Devote the necessary time and energy to master the course material. According to Department of Psychology guidelines you should budget an average of 2-3 out-of-class hours per week for every hour in-class. If your schedule does not currently permit you to satisfy these requirements I advise you take the course at another time.
- > Be prepared and on-time for every class meeting, having completed the assigned work
- > Save newspapers, word & math puzzles, texting, IM, email, Facebook, etc. for outside of class
- > Sleep in your bed, in someone else's bed, in the hall, or under a tree... but not in class
- > Take responsibility for getting anything you might have missed from a fellow classmate
- > Monitor your email and Canvas announcements at least once every 24 hours
- > Adhere to all course and university policies, deadlines, requirements and grading criteria
- > Seek assistance when you need it and see that your questions are answered to your satisfaction

Semester Length	Out-of-Class Hours/Week
16 weeks	6-9
6 weeks	15-22
3 weeks	30-45

COURSE EVALUATIONS

As members of this learning community your feedback is crucial to the success of our program, and therefore to the value of your degree. All I ask is that in evaluating of all your courses you approach it the same way you expect instructors to evaluate your performance... be open, honest and objective.

GRADES

GRADES ARE NOT GIVEN, BUT EARNED. Your grade is determined by your performance on the various learning assessments in the course and is assigned individually (not curved). With the exception of calculation errors, no grade changes will be made to your final grade at the end of the semester. If earning a particular grade is important to you, please contact me at the beginning of the course so that I can offer some helpful suggestions for achieving your goal.

I am happy to discuss any of your grades with you. Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing within 1 week of receiving the grade. If you request a re-grade, I will handle it (not the TAs) and my re-grade is final. Your grade may go up, it may go down, or it may stay the same. You must submit a 1/2 page explanation of why you feel your assignment/paper was unfairly graded and why you deserve a re-grade. Note: A re-grade is different than an error in scoring/grading.

If eligible to be turned in late, work will be penalized 1 letter grade per 24 hours after the time it was due. The final term paper is NOT eligible to be turned in late. Late quizzes will be accepted within 48 hours of the due date/time. The final exam is NOT eligible to be completed late.

12 Quizzes (10% each) = 35%
7 Blog Contributions/Participation = 10%
1 Final Analysis Paper = 35%
1 Final Exam = 20%

Total = 100%

Please note: Your grade in this class is **weighted** according to the relative percentage weights for each assignment/exam; it is *not* the accumulation of a raw total number of points. If you have questions about how grades are calculated, ask me or the TA for clarification.

Your final letter grade will be based on the following grading scale:

LETTER GRADE	=	SCORE	LETTER GRADE	=	SCORE
A+	=	97-100	C+	=	77-79
A	=	94-97	C	=	73-76
A-	=	90-93	C-	=	70-72
B+	=	87-89	D+	=	67-69
B	=	83-86	D	=	63-66
B-	=	80-82	D-	=	60-62
			F	=	< 60

EXTRA CREDIT

There are opportunities to receive extra credit. All exams will contain additional questions for extra credit. Other extra credit opportunities, if they are offered, will be announced on Canvas and cannot be made up if missed.

*There is one other optional extra credit assignment: “Science of Relationships Post.” Students can earn extra credit by writing a brief article that would be considered of publishable quality on ScienceofRelationships.com (detailed guidelines are posted on Canvas). This paper must be handed in **no later than January 15th**.

Note: I encourage you to take advantage of extra credit, but be aware that no amount of extra credit can effectively boost a failing grade. An “F” cannot turn into a “D” with extra credit.

A NOTE TO THE CLASS

I am anticipating a very thoughtful, interesting and insightful class. I expect us to have some great conversations about relationship science and how it relates to your lives and society. Although the course may be challenging, I believe you will all enjoy being in the class and learning what social psychology has to offer.

Tips for doing well in the course:

- 1) **READ THE TEXTBOOK THOROUGHLY!** This is crucial. Many college students shrug off the reading, and then are unhappy when they do not get the grade they desire. This can mean the difference between a B and an A, or a C and a B.
- 2) Don’t fall behind. Start your assignments **EARLY** (especially your term paper).
- 3) Don’t expect this class to be “easy.” The material and assignments are highly challenging. Don’t strategize by slacking off to devote efforts to your “harder” courses, as this will result in an undesirable grade.
- 4) Begin with the mindset that your current grade is a zero (0%) and you must work up to earn points in your exams/assignments.
- 5) Form a study group! This is **STRONGLY** recommended. Your learning will be enhanced, and so will your performance in the class. Don’t go it alone!
- 6) If you are struggling, utilize me the TAs. **Chat with us** if something is unclear. Do **NOT** wait until the last week of the semester to investigate why you’re not getting the grades you desire.
- 7) Get an adequate amount of sleep, eat a healthy diet, and exercise.
- 8) Enjoy the college experience. Have fun!

See the course schedule on the next page.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
			January 2 nd Introduction (Ch. 1); Theories & Research Methods (Ch. 2) Quiz due Jan 3 rd at 9pm	January 3 rd Attraction (Ch. 3) Quiz due Jan 6 th at 9pm
January 6 th Love & Intimacy (Ch. 8) Quiz due Jan 7 th at 9pm	January 7 th Social Cognition (Ch. 4) Quiz due Jan 8 th at 9pm	January 8 th Interdependence (Ch. 6) Quiz due Jan 9 th at 9pm	January 9 th Attachment & Family Processes Quiz due Jan 10 th at 9pm	January 10 th Communication (Ch. 5) Quiz due Jan 13 th at 9pm
January 13 th Conflict (Ch. 11) Quiz due Jan 14 th at 9pm	January 14 th Jealousy, Infidelity, and Betrayal (Ch. 10) Quiz due Jan 15 th at 9pm	January 15 th Divorce & Breakups (Ch. 13) Optional Science of Relationships paper due today Quiz due Jan 16 th at 9pm	January 16 th Friendship (Ch. 7) Quiz due Jan 17 th at 9pm	January 17 th Sexuality (Ch. 9) Final term paper due today Quiz due Jan 20 th at 9pm
January 20 th MLK Day	January 21 st Marriage & Maintenance (Ch. 14)	January 22 nd Miscellaneous Topics; Wrap Up Final Exam – complete by Jan 22 nd at 9pm		

NOTE: The schedule above is **meant to serve as a guide – you are responsible for managing the course material on your own time**. Since all of the material is available at the very beginning of the course, you may find it advantageous to “read ahead” before the next day’s unit of material. I will announce any changes to the schedule as they happen, and I will post notes on Canvas that reflect this.

ALSO NOTE: This syllabus is *not* a binding document. I reserve the right to modify the syllabus for any time and for any reason. If anything is modified, I will notify the class but it is your responsibility to keep up with class announcements and updates. In addition, if you are confused about anything on the syllabus (including assignment guidelines and due dates) then you are responsible to ask either me or the TAs for clarification.