

Senior Seminar in Psychology
Childhood Trauma and Adversity
Psychology 4931

Course Details

Class number: 79248

Section: U01 1188

Day of the Week: Wednesdays

Inclusive Dates: August 22, 2018 to December 5, 2018

Time: 12:00 to 1:40 pm

Semester: Fall 2018

Classroom: Graham Center 277

Prerequisite: PSY 3213 or PSY 3215

Modality: Face-to-face

Textbook: None

Instructor Details

Instructor: Dr. Adela C. Timmons

Department: Psychology

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm or by appointment

Office: AHC1 341

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Teaching Assistant Details

Teaching assistant: Stephanie Morris

Email: smorr064@fiu.edu

Office hours: By appointment

Course Description

Welcome to my class! I am excited to have you. If you are in this class, you are a senior or (possibly junior) who will soon graduate with a degree in psychology. Congratulations! Many of you may be wondering what you'll be doing next. Some of you might be thinking about applying to graduate school, while others might be considering alternative routes. Each class will be divided into two sections. The first half of class will be taught in the style of a graduate seminar. We'll be learning how childhood trauma impacts behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and biological functioning across the lifespan. This section of class is meant to introduce you to what graduate school is like—that is, diving deep into a topic, engaging in intellectual discussions, and exercising those critical thinking and writing skills. The second half of class will be focused on professional development. This is meant to help prepare and guide you in the next steps of your career. I am here to serve as a mentor to you—please use me as a resource in your professional development journey. Class will involve a mixture of formats, including lectures, discussions, videos, and small group activities. My class is meant to be interactive, so please ask questions and get involved!

Course Objectives and Outcomes:

Childhood trauma and adversity section objectives and outcomes:

- (1) Obtain foundational knowledge about the field of childhood trauma and adversity
- (2) Become familiar with cutting-edge theories and theorists in this field

- (3) Obtain exposure to graduate-level, seminar style coursework

Professional development section objectives and outcomes:

- (1) Learn about career paths in psychology and the process of applying to graduate school
- (2) Reflect on and crystalize your professional career goals post-graduation
- (3) Prepare applications for post-graduation career plans

Class Policies

- **Attendance:** Attending every class is strongly recommended. I will collect attendance each week. If you miss only 1 class this semester, I will award you 1% extra credit. If you miss no classes all semester, I will award you 2% extra credit.
- **In-class participation:** Please ask questions, make comments, and participate. This class is meant to be interactive. At the beginning of the class, please turn off class-irrelevant electronic devices, including cell phones. If you are expecting an emergency call, inform the instructor at the beginning of the class, turn your phone to vibrate, and take your call outside. Although the class atmosphere will be casual and friendly, it is also important to respect each other. If your behavior disrupts class, you may be asked to leave.
- **Syllabus changes:** The information on this syllabus, including the class schedule, is subject to change by the instructor. Any changes will be announced in class and posted online. Students are responsible for staying informed of these changes.
- **Contacting the instructor:** The best way to contact me is via email at: atimmons@fiu.edu.
- **Student conduct:** Florida International university is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the university. All students are deemed by the university to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the academic misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.
- **Services for students with disabilities:** In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, FIU provides appropriate accommodations and support services to qualified applicants and students with disabilities. These include, but are not limited to, auxiliary aids/services such as sign language interpreters, assistive-listening devices for hearing-impaired individuals, extended time for proctoring of exams, and registration assistance. Accommodations and types of support services vary and are specifically designed to meet the disability-related needs of each student based on current, verifiable medical documentation. Arrangements for auxiliary aids/services are available only through the FIU Disability Resource Center. Please note: requests for accommodations **MUST** go through this office. Please initiate the process at the beginning of the semester.
- **Late assignments:** Assignments are due in class on the date stated in the syllabus. Please turn in paper copies of assignments and do not email. This allows me and/or the TA to make personalized comments. If you know you will be absent on a particular day, you can arrange to turn in your assignment for full credit **IF** you make arrangements with me **PRIOR** to the due date and submit the assignment **EARLY**. In the event of an emergency, I will accept the assignment for full credit **IF** you turn in appropriate documentation within two weeks of the due date. You may turn in late assignments for half credit up until the last class (12/5/18).

- **Finals week:** FIU requires that classes meet during finals week if there is not a final exam. Thus, we will meet on 12/5/18 for our final class.

Assignments and Evaluation

Child Trauma

- **Readings:** Come to class having read the assigned readings due on that day. We will discuss these readings in class. Class discussions are much more interesting when you've done the readings! Sometimes the readings will overlap with lecture material and sometimes they won't. Because this is a senior course designed to prepare you for graduate school, the readings are graduate level. They may be challenging at times, but this is meant to help you grow and learn. Rather than learning from a textbook, you will be engaging directly with scientific material—that is, you will be reading articles written by researchers for researchers. You may not always understand every detail, but if you persist, your reading comprehension skills will improve greatly! Readings for each week are posted on Canvas under Modules.
- **Reading reactions:** You will be required to turn in a short reaction to the reading **IN PERSON** at the beginning of each class period. Email submissions will be accepted only with special permission if arranged **PRIOR TO CLASS**. They can be hand-written or typed. Include 3 to 6 sentences discussing something from the article that caught your interest or intrigued you. Then, write A discussion question. You will use these questions during class discussions, so write good ones! There will be 14 reading reactions total, each worth 1 point. Keep in mind, each one is worth 1% of your grade. I will allow you to skip one of them without losing credit, so in total, they will make up 13% of your grade. If you turn in all 14, you'll receive 1% extra credit.
- **Class discussion:** Class discussions will be based on the reading for that day. You will use your reading reactions and discussion questions in class to facilitate lively discussion.

Professional Development*

- **Description of post-graduation career goals:** This will involve a 1 page description of your post-graduation career goals. It's okay if you don't know or are considering multiple options. It's also okay if it doesn't have anything to do with psychology. The point of this assignment is to help you think about what you'd like to do next.
- **Self-assessment of readiness:** This will involve a 1 to 2 page self-assessment of your readiness for your selected career goal. The purpose of this assignment is to help you identify any gaps you might have in between your current experience and your future goals.
- **Action plan to achieve readiness:** This will involve a 1 to 2 page plan of what steps you will take over a specified period of time to achieve readiness for your career goals. The point of this assignment is to help you figure out exactly how you will achieve your goals.
- **List of schools/jobs:** You will turn in a list of 10-15 programs, schools, or jobs for which you would like to apply. You will pick your top choice and write 1 paragraph explaining why you chose the program/school/job and why it is a good match for you.
- **CV/resume draft 1:** You will write up a rough draft of your curriculum vitae or resume. The number of pages will depend on how much you have done. This is to help you prepare your graduate school/job applications. You will not be graded on the number of things listed on your cv/resume. Rather, you will be graded on your execution (e.g., Is it Polished? Clear?)
- **CV/resume draft 2:** You will receive feedback from your peers in class. In addition, I will ask you to show your cv/resume to two people. You will write (1) a half page summary of what each person's comments were and (2) a half page summary of how you incorporated them. If you chose not to incorporate certain comments, you will explain why. Receiving feedback and

revising is a critical part of the writing process. By getting feedback, you will end up with a much-improved final product.

- **Personal statement/cover letter draft 1:** You will write up a draft of a personal statement/cover letter. It should be 1 to 2 pages **SINGLE SPACED**. If a job or school requires something substantially different, please let me know, and we can make adjustments. The goal is to write something that will actually be useful to you.
- **Personal statement/cover letter draft 2:** You will receive feedback from your peers in class. In addition, I will ask you to show your personal statement/cover letter to two people. You will write (1) a half page summary of what each person’s comments were and (2) a half page summary of how you incorporated them. If you chose not to incorporate certain comments, you will explain why. Receiving feedback and revising is a critical part of the writing process. By getting feedback, you will end up with a much-improved final product.
- **Graduate portfolio:** This will be the culmination of all the work you did all semester long. Throughout the semester, you will receive feedback on all professional development assignments you completed. You are expected to revise your materials in line with the comments provided by myself and/or the teaching assistant. You will write (1) a half page summary of what each person’s comments were, (2) a half page summary of how you incorporated them (if you did not incorporate certain comments, provide a thoughtful explanation of why), and (3) a 1 page reflection about what it was like to put these materials together and what you learned in the process.
- **Extra credit:** You will have the opportunity to earn 3 points of extra credit (3% of your grade) total. The first opportunity is through attendance (1 absence = 1 point extra credit; zero absences = 2 points extra credit). The second opportunity is through the reading reactions: If you turn in all 14 reading reactions, you will get 1 point extra credit.

*Further details and grading guidelines for these assignments will be provided in class.

SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS, DUE DATES, AND POINT BREAKDOWNS			
Assignment	Due Date(s)	Points	Percentage
Reading reactions	All class dates	13	13%
Description of post-graduation career goals	9/5/18	5	5%
Self-assessment of readiness	9/12/18	7	7%
Action plan to achieve readiness	9/19/18	10	10%
List of schools/jobs	9/26/18	5	5%
CV/resume draft 1	10/3/18	10	10%
CV/resume draft 2	10/10/18	10	10%
Personal statement/cover letter draft 1	10/24/18	10	10%
Personal statement/cover letter draft 2	10/31/18	10	10%
Graduate school portfolio	12/5/18	20	20%
Extra credit: Attendance	All class dates	1-2	1-2%
Extra credit: Reading reactions	All class dates	1	1%

GRADE BREAKDOWN	
Grade	Points
A	93.00% - 100.00%
A-	90.00% - 92.99%

B+	87.00% - 89.99%
B	83.00% - 86.99%
B-	80.00% - 82.99%
C+	77.00% - 79.99%
C	70.00% - 76.99%
D	67.00% - 60.00%
F	59.99% or less

OVERVIEW OF CHILD TRAUMA TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS				
Week	Date	Lecture Topic	Reading	Assignment
1	8/22/18	Definitions and prevalence		
2	8/29/18	The effects of trauma: An overview	Felitti et al., 1998	Reading reaction
3	9/5/18	Biological embedding of trauma 1	Bush & Boyce, 2014	Reading reaction
4	9/12/18	Biological embedding of trauma 2	Repetti et al., 2011	Reading reaction
5	9/19/18	Biological embedding of trauma 3	Ellis et al., 2011	Reading reaction
6	9/26/18	Attachment	Blair-Gomez et al., 2013	Reading reaction
7	10/3/18	Emotion regulation 1	Sbarra & Hazan, 2008	Reading reaction
8	10/10/18	Emotion regulation 2	Beckes & Coan, 2011	Reading reaction
9	10/17/18	Cognition, attention, and memory	Frankenhuis, 2013	Reading reaction
10	10/24/18	Historical trauma and oppression	Mohatt et al., 2010	Reading reaction
11	10/31/18	Health disparities	APA, 2017 part 1	Reading reaction
12	11/7/18	Intergenerational transmission	Timmons et al., 2017	Reading reaction
13	11/14/18	Resilience	Seery, 2011	Reading reaction
14	11/21/18	Flex-week (catch up class in case of cancellations due to inclement weather)		
15	11/28/18	Trauma-informed systems	APA, 2017 part 2	Reading reaction
16	12/5/18	Evidence-based therapies	Schneider et al. 2013	Reading reaction
OVERVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS				
Week	Date	Reading	Assignment	
1	8/22/18	Career paths in psychology		
2	8/29/18	Psychology graduate programs		
3	9/5/18	Preparing to apply	Description of post-graduation career goals	
4	9/12/18	Overview of how to apply	Self-assessment of readiness	
5	9/19/18	Choosing schools and mentors	Action plan to achieve readiness	
6	9/26/18	Curriculum vitae/resume	List of schools/jobs	
7	10/3/18	Curriculum vitae/resume	CV/resume draft 1	
8	10/10/18	Curriculum vitae/resume	CV/resume draft 2	
9	10/17/18	Personal statement/cover letter		
10	10/24/18	Personal statement/cover letter	Personal statement/cover letter draft 1	
11	10/31/18	Personal statement/cover letter	Personal statement/cover letter draft 2	
12	11/7/18	Interviews		
13	11/14/18	Making decisions		
14	11/21/18	Flex-week (catch up class in case of cancellations due to inclement weather)		
15	11/28/18	Graduate school survival tips		
16	12/5/18	Work-life balance	Graduate portfolio due	