

**Senior Seminar in Psychology**  
Childhood Trauma and Adversity  
Psychology 4931

**Course Details**

**Class number:** 81808

**Section:** U01-O

**Day of the Week:** Fridays

**Inclusive Dates:** August 26, 2019 to December 7, 2019

**Time:** 11:00 am to 12:15 pm

**Semester:** Fall 2019

**Classroom:** College of Business Complex 142

**Prerequisite:** PSY 3213 or PSY 3215

**Modality:** Face-to-face

**Textbook:** None

**Instructor Details**

**Instructor:** Dr. Adela C. Timmons

**Department:** Psychology

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Office:** AHC1 341

**Email:** atimmons@fiu.edu

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**Teaching Assistant Details**

**Teaching assistant:** Morgan Jusko

**Email:** mjusko@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 (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 critical thinking and writing skills. The second half of class will be focused on professional development (we will focus on graduate programs in psychology, but all careers paths, including non-psychology graduate programs and applying to jobs right out of college will be covered). 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 journey. Class will involve a mixture of formats, including lectures, discussions, videos, and small group activities and 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 post-graduation professional career goals
- (3) Prepare applications for post-graduation career plans

### **Class Policies**

- **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](mailto: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. Requests for accommodations **MUST** go through this office. Initiate requests at the start of the semester.
- **Late and incomplete assignments:** Assignments are due on the date stated in the syllabus. Please turn in your assignments online via Canvas. 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 (12/6/19). Assignments that do not adhere to page length requirements will receive additional deductions off the total score proportional to what is turned in.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

#### **Child Trauma**

- **Readings:** Come to class having read the assigned readings due on that day. The lecture material for the day will generally relate to and reinforce the readings. A few points on each exam will also relate to the readings. Because this is a senior course designed to prepare you for your next steps, 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 and are listed in the syllabus.

- **Reading reactions:** You will be required to turn in a short reaction to the reading on Canvas. Include 3 to 6 sentences discussing something from the article that caught your interest or intrigued you. There will be 9 reading reactions total, each worth 1 point. Keep in mind, each one is worth 1% of your grade.
- **Attendance:** Attending every class for the entire class duration is required. I will collect attendance each week (if you leave early without permission you will be marked absent, **late is 75% credit**). Class attendance will make up 10% of your grade (1% per class). We will have 12 classes plus the midterm and final. You will be permitted 2 unexcused absences that will not impact your grade, hence 10%. If you need to miss more class than your 2 absences, you must provide documentation within 2 weeks of the missed class.
- **In-class participation:** Class participation will make up 7% of your grade. Please ask questions, make comments, and participate. This class is meant to be interactive and is more fun when everyone is engaged! At the beginning of the class, please put away class-irrelevant electronic devices, including cell phones. Using your phone during class will negatively impact your participation grade. 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.
- **Exams:** We will have a midterm exam and final exam. The exams will be approximately 1 hour long and will include 40 multiple choice questions and/or true/false questions, primarily related to the lecture materials (a few questions on each exam will relate to the readings). The midterm will be 20% of your grade, and the final will be 20% of your grade. The final exam will be non-cumulative. If scores are low on the exams, I will curve the exam grades upward (I will never curve grades downward). I will also look at the exam questions and throw out any that are bad (e.g., incorrect for 90% of the class). If you get that question correct, you will receive extra credit. Study guides will be posted on Canvas 2 weeks prior to the exam. Reviews will be held in class 1 week prior to the exam.

### Professional Development

- **CV/resume draft 1:** You will write up a rough draft of your curriculum vitae (CV) or resume (to be submitted on Canvas—but also bring a hard copy to class this day). 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 (and/or may elicit feedback from friends/mentors/family members outside of class). You will (1) incorporate these comments in a new draft and (2) write a 1 page summary of what each person's comments were and 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 by the end of the semester.
- **Personal statement/cover letter draft 1:** You will write up a draft of a personal statement/cover letter (to be submitted on Canvas—but also bring a hard copy to class this day). It should be 1 to 2 pages (**SINGLE SPACED** consistent with how these are typically formatted in real applications). 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 (and/or may elicit feedback from friends/mentors/family members outside of class). You will (1) incorporate these comments in a new draft and (2) write a 1 page summary of what each person's comments were and 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 by the end of the semester.
- **Graduate portfolio:** You will receive feedback on your CV/resume and personal statement/cover letter from myself and/or the TA. For the graduate portfolio, you are expected to (1) incorporate these comments in your final draft, (2) write a 1 page summary of what the comments were and how you incorporated them (if you did not incorporate certain comments, provide a thoughtful explanation of why), and (3) write a 1 page reflection about what it was like to put these materials together and what you learned in the process. By the end of the class, you will have gone through several revisions—my goal is for you to leave class with materials you can actually use and build upon in your next steps.
- **Extra credit:** You will have the opportunity to earn up to 3 points of extra credit (3% of your grade). Extra credit opportunities will be announced in class.
- **Odds and ends:** All course assignments should be submitted on Canvas and are due by class time on the due date (you should bring a second, hard copy of your CV/resume draft 1 and personal statement/cover letter draft 1 on their due dates to get peer feedback in class that day). Further details and specific grading guidelines for all assignments will be provided in class the week before the due date. Example CVs/resumes, example personal statements/cover letters, and grading rubrics are posted on Canvas. Other miscellaneous career development and graduate school resources are also posted on Canvas. Personal statements/resumes should be single spaced consistent with typical formatting for real applications. Reflections and summaries can be double spaced. You will not be penalized for going over page limits.

SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS, DUE DATES, AND POINT BREAKDOWNS			
Assignment	Due Date(s)	Points	Percentage
Attendance	All class dates	10	10%
Participation	All class dates	7	7%
Reading reactions	See schedule on page 5	9	9%
CV/resume draft 1	9/27/19	5	5%
CV/resume draft 2	10/11/19	6	6%
Midterm exam	10/18/19	20	20%
Personal statement/cover letter draft 1	11/1/19	5	5%
Personal statement/cover letter draft 2	11/15/19	6	6%
Graduate portfolio	12/6/19	12	12%
Final exam	12/13/19	20	20%
Extra credit opportunities	Announced in class	1-3	1-3%

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

\*TA guest lecture

OVERVIEW OF CHILD TRAUMA TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS				
Week	Date	Lecture Topic	Reading	Assignment
1	8/30/19	No class		
2	9/6/19	Introduction		
3	9/13/19	Trauma overview*	Felitti et al., 1998	Reading reaction
4	9/20/19	Biological impacts	Timmons et al., 2019 (skim results)	Reading reaction
5	9/27/19	Attachment	Blair-Gomez et al., 2013	Reading reaction
6	10/4/19	Emotion regulation*	Sbarra & Hazan, 2008	Reading reaction
7	10/11/19	Midterm exam review		Study!
8	10/18/19	Midterm exam		
9	10/25/19	Cognition and memory	Frankenhuis, 2013	Reading reaction
10	11/1/19	Health disparities	Mohatt et al., 2014	Reading reaction
11	11/8/19	Resilience	Seery, 2011	Reading reaction
12	11/15/19	Trauma therapies 1	Schneider et al., 2013	Reading reaction
13	11/22/19	Trauma therapies 2	Bernstein et al., 2019	Reading reaction
14	11/29/19	Happy Thanksgiving!		Eat turkey ☺
15	12/6/19	Final exam review		Study!
16	12/13/18	Final exam		
OVERVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS				
Week	Date	Reading	Assignment	
1	8/30/19	No class		
2	9/6/19	Career paths in psychology		
3	9/13/19	How to apply*		
4	9/20/19	Curriculum vitae/resume		
5	9/27/19	Curriculum vitae/resume*	CV/resume draft 1	
6	10/4/19	Future plans survey and reflection		
7	10/11/19	Course feedback and evaluations	CV/resume draft 2	
8	10/18/19	Midterm exam		
9	10/25/19	Personal statement/cover letter		
10	11/1/19	Personal statement/cover letter	Personal statement/cover letter draft 1	
11	11/8/19	Interviews		
12	11/15/19	Small group future plans discussion	Personal statement/cover letter draft 2	
13	11/22/19	Work-life balance and survival tips		
14	11/29/19	Happy Thanksgiving!		
15	12/6/19	Course feedback and evaluations	Graduate portfolio due	
16	12/13/18	Final exam		