

Senior Seminar in Psychology
Childhood Trauma and Adversity
Psychology 4931

Course Details

Class number: 19427

Section: RVI 1211

Day of the week: N/A

Inclusive dates: January 11, 2021 to April 17, 2021

Time: N/A

Semester: Spring 2021

Classroom: N/A

Prerequisite: PSY 3213 or PSY 3215

Modality: Online

Textbook: None

Instructor Details

Instructor: Dr. Adela C. Timmons

Department: Psychology

Office Hours: By appointment (I'm happy to meet, just ask!)

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Teaching Assistant Details

Teaching assistant: Jessica Smith

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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 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, online discussions, and videos.

Course Objectives and Outcomes:

Childhood trauma and adversity section objectives and outcomes:

- (1) Obtain foundational knowledge about the field of childhood trauma and adversity
Assignment: watch weekly video lectures on childhood trauma and adversity
Evaluation: midterm and final exams
- (2) Become familiar with cutting-edge theories and theorists in this field
Assignment: watch weekly video lectures on childhood trauma and adversity
Evaluation: midterm and final exams
- (3) Obtain exposure to graduate-level coursework
Assignment: read weekly research articles on childhood trauma and adversity
Evaluation: complete weekly reading reactions

Professional development section objectives and outcomes:

- (1) Learn about career paths in psychology and the process of applying to graduate school
Assignment: watch video lectures entitled Career Paths in Psychology and How to Apply
Evaluation: complete CV/resume, personal statement/cover letter, revisions, and graduate portfolio
- (2) Reflect on and crystalize your post-graduation professional career goals
Assignment: watch video lecture entitled Future Plans Survey and Reflection
Evaluation: Complete graduate portfolio reflection paper
- (3) Prepare applications for post-graduation career plans
Assignment: watch video lectures entitled CV/Resume and Personal Statement/Cover Letter
Evaluation: complete CV/resume, personal statement/cover letter, revisions, and graduate portfolio

Class Policies

- **Syllabus changes:** The information on this syllabus, including the class schedule, is subject to change by the instructor. Any changes will be 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. Requests for accommodations **MUST** go through this office. Initiate requests at the start of the semester.

- **Late and incomplete assignments:** Assignments are due at 11:59 pm on the date stated in the syllabus. Please turn in your assignments online via Canvas. In the event of an emergency, I will accept a late 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 day of classes (4/16/21 at 11:59 pm). Assignments that do not adhere to page length requirements will receive additional deductions off the total score proportional to what is turned in.
- **Before beginning the course, please review the following policies:**
Policies: <https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/97439/pages/policies>
Netiquette: <https://online.fiu.edu/html/canvas/policies/>
Technical requirements and skills: <https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/97439/pages/technical-requirements-and-skills>
Accessibility and accommodation: <https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/97439/pages/technical-requirements-and-skills>
Panthers care and counseling and psychological services (CAPS):
<https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/97439/pages/panthers-care-and-counseling-and-psychological-services-caps>
Academic misconduct statement: <https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/97439/pages/academic-misconduct-statement>
Inclusivity statement: <https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/97439/pages/inclusivity-statement>

Assignments and Evaluation

Weekly Modules

- Each week, I will unlock a module for you to complete. It will include several components, including a welcome video providing an overview for the week, a section on childhood adversity and trauma, and a section on professional development. The childhood adversity and trauma section will include a reading, reading reaction, video lecture, and any class activities you will complete. The professional development section will include a video lecture, professional development assignments, and any optional supplemental materials that will be helpful (e.g., readings on how to apply for graduate school). You should complete each module by Sunday at 11:59 pm that week. The content of the modules is explained in further detail below.

Child Trauma

- **Readings:** Read the assigned readings for each week prior to watching the class lectures. The lecture material for the week 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. Reading reactions are due each Sunday by 11:59 pm.

- **Video lecture “attendance:”** There will be **TWO** video lectures per week. The first will cover childhood trauma and adversity and the second will cover a professional development topic. Watch **BOTH** the video lectures for each week by 11:59 pm on Sunday. I will collect “attendance” each week by determining whether or not you have watched the video lectures for that week. You must watch the entire lecture **BY THE DEADLINE** to receive credit. This component will make up 10% of your grade (.5% per lecture). We will have 20 lectures (10 on childhood trauma and adversity and 10 on professional development) plus the midterm exam review, midterm, final exam review, and final. If you need to miss (or be late watching) a video lecture, you must provide documentation within 2 weeks of the missed/late video lecture to receive credit.
- **Lecture “participation:”** Class participation will make up 7% of your grade. We will use an interactive video platform called PlayPosit. Using this technology, I will pause and provide the opportunity to submit comments and to respond to the comments of others students while watching video lectures. Even though the class is online, it is meant to be interactive (and is more fun when everyone is engaged!). Your participation grade will depend on the quality of the comments you provide on the videos. I will review the comments each week. You will receive a single participation score at the end of the semester based on your level of participation and the thoughtfulness of the comments you submit.
- **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). They will be administered via Honorlock. You will have a 48-hour-period in which to take the exam, which will be from **THURSDAY TO FRIDAY** of that week. 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 (i.e., incorrect for 90% of the class). If you get that question correct, you will receive extra credit. Study guides will be posted on Canvas at least 1 week prior to the exam. I will post a review 1 week before 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). 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 + 1-page summary:** You will ask someone you know to provide feedback (this can be a peer in class, friend, teacher, or family member). You will (1) incorporate these comments in a new draft and (2) write a 1-page summary of what the 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.
- **Personal statement/cover letter draft 1:** You will write up a draft of a personal statement/cover letter (to be submitted on Canvas). 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 + 1-page summary:** You will ask someone you know to provide feedback (this can be a peer in class, friend, teacher, or family member). 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.
- **Graduate portfolio + 1-page summary + 1-page reflection:** 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 the weekly class announcements and weekly welcome videos.
- **Odds and ends:** All course assignments should be submitted on Canvas by 11:59 pm Sunday (with exams due Thursday-Friday of that week). Further details and specific grading guidelines for all assignments will be provided in class announcements and in the video lectures 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. I strive to answer emails and return grades as promptly as possible. In general, please allow 48 hours for me to reply to emails and 1 week to grade assignments.

SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS, DUE DATES, AND POINT BREAKDOWNS			
Assignment	Due Date(s)	Points	Percentage
Lecture video “attendance”	Each week	10	10%
Video lecture “participation”	Each week	7	7%
Reading reactions	See schedule on page 5	9	9%
CV/resume draft 1	2/7	5	5%
CV/resume draft 2	2/21	5	5%
1-page summary of revisions	2/21	1	1%
Midterm exam	2/25-2/26	20	20%
Personal statement/cover letter draft 1	3/14	5	5%
Personal statement/cover letter draft 2	3/28	5	5%
1-page summary of revisions	3/28	1	1%
Graduate portfolio	4/11	10	10%
1-page summary of revisions	4/11	1	1%
1-page reflection of application process	4/11	1	1%
Final exam	4/15-4/16	20	20%
Extra credit opportunities	Announced in lectures	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

OVERVIEW OF CHILD TRAUMA TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS				
Week	Due Date	Lecture Video Topic	Reading	Assignment
1	1/17	Introduction		Video lectures
2	1/24	Trauma overview	Felitti et al., 1998	Reading reaction Video lectures
3	1/31	Biological impacts	Timmons et al., 2019 (skim results)	Reading reaction Video lectures
4	2/7	Attachment	Blair-Gomez et al., 2013	Reading reaction Video lectures
5	2/14	Emotion regulation	Sbarra & Hazan, 2008	Reading reaction Video lectures
6	2/21	Midterm exam review		Study!
7	2/25-2/26	Midterm exam		
8	3/7	Cognition	Frankenhuis, 2013	Reading reaction Video lectures
9	3/14	Health disparities	Mohatt et al., 2014	Reading reaction Video lectures
10	3/21	Resilience	Seery, 2011	Reading reaction Video lectures
11	3/28	Trauma therapies 1	Schneider et al., 2013	Reading reaction Video lectures
12	4/4	Trauma therapies 2	Bernstein et al., 2019	Reading reaction Video lectures
13	4/11	Final exam review		Study!
14	4/15-4/16	Final exam		

OVERVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS			
Week	Date	Reading	Assignment
1	1/17	Career paths in psychology	
2	1/24	How to apply	
3	1/31	Curriculum vitae/resume – how to	
4	2/7	Curriculum vitae/resume – examples	CV/resume draft 1
5	2/14	Curriculum vitae/resume – revision	
6	2/21	Course feedback	CV/resume draft 2 1-page summary of revisions
7	2/25-2/26	Midterm exam	
8	3/7	Personal statement/cover letter –	

		how to	
9	3/14	Personal statement/cover letter – examples	Personal statement/cover letter draft 1
10	3/21	Personal statement/cover letter – revision	
11	3/28	Interviews	Personal statement/cover letter draft 2 1-page summary of revisions
12	4/4	Work-life balance and survival tips	
13	4/11	Course evaluations	Graduate portfolio 1-page summary of revisions 1-page reflection of application process
14	4/15-4/16	Final exam	