



# PSYC 314: Health Psychology

## Distance Learning Course

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The best way to reach the course instructor or teaching assistant is via the e-mail addresses listed above. If your questions are not easily dealt with via e-mail, we can arrange a telephone or in person meeting.

### Course Description

Psychology 314 (PSYC 314) provides a general introduction to the psychology of health. Topics covered include research methods in health psychology, health behaviour, stress, coping, social support, patient-practitioner relations, pain and pain behaviour, and the role of psychological and social factors in the etiology and course of chronic and terminal illness.

### Prerequisites

The prerequisites for the course are Psychology 100 (Introduction to Psychology), or 6 credits of 200-level Psychology courses or permission of the instructor.

Although I have tried to design this course to be self-contained (i.e., all necessary terms and concepts are defined in the course materials), a background of basic psychological concepts will help you understand the material. In particular, I have found that students who are not familiar with the concepts of classical and operant conditioning, and who have had no previous exposure to research methods, may have some difficulty. If you have not taken one of the prerequisite courses or its equivalent or if you feel that you need to refresh your memory, any introductory psychology text may be helpful. These can be borrowed from the Extension Library or purchased from the bookstore.

### Intended Audience

Psychology 314 is an upper-division undergraduate course offered for degree credit within the Faculty of Arts. Because the course focuses on the role of psychological and social factors in health, it should also be of interest to students in other disciplines such as dentistry, nursing, physical rehabilitation, kinesiology, medicine and pre-medicine, sociology, and public health.

This course is run entirely online. This allows students to move through the course at their own pace and requires self-directed learning. Students who have difficulty with this type of course design should consider enrolling in a different section of PSYC 314 that includes a lecture component.

## **Learning Outcomes**

Psychology 314 is designed to help you combine scientific, theoretical, and personal avenues of inquiry to understand issues and evidence about the role of psychological factors in health. After completing the course, you should be able to:

1. understand the difficulties inherent in conducting psychological research on health and illness;
2. critically evaluate the merit of studies presented to you in the media of the role of psychological, social, and behavioral factors in health and illness;
3. understand various pathways through which your cognitions and behaviors, as well as the cognitions and behaviors of those around you, influence your health and illness; and
4. understand why we engage in problematic health behaviours such as smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol to excess, eating poorly, what we can do to change those behaviours, and what the health costs are if we do not change our poor health behaviors.

## **Course Overview**

This course has been designed to give you exposure to the broad range of topics studied by health psychologists. There are five units in this course.

Unit 1 provides you with a basic introduction to the field of health psychology, a historical overview of the way the relationship between the mind and the body has been perceived over time since antiquity, and the relationship of health psychology to other overlapping, disciplines. It also provides you with a basic introduction to the body's physical systems and research methods used in health psychology.

Unit 2 discusses stress, what it is, how to measure it, and its effects on the mind and the body. You will learn about moderators of the stress experience. That is, factors such as coping and social support that can prevent or diminish the potentially negative effects of stress.

Unit 3 discusses health behaviors, both in terms of theory and in terms of health-enhancing behaviors such as exercise. It also focuses on health-compromising behaviors, such as excessive alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking, describing theoretical models to explain these behaviors, and methods of treatment.

Unit 4 discusses factors associated with seeking treatment for illness symptoms, and factors associated with following the advice of health professionals. It examines pain

and its management, as well as the management of chronic and terminal illness. You will learn about the role of psychological factors in chronic and life-threatening conditions, such as cancer, coronary heart disease, and AIDS.

Unit 5 examines the future of health psychology.

## **Assignments and Grading**

**Course Assignments:** There are 2 written assignments for this course. For more information about these assignments, see the **Assignment information** on the course webpage.

For the first assignment you are asked to locate a news report on a research study examining the effect of a psychological or social factor effecting a particular disease or health problem. You must then locate the original scientific report on these findings and compare the 2 reports in a 2-page paper (double-spaced).

The second assignment is the major course paper. Your task is to choose one psychological (e.g., stress, neuroticism, coping, Type A personality, optimism, conscientiousness) or social factor (e.g., social support) and find five studies that examine its role in the onset or course of a specific disease (e.g., cancer, coronary heart disease, asthma, diabetes). The disease should not be one that would typically be considered a mental disorder (e.g., an eating disorder, anorexia nervosa, depression). The paper should be between 5-6 pages of text (double-spaced), plus a title page and a reference page for a maximum page length of 8 pages.

**Final Examination:** You must pass the final examination with a **minimum grade of 50%** to receive credit for this course. The final examination is based on the textbook only. For more information on the final exam, see **Schedule & Marks** on the course webpage.

**Grade Breakdown :** The following shows what percentage of your final grade comes from each component in the course.

15% - Assignment 1 (News and scientific article)

35% - Assignment 2 (Course paper)

50% - Final Exam

## **Learning Resources**

The materials for this course consist of the PSYC 314 website (which contains the course author's commentary, reading instructions, website activities, and assignments) and a textbook.

**Textbook:** Sarafino, E. P., Smith, T. W., King, D. B., & DeLongis, A. (2016). *Health Psychology: Biopsychosocial interactions*, 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian edition. Wiley.

Hardcopies are available for purchase at the UBC Bookstore.

PSYC314 Textbook Order Form

**Textbook companion website:** <http://bcs.wiley.com/he-bcs/Books?action=index&itemId=1118991982&bcsId=9593>

**Course website:** This is an online course. We are using the platform operated by UBC (*Connect*) that is available to all students who are registered in this course. To login to the course website with your CWL: <http://elearning.ubc.ca/connect/>

Click [here](#) for more information on technical requirements.

## **Psychology Department's Policy on Grade Distributions and Scaling**

In order to reduce grade inflation and maintain equity across multiple course sections, all psychology courses are required to comply with departmental norms regarding grade distributions. According to departmental norms, the mean grade in a 300-level class is 70 for a good class, 68 for an average class, and 66 for a weak class, with a standard deviation of 13). The corresponding figures for 100- and 200-level Psychology courses are 67, 65, and 63, with a standard deviation of 14. **Scaling** is likely to be used in order to comply with these norms; grades may be scaled up or down as necessary by the professor or department.

## **Psychology Department's Position on Academic Misconduct**

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct are very serious concerns of the University, and the Department of Psychology has taken steps to alleviate them. In the first place, the Department has implemented software that can reliably detect cheating on multiple-choice exams by analyzing the patterns of students' responses. In addition, the Department subscribes to TurnItIn – a service designed to detect and deter plagiarism. All materials (term papers, lab reports, etc.) that students submit for grading will be scanned and compared to over 4.5 billion pages of content located on the Internet or in TurnItIn's own proprietary databases. The results of these comparisons are compiled into customized "Originality Reports" containing several, sensitive measures of plagiarism; instructors receive copies of these reports for every student in their class.

In all cases of suspected academic misconduct, the parties involved will be pursued to the fullest extent dictated by the guidelines of the University. Strong evidence of cheating or plagiarism may result in a zero credit for the work in question. According to the University Act (section 61), the President of UBC has the right to impose harsher penalties including (but not limited to) a failing grade for the course, suspension from the University, cancellation of scholarships, or a notation added to a student's transcript. All graded work in this course, unless otherwise specified, is to be original work done independently by individuals. Do not use Google/Yahoo/MSN Search/etc. to find articles for assignments in this course. Do use any of the indexes and databases listed under Indexes and Databases, Subject Resources, OneSearch or Metasearch on the Library's website at <http://www.library.ubc.ca>. (Not sure which index to use? Click HELP on the library homepage at [www.library.ubc.ca](http://www.library.ubc.ca) or try Subject Resources.)

If you have any questions as to whether or not what you are doing is even a borderline case of academic misconduct, please consult your instructor. For details on pertinent University policies and procedures, please see Chapter 5 in the UBC Calendar (<http://students.ubc.ca/calendar>).