Graduate Research Workshop on Psychological Interventions
Psychology 274/Education 287

Instructors
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Class Meetings
Wednesday, 1:30-3:30 (workshop days may run longer, but not past 4:00)

Course Readings
Readings will be made available each week.

Enrollment
The course is designed as an advanced seminar. Priority will be given to doctoral students in psychology or in education. The enrollment will be limited to 10-12 students.

Course Objectives
The power of “psychological interventions” has garnered increasing attention in discussions of social problems and social policy, particularly in education but also in health and economics. The course is intended to provide students with an opportunity to design and refine their own intervention experiment grounded in psychological theory. It is based on a workshop model, in which each student will present a proposed experiment and then receive intensive and constructive feedback on its aims and the procedures for accomplishing them. The expectation is that students will end the course with a proposed experiment that is of high quality, that they feel confident in, and that they plan to conduct.

Given these objectives, and the limited time frame of the academic quarter, it is expected that all students begin the course with an idea of the problem they wish to study and the intervention they wish to test. It is also expected that students have prior coursework in social psychology and experimental methodology.

The workshop is intended to be not evaluative but constructive—a space where participants from different disciplines or intellectual backgrounds can collaborate with one another with the goal of advancing their learning and the quality of their work. While all students are expected to invest a great deal of thought and effort in their initial proposals, the expectation is that all the proposals will be works in progress and thus improvable.

Some of the initial classes will be dedicated to discussing psychological interventions and the intellectual and applied traditions that provide a foundation for them. Potential topics include the importance of the social situation as determinant of human cognition, affect, and behavior; the role of the actor’s subjective construal of the situation in moderating these effects; the experimental
tradition in social psychology; the notion that human affairs take place in a dynamic tension system of interacting forces; the role of recursive processes in magnifying differences among individuals and groups and in carrying forward effects of social intervention; the notion of psychological hubs that affect a diverse array of outcomes; the science and art of designing effective intervention delivery systems; the problem of bringing psychological interventions “to scale.”

To facilitate discussion, we request that students refrain from using laptops and other portable devices unless necessary (if necessary, please see one of us). If you are presenting and wish to use a laptop to take notes, this is acceptable.

Research Proposal
Both the initial proposal and the final proposal should describe an original randomized experiment testing the effect of a psychological intervention on an important outcome. Your experiment must have at least one experimentally manipulated independent variable (i.e., the intervention) and the proposal should follow the standard format of a research proposal. It should contain an introduction describing the theoretical background and rationale, a methods section, a predicted results section, and a discussion section highlighting implications and limitations.

The initial proposal should be a shortened version of the final proposal, approximately 10 pages in length (double-spaced, about 2500 words). The final proposal should expand and improve upon the initial proposal. The initial proposal should be written in a way that conveys in sufficient detail the rationale for your study and the experimental procedures so that a naïve reader can follow your logic. This is essential to receive constructive feedback.

The initial proposal is due the Monday before your scheduled workshop at 5 pm. The final proposal is due Friday, June 7 at 5 pm.

Both instructors will be available to consult on possible topics throughout the quarter

Course Requirements and Grades
All students are expected to attend all classes, to participate in class discussion, and to thoughtfully read all readings and research proposals. To facilitate discussion of readings, please come prepared with a comment or question on the readings for that day. To facilitate workshops, please review each proposal as you would review a paper submitted for publication or grant proposal submitted for funding.

Grades will be based on a combination of class participation (25%), the initial research proposal (25%), and the final research proposal (50%). You can enroll in the class for a grade or credit/no credit.
Preliminary Schedule

Each week a selection of readings will be drawn based on the direction of class discussion and student interest from the set of readings noted under the relevant date.

Wed, April 3, Introductions and course overview

Wed, April 10, Background 1
   *Foundations of the Social Psychological Approach to Intervention*
   *Methodological Contributions*

Wed, April 17, Background 2
   *Recursion and Effects Over Time*
   *Psychological Hubs*

Wed, April 24, Workshop 1
   Presenter: *Rohan Rahm, Michelle Hutton*

Wed, May 1, Workshop 2
   Presenters: *Hyemin Han, Janet Bill*

Wed, May 8, Workshop 3
   Presenters: *Daniel Zychlinski, Yael Wulfovich*

**Tues, May 14 at 6 PM**: Workshop 4
   Presenters:

Wed, May 22, Workshop 5
   Presenters: *Engin Bumbacher, Joe Powers*

Wed, May 29, Workshop 6
   Presenters: *Alyssa Wisdom*

Wed, June 5, Scaling up and course wrap up
   Presenter:
Potential Readings

Each week a selection of readings will be drawn based on the direction of class discussion and student interest from the set of readings noted under the relevant date.

Wed, April 3, Introductions and course overview

Wed, April 10, Background 1

*Foundations of the Social Psychological Approach to Intervention*


*Methodological Contributions*

- Aronson, Fried, & Good (2002). Reducing the effects of stereotype threat on African American college students by shaping theories of intelligence.
- Bond et al. (2012). A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization.
- Grant & Hoffman (2011). It’s not all about me: Motivating hand hygiene among health care professionals by focusing on patients.
- Hulleman & Cordray (2009). Moving from the lab to the field: The role of fidelity and achieved relative intervention strength.
- Yeager et al. (in press). Breaking the cycle of mistrust: Wise interventions to provide critical feedback across the racial divide.

***Tuesday, April 16***

*Recursion and Effects Over Time*


Brannon & Walton. (in press). Enacting cultural interests: How intergroup contact reduces prejudice by sparking interest in an outgroup’s culture.


Dimidjian et al. (2006). Randomized trial of behavioral activation, cognitive therapy, and antidepressant medication in the acute treatment of adults with major depression.


Finkel et al. (2013). A brief intervention to promote conflict reappraisal preserves marital quality over time.


Langer & Rodin (1976). The effects of choice and enhanced personal responsibility for the aged: A field experiment in an institutional setting.

Lewin, Kurt. (1943). Defining the “field at a given time.”


Obradovic, Burt, & Masten (2010). Testing a dual cascade model linking competence and symptoms over 20 years from childhood to adulthood.

Rokeach (1971). Long-range experimental modification of values, attitudes, and behavior.

Schultz (1976). Effects of control and predictability on the physical and psychological well-being of the institutionalized aged.


*Psychological Hubs*

**The Self and Self-Integrity**


Grant & Hoffman (2011). It’s not all about me: Motivating hand hygiene among health care professionals by focusing on patients.


Belonging


Executive Resources


Constual


Wilson, Damiani, & Shelton (2002). Improving the academic performance of college students with brief attributional interventions.

Stress Reactivity


Crum, Achor, Salovey, & Rothstein. Rethinking stress: Changing mindsets to harness the enhancing effects of stress.


Yeager, Spitzer, Johnson, & Dweck (2012). Changing adolescents’ implicit theories of personality reduces stress and improves achievement.

Wed, April 24, Background 3 and Workshop 1

Sensitive Periods


**Timing and Choice Points**
Bettinger, Long, Oreopoulos, & Sanbonmatsu (2010). The role of simplification and information in college decisions: Results from the HMR Block FAFSA Experiment
Carter, Ferguson, & Hassin (2011). A single exposure to the American flag shifts support toward Republicanism up to 8 months later.
Gawande (2007). The checklist: If something so simple can transform intensive care, what else can it do?

*Science* special issue
Diamond & Lee (2011). Interventions shown to aid executive function development in children 4 to 12 years old.

**Wed, May 1, Background 4 (Case Studies) and Workshop 2**

**Conceptual change**

**Self-affirmation and expressive writing**
Harris, Mayle, Mabbott, & Napper (2007). Self-affirmation reduces smokers’ defensiveness to graphic on-pack cigarette warning labels.
Klein & Boals (2001). Expressive writing can increase working memory.

Affect
Frederickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel (2008). Open hearts build lives: Positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources.
Jamieson, Mendes, Blackstock, & Schmader (2010). Turning the knots in your stomach into bows: Reappraising arousal improves performance on the GRE.
Lyubomirksy & Della Porta (in press). Boosting happiness, buttressing resilience: Results from cognitive and behavioral interventions.

Choice

Interpersonal support

Norms and identity

Teaching skills for coping

Kulesza, Apperson, Larimer, & Copeland (2010). Brief alcohol intervention for college drinkers: How brief is?


**Inspiration and value**

Grant (2008). The significance of task significance: Job performance effects, relational mechanisms, and boundary conditions.

Grant & Gino (in press). A little thanks goes a long way: Explaining why gratitude expressions motivate prosocial behavior.


**Placebos**


**Wed June 5, Scaling up and course wrap up**

Bond et al. (2012). A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization.

Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow (in press). Ruminations II: Getting ideas into action, building.


Hulleman & Cordray (2009). Moving from the lab to the field: The role of fidelity and achieved relative intervention strength.
