SYLLABUS

Psychology 7770: Diversity in Psychological Science  Spring, 2013  T, 9:40am-12:30pm  
Room 426, Rogers-Stout

Instructor: Stacey Williams, Ph.D.  Office: Room 414, Rogers-Stout  
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Office hours: Office hours by appointment.

Course Purpose and Objectives:

This course highlights psychology’s focus on diversity and delves into psychological theories 
and research that can explain the influence of diversity on individuals. Other disciplines (e.g., 
anthropology, sociology) examine behavior at the level of society and culture. Psychology 
examines how and why socio-cultural diversity variables (e.g., social class, culture, race/ 
etnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, rurality) translate into or influence 
individual and group behavior by focusing on individuals from diverse backgrounds and by 
paying particular attention to cognitions, emotions, motivation and behavior. Such focus often 
emphasizes the “negative side” of diversity via poor intergroup relations. Thus, course content 
will involve negative consequences of human diversity, such as prejudice and discrimination 
and their effects.

This course integrates diversity into psychology with a main focus on research. We will read and 
discuss, as well as design research that identifies socio-cultural factors as they differentiate social 
and psychological processes of people’s lives, including but not limited to health and well-being. 
In this way, diversity science can be considered translational in nature.

As this is a graduate level course, an equally important goal will be to critically analyze and 
integrate theory and research in one’s own area of interest. Thus an emphasis in assignments will 
be to apply ideas and research on diversity to students’ own experiences, and to the work they 
are doing (and/or will do in the future). Thus far, some areas of psychology are more readily 
integrating diversity constructs and perspectives than others. However, diversity is gaining 
ground as population demographics shift and more diverse characteristics are represented in 
classrooms, participant pools, and clinics. Therefore, students are encouraged to apply material 
to their areas of the science, as well as real problems and social issues.

A course on diversity naturally highlights diverse backgrounds and opinions of those involved in 
the course. As such, this course may challenge your beliefs. Respect for differing viewpoints is 
of utmost importance in order to create an environment in which all students feel comfortable 
contributing. I will work hard to create a safe environment in which students can feel 
comfortable and valued when sharing opinions and personal experiences. I expect that students 
will do the same for each other.

Attendance
Attendance is expected. It is in your best interest to come to every class. If you do not attend class, you remain responsible for all material covered and any announcements made in class.

**Participation:**

Given this is a graduate seminar, students are expected to actively participate in, and take a major role in class discussions. I expect you to do all the required reading, and to be prepared to discuss the major issues raised by the readings. In addition to your participation to class discussion, you will be required to provide a written response to the readings by way of a set of **detailed and interpretive discussion questions.** Since this course is arranged as a discussion and writing seminar, classes will revolve around discussion of topics and readings. To help stimulate discussion, students will bring in interpretive questions (typed). Each question should address a different reading. Questions should not be yes/no questions; instead, questions should be “thick”—multi-layered as opposed to single sentences, thoughtful and relevant. Questions should include a brief synthesis of points made in the readings but should focus more on your own original and critical responses. Questions should address content, rather than stylistics, of the readings. You should avoid simple informational questions (i.e., what does x mean?) Sample interpretive questions from a class on childhood at MIT may be found at the following webpage: [http://web.mit.edu/cms.871/www/questions.html](http://web.mit.edu/cms.871/www/questions.html). In discussions, you should be prepared to respond to your own questions as well as others (though you don’t have to write the response). In general, you should be pro-active in preparing for class. Discussion preparation strategies might include: reading and reacting to your own (or others) interpretive questions; expanding on points made in the readings with additional reading/research; connecting readings w/ concepts discussed in class; and integrating current events relevant to the readings. Questions will be evaluated with a check plus, check, and check minus, based on effort, analytical depth, and a comprehensive understanding of readings. If you are not present, or turn in late or handwritten questions, the questions will always receive a check minus.

**Diversity Notebook:**

Students will be asked to write in a “diversity notebook”. Such a notebook will allow students a forum for responding to various components of the course, including discussion, assigned activities and panel discussion. Entries should include personal reactions and experiences as deemed relevant. Further details of these entries will be discussed in class. Each entry will graded for completion.

**Paper & Presentation:**

The main assessment for the final grade will be a 20 page paper on a topic of student choice pertaining to diversity issues we cover in class. Students should try to choose a topic that integrates diversity issues with concepts or research topics in which they already are interested. Students must discuss their topics with instructor prior to moving forward on the paper. More details on this assignment will be discussed in class. The paper must be written in APA style. An optional rough draft can be turned in for comments one month prior to the final draft due date. The page requirement does NOT include references. The paper may be a literature review, research
proposal, or intervention proposal. Other projects, activities, or grants may be considered for this final project, but these ideas must be vetted by instructor.

**Grading**

**Approximated Course Points:**
Reading Response Questions and Participation: [20 points x 13 class periods] = 260 points
Diversity Notebook
Final Paper worth a possible 100 points

Grades are assigned using the university’s system: 95-100% = A; 90-94% = A-; 86-89% = B+;
83-85% = B; 80-82% = B-; 76-79% = C+; 73-75% = C; 70-72% = C-; 65-69% = D+; 60-64% = D; 59% and below = F. However, in order to pass, graduate students are expected to attain at least a 3.0, which equates to a ‘B’.

**Other**

Any student who may need an accommodation based on a disability must make an appointment to see me during my office hours early in the semester. A Faculty Accommodation Form from Disability Services authorizing your accommodations is required.

Please see syllabus attachment for additional university-related information.