

PSYCHOLOGY 496A: Experimental Existential Psychology

FALL Semester

Lecture Time: T/TR, 9:30-10:45 AM
Lecture Place: Psychology Bldg., Rm. 323A

Instructor: Daniel Sullivan
Office: Psychology Rm. 519
Office hours: T 1:00-3:00, TR 1:00-3:00, or by appointment
Contact: 785-764-6745 or swolf22@email.arizona.edu (email preferred)

Course Objectives

Many topics once thought to be the domain of existential philosophy – such as fear of death, the search for meaning and authenticity in life, or the experience of guilt – are now widely studied using experimental methods. This course surveys the many theories and methodologies used by experimental existential psychologists to investigate these fundamental aspects of human experience. Topics will range from the origin of this research area in existentialism to its relevance to contemporary social and clinical psychology. You will learn how to write theoretical papers and conduct experimental research drawing on existential texts and ideas.

D2L

D2L (<https://d2l.arizona.edu/>) will be used for announcements as well as for other relevant materials pertaining to the course, including required readings and lecture notes. To succeed in this course, you should be checking this site, as well as your e-mail account, on a frequent basis.

If at any point you check the D2L site and do NOT find something you think you should be able to find, such as a required reading or set of lecture notes, please email me with information about what you think is missing.

Required Text(s)

There is no single required textbook for this course. All readings will be available as scanned PDF files on the course D2L website, long in advance of when they are due. Please download them and read them ahead of the class session when they are due. Print them out if you have to, but of course not printing helps save the environment and all that jazz. You will need to have the readings with you during class, but it is alright to have them open on a computer or tablet.

Lecture Notes

Lecture notes are also available on D2L. They are PowerPoint presentations organized and labeled by the date of the class session to which they correspond. As a rule, this class will be fairly discussion-based, with everyone participating in analysis of the readings. Accordingly, the PowerPoints will really just serve as loose guides to structure our class sessions.

Attendance

You will not be directly graded for attendance in this course. However, there will be a 10% participation component of your grade. This will be earned through regular participation in class discussion and in-class activities. Regular attendance is crucial to succeed, though not directly required.

Late Work

The general class policy is that NO LATE PAPERS and NO MISSED IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS will be accepted. However, in extremely unusual circumstances, some arrangements may be possible for

making up missed work. If circumstances can be foreseen, you should talk to me before an assignment date to discuss arrangements. If you have a problem on exam day that prevents you from showing up, contact me IMMEDIATELY by e-mail or phone.

Academic Misconduct

Your presence in the classroom presupposes a commitment to principles of academic honesty, integrity, and responsible citizenship. Consult the Dean of Students' Code of Academic Integrity regarding academic misconduct. For all assignments, it will be assumed that you are expected to do your own work without collaborating with other students, unless the case is made clear to be otherwise. Continued enrollment in this course assumes tacit agreement with this policy.

Student with disabilities or special circumstances

The staff of the Disability Resource Center (DRC), 1224 E Lowell Street, <http://drc.arizona.edu/>, coordinates accommodations and services for UA courses. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in UA classes and have not contacted them, please do as soon as possible. Please also see me privately so that we can discuss any accommodations necessary to facilitate your experience in this course. More generally, if you have any problems or concerns regarding this course, please contact me as soon as possible. Your feedback (both positive and negative) is integral to how well this course works! We should strive to respect and value the diversity that exists in UA classrooms (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, national origin, disability, geographic backgrounds, political orientation, sexual orientation). While we may sometimes disagree with each other on topics discussed in class, it's important that we remember that appreciating diversity in perspectives is an important part of the learning process. If you ever feel that you are not being given the respect you deserve in class, please let me know.

Caveat

I often improvise during my lectures, have a strange sense of humor, and have been known to use uncouth language from time to time. Please let me know after class if you find any remark I make offensive.

Grading

There are a total of 200 points to earn in this course. Your final grade will be determined by your performance on the following 5 assignments, as well as general class participation. The majority of your grade will be based on two major papers (each about 10-15 pages), as well as two shorter papers and one in-class presentation. Details about assignments will be given prior to each due date.

DUE DATE	EVALUATION	% OF TOTAL	# OF POINTS
T Sept 10	Assignment 1: Short Reaction Paper	10%	20
T Oct 8	Assignment 2: Theoretical Paper	30%	60
TR Oct 31	Assignment 3: Research Proposal	10%	20
T/TR Dec 3/5	Assignment 4: Research Presentation	10%	20
T December 17	Assignment 5: Research Paper	30%	60
N/A	<i>Participation</i>	10%	20

Schedule & Readings

Date	Topic	Reading (for before class)
T 8/27	Introduction to the Course	N/A
TR 8/29	Kierkegaard and Nietzsche	Cole, <i>The Problematic Self in Kierkegaard and Freud</i>
T 9/3	Kierkegaard and Nietzsche	Nietzsche, <i>The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life</i>
TR 9/5	Kierkegaard and Nietzsche	<i>Continued</i>
T 9/10	Origins in Sociology	Weber, <i>Social Psychology of the World Religions</i> O'Dea, <i>Sociology of Religion</i>
TR 9/12	Sartre	Martin, <i>Oppression and the Human Condition</i>
T 9/17	Sartre	Sartre, <i>The Emotions</i>
TR 9/19	Psychoanalysis	Westen, "The Scientific Legacy of Sigmund Freud: Toward a Psychodynamically Informed Psychological Science"
T 9/24	Psychoanalysis	Bauman, <i>Mortality, Immortality, and Other Life Strategies</i>
TR 9/26	Psychoanalysis	Rank, "Life and Death Fear," "Love, Guilt..."
T 10/1	Terror management theory	Morgan, "Ernest Becker and the Problem of Horrendous Death" Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, "The Cultural Animal"
TR 10/3	Terror management theory	Hayes et al., "A Theoretical and Empirical Review of the Death-Thought Accessibility Concept in Terror Management Research"
T 10/8	Self-determination theory	Ryan & Deci, "Self-determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-being" Ryan, Legate, Niemiec, & Deci, "Beyond Illusions and Defense: Exploring the Possibilities and Limits of Human Autonomy and Responsibility through Self-Determination Theory"
TR 10/10	Self-verification theory	Lecky, <i>Self Consistency: A Theory of Personality</i> Swann & Brooks, "Why Threats Trigger Compensatory Reactions: The Need for Coherence and Quest for Self-verification"
T 10/15	Integrative Perspectives	Wong, "Existential and Humanistic Theories"
TR 10/17	Integrative Perspectives	Sullivan, Landau, & Kay "Insights from Paul Tillich"

T 10/22	Integrative Perspectives	Hennes, Nam, Stern, & Jost “Not all Ideologies are Created Equal: Epistemic, Existential, and Relational Needs Predict System-Justifying Attitudes” Shepherd, Kay, Landau, & Keefer “Evidence for the Specificity of Control Motivations in Worldview Defense”
TR 10/24	Emotions: Overview	Lazarus & Lazarus, “The Existential Emotions” Barr, “Acute Traumatic Stress in Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Parents”
T 10/29	Guilt	Buber, “Guilt and Guilt Feelings”
TR 10/31	Uncertainty and Anxiety	Hirsh, Mar, & Peterson “Psychological Entropy: A Framework for Understanding Uncertainty-Related Anxiety”
T 11/5	Meaning	Proulx & Inzlicht, “The Five ‘A’s of Meaning Maintenance”
TR 11/7	Boredom	Klapp, <i>Overload and Boredom</i> Eastwood, Frischen, Fenske, & Smilek, “The Unengaged Mind: Defining Boredom in Terms of Attention”
T 11/12	Suffering/Trauma	Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, “The ‘Big Three’ of Morality, and the ‘Big Three’ Explanations of Suffering”
TR 11/14	Cultural-Existential Psychology	Siegel, “Defensive Structuring and Environmental Stress” Salzman, “Globalization, Culture, and Anxiety: Perspectives and Predictions from Terror Management Theory”
T 11/19	Cultural-Existential Psychology	Baumeister, “How the Self Became a Problem” Sullivan, “From Guilt-oriented to Uncertainty-oriented Culture: Nietzsche and Weber on the History of Theodicy”
TR 11/21	Existential Neuroscience	Lourenco, Longo, & Pathman “Near Space and its Relation to Claustrophobic Fear” Qurin et al., “Existential Neuroscience”
T 11/26	Project workshopping	
TR 11/28	NO CLASS; Thanksgiving Break	
T 12/3	Class Presentations	
TR 12/5	Class Presentations 2	
T 12/10	Course wrap-up	