



Psychology 131: Psychology of Stress

Location
Loras College
Psychology Program

Hennessy 270
M-F 10:00-12:00; 2:00 – 4:00*
J-Term 2017

Instructor: Jake Kurczek, PhD
Assistant Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience
Office: Henn 186
Phone: 588-7045
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Office Hours: By appointment

Textbook: Sapolsky, R.M. (2004.) *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers (3rd ed.)*.

Class Website: You will be able to find PDFs of the lectures and discussions posted on eLearn

***M-F See schedule for time changes. (Hennessy 270, unless otherwise noted)**

Prerequisite: None
Course Fee: \$150.00

Other Materials:

Throw blanket, large pillow, towel or mat for floor exercises
Book for reading enjoyment
Appropriate Iowa winter hiking wear
Exercise Gear

Course Goals and Overview

In this course, you will:

- 1) Learn basic biological principles related to health, stress, and coping.
- 2) Become familiar with major psychological research and theory related to the sources and effects of stress.
- 3) Analyze your overall life stress
- 4) Learn a variety of intervention strategies for dealing with stress.
- 5) Reflect on the place of stress in our lives, including how it affects our sense of meaning and control.

Course Requirements and Policies

Course requirements/policies and assignments can be found here. Policies specific to J-Term are found below.

Lecture Attendance. Students are required –and expected - to attend all of the classes for this course. While I will not enforce a daily attendance policy, a failure to attend will reflect poorly in your participation/question portion of your final grade. A portion of this grade is reflected in the critical thinking journals, which are randomly distributed throughout the course. If you are going to miss a

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lecture, please do your best to let me know *before* class. January Term courses are designed specifically to be experiential and active. Don't panic, though, it's not about quizzing you orally every day in class. I just expect you to come to class prepared with the lesson assigned and to contribute your questions and thoughts. In this course, specifically, you should also expect to move physically – so come dressed and prepared to do that. If you have some anxiety about any of this, please let me know. I can give you tips to perhaps reduce your stress a bit. If there is a particular activity that you are uncomfortable about participating in, again, please let me know ahead of time and we may be able to find an accommodation for you that will still allow you to get the feeling of the experience.

Absences and Make-ups. It is expected that you will turn in each assignment and take each examination at the scheduled time. A make-up exam can be taken only for excused absences. Unless highly unusual circumstances prevail, approval for excused absences must be obtained prior to the scheduled exam. If you fail to take an examination (an unexcused absence), you will receive a score of zero for that exam. However, because of the accelerated nature of January Term courses, ***you will be dropped from the course with a grade of “F” if you miss more than two days of class. Missing an hour or more of any class meeting will also count as a full day’s absence.***

College Sponsored Events. If you are involved in intercollegiate athletic competitions, theater and choral performances, or debate, and have activities that may conflict with this course you should follow these instructions from the College’s official policies:

1. Submit a copy of your team/organization’s schedule to your instructors no later than the first day of class with all specific course conflicts highlighted.
2. Through oral and email notification, communicate with your instructor(s) at least one class prior to each class that you are scheduled to miss to coordinate how you will make up and turn in missed work. Your course syllabus may require greater advance notice of a pending absence. You are expected to make up coursework missed (or an appropriate equivalent) by the original due date.
3. Forward all relevant changes to the schedule to your instructors as soon as you are notified.
4. Submit all course syllabi and schedule of course commitments to coach/moderator as soon as possible.
5. It is a privilege to participate in college sponsored events. Students found to be intentionally abusing this policy will lose the opportunity to participate in college sponsored events.

This policy does not cover practice for any college sponsored event, or academic/co-curricular conferences. Even if your scheduling conflicts are due to college-sponsored activities, there are many “nonreplicable” activities in this course that cannot be made up -- most obviously the retreat. ***If your schedule of activities will not allow you to attend the retreat, you will be penalized. You will also be penalized for missing other class activities and demonstrations. If your schedule requires you to miss either the retreat or more than two days of class, it will be difficult for you to pass this course and you should consider dropping the course.***

Assignments

1) *Participation*

100 pts (20%)

Participation is a very large component of this course. The readings, experiential activities, the retreat, guest speakers, and class discussions will all require your active involvement for them to be effective. You are expected to try all experiential activities as seriously and wholeheartedly as possible, even if some seem odd or slightly uncomfortable. Some of these activities will be based on eastern philosophies (yoga, for example). You will be expected to be active and respectful

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listeners during guest presentations, but I also expect you to ask thoughtful questions of our guest speakers. During almost every class meeting, we will be discussing the readings, the experiential components of the course, or some of your reflections on the course. You will be expected to arrive to class having completed the assigned reading in an active, thoughtful manner. You will be expected to record your reflections on the readings on an almost daily basis, to make contributions to our daily class discussions and to be actively involved in class experiences. This type of **daily class participation** will make up **65 points** in this category of assessment. Your active and respectful involvement in the spirit and activities of all **off-campus trips**, especially the retreat, will be worth **35 points**. Both of these participation grades will be based upon my observation and also feedback from you and your peers.

This important category of assessment focuses on the following outcomes:

- a. Your ability to discuss, in a group, different philosophies on stress and coping, as expressed in assigned texts.
- b. Your ability to be a respectful contributor by providing meaningful, related comments and also respectfully listening to peers.
- c. Your ability to thoughtfully engage in new activities with an open mind.

2) *Stress and Coping Journal* **50 pts (10%)**

Journal: You will keep an electronic journal throughout the course, making entries many days. This information is for you: the contents of your journal will not be shared with other students without your explicit permission, as you may be writing about personal experiences and emotional events in your life. Download the app, [Stop, Breathe & Think](#) and sign-up. We'll use this in class and as part of your journal.

The Stress and Coping Journal will assess the following learning outcomes:

- a. Your ability to explain and analyze your own sources of stress and responses to stress.
- b. Your ability to explain and compare the interventions you will try throughout the course.
- c. Your ability to reflect on your own personal fears, losses, and patterns of anxiety.
- d. Your ability to clearly express ideas in writing.

3) *Electronic Portfolio* **250 pts (50%)**

Digital Storytelling. As a class, we will create a web-based resource for students and adults to learn about how the psychology of stress interfaces with life. My thinking is that this resource will us help understand the applications and misapplications of psychology to our lives. Others who are eager to learn about psychology and science should have access to this material for teaching and learning alike. A digital story of the psychology of stress topic of your choice should be designed for a general audience.

- This wiki should include the following aspects
 - An introduction to the topic
 - Why it is important
 - Research/Evidence on the topic
 - An activity that can teach you more about the topic (e.g. games, demonstrations, other resources)
 - Local resources that Loras College students can use
 - Minimum 6 multimedia resources
 - Minimum 10
 - APA format

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Infographic: One of the most important skills to acquire in any scientific field is the ability to think critically about a given topic. Beyond thinking critically is the ability to break difficult information down into more understandable information. Infographics allow you to communicate information in a fun and understandable way. It is important for scientists to share information and educate others about the things that they study. You must follow me [@LorasNeuro](#) and [@EngagedBrain](#) for links to up-to-date research and news articles about stress. You are *strongly encouraged* to share updates and information using the hashtag [#HowDuBrainsWork](#).

One page (De)Stress: A difficult aspect of science is taking confusing topics and breaking them down in an entertaining fashion. We'll produce these one-page information pamphlets that briefly describe and educate on your topic of stress. However, their main purpose is to provide local resources for Loras College students related to your topic. We'll produce as many different concepts in stress as possible so that people can better understand how stress affects us and what we can do to manage stress. We'll also share these, just like our infographics.

Podcast: I'd like you to join me for a 10-20 minute conversation about your final paper topic. These will be scheduled during the last two weeks of class. The form of the podcast will be like when Shankar Vedantam of the [Hidden Brain Podcast](#) visits NPR to talk about a new finding in science. I'll prepare some general questions, but we may talk about more specific things depending on your topic. It may be most helpful to you to have two recent articles about your topic that you can discuss.

These assignments will assess the following learning outcomes:

- a. Your ability to identify biological structures related to the stress response and to describe their basic functions.
- b. Your ability to explain the overall physiological process of the stress response
- c. Your ability to identify and explain basic elements of stress theory and research covered in class.
- d. Your ability to discuss how and why various coping strategies work to reduce stress.
- e. Your ability to explain and analyze research related to stress.
- f. Your ability to clearly express ideas in writing.

4) Oral Research Presentation (in pairs)

100 pts (20%)

Two students will be assigned to the same topic and will work together to develop the oral 60-90 minute presentation. Each student within the group will be responsible for finding two quality articles related to the topic (thus, for the oral presentation you will have four articles total to discuss). One of the articles **MUST** be a peer-reviewed, scholarly journal article. The second *can* be another scholarly journal article, but it could also be a newspaper, magazine, or non-scholarly journal article. All articles must be less than 10 years old (and preferably less than 5 years old). Each group will be assigned a day and class period (morning or afternoon) to present. The two students will give the oral presentation at the beginning of that class session. The presentation should be 60-90 minutes in length. The presentation is to be e-mailed to me by 9:00PM the night before your Discussion Leader.

The presentation should include a summary of the four articles. The key is to discuss the articles in an organized, meaningful fashion. You must provide a brief summary of each article throughout the presentation. For the scholarly journal articles you should provide a brief overview of the hypothesis(es), methodology, results, and discussion of results (focusing mainly on the results and the implications of the results).

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Following the summary of the articles, the job of the discussion leader is to provide some structure to the discussion of the issues that session. This should be a PowerPoint or handouts, sets of questions for discussion, etc. The point is not for the leader to do all of the talking for the remainder of that day, but rather to **facilitate** discussion. So the discussion leader **will not** summarize the article(s) that everyone read, but rather use the article as a touchstone on the topic of the day. So a discussion leader will likely need to do outside research to help with the discussion. Activities, debates, videos and other active learning techniques are *highly encouraged*, or let's just say, they're **required**.

Following the presentation, the presenters will remain at the front of the classroom to field questions from other students and assist in a more in-depth discussion of the topic. In addition to the Discussion Leaders, two groups will serve as discussion facilitators. These groups will make extra effort to know and understand the material and work to help facilitate the discussion that the leaders provide. This means taking an active role in the discussion and attempting to engage the rest of class by sharing your experience and questioning others. Lastly, two groups will serve as note takers. These students will work to pull out the most interesting and relevant information from the presentation and discussion about the concepts for the day. Each group will serve as Discussion Leaders 1 time, Discussion Facilitators 3 times and Note Takers 2 times during the semester.

Library Hours during J-term: M-Th 8:45 a.m.-8 p.m.; F 8:45 a.m.-4 p.m.; Sat & Sun closed

This project will evaluate:

- a. Your ability to engage in high quality research.
- b. Your ability to summarize, synthesize, and describe research related to your topic on stress or coping.
- c. Your ability to work with another on a group project.
- d. Your ability to present your work orally.

J-Term and Course Specific Policies

- ***What are the expectations for behavior off-campus and when we are on Retreat?***

Loras College students participating in January term courses are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the policies and guidelines put forth in the student handbook, even when off-campus. We will be visiting several off-campus locations during this class. I expect you to be respectful of the guest speakers and instructors that will be interacting with our class and attentive to what they have to teach us. If you are not able to abide by these rules for student conduct, you will not receive credit for participating in the off-campus activities. If I feel at any time that I can not trust you to behave with maturity and respect for others I will insist that you withdraw from the class.

In addition, while we are at the Sinsinawa Retreat, I will ask you to surrender cell phones and computers (all electronic devices). Sinsinawa also requests that you conduct yourselves with respect for the other people who may be staying at the center, since many are there for spiritual guidance or quiet reflection. Meals will be provided at the center; you are also allowed to bring your own snacks, but please do not bring alcoholic beverages to the Center. We will remain at the Center from Thursday Noon through Friday 2 p.m. and you will not be allowed to come and go from the facility on your own during this time. If you are not able to abide by these rules for student conduct, you will not receive credit for the retreat, which will greatly impact your grade;

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you may also be asked to leave the Center and will be responsible for paying for transportation back to campus. As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to make this decision based on my observations of your behavior.

- ***How will you get to the off-campus activities?***

The college will provide bus transportation to the Sinsinawa Retreat. **For all other off-campus activities students are responsible for their own transportation.** Other off-campus locations will be in or near Dubuque. I will provide directions to the locations. You can arrange to carpool with other students in the class but you need to make these arrangements on your own. You can also try to take the Jule public transit or try to get there on foot.

- ***What if you need a special accommodation for this course, due to disability?***

Any student who believes that he or she may need an accommodation for any type of documented disability during this class should make an appointment to see me during my office hours or ask to speak with me after class. I am happy to discuss arrangements to do this, but usually you do need to document your needs with the college. It is always a good idea to contact the Lynch Office at x7134 and make an appointment with a staff member to review your documentation and to determine appropriate, reasonable accommodations. Minor accommodations such as seating arrangements are of course very easy and require no special documentation, simply a conversation with me. If you have questions on whether or not you may qualify for accommodations or on how to document a disability, please contact the Director of the Lynch Office at 588-7134. You may self-disclose and request an academic adjustment any time during the semester. However, I strongly recommend that you do so as soon as possible because accommodations are not provided retroactively and adequate lead-time is required.

- ***This course deals with a variety of emotional issues. What if you would like additional counseling?***

There are mental health professionals and counselors on staff at Loras in our Counseling Center. Counseling services are confidential and available to all students. Some issues our counselors deal with frequently are problems with school, from specific problems such as difficulty with certain types of classes to lack of motivation; insecurity about what to choose for a career; difficulties with college life, such as conflict with roommates, feeling lonely or having trouble "fitting in"; problems with romantic relationships or questions concerning sexuality; troubles at home that cause stress at school; as well as more common emotional issues like feeling tense, stressed, anxious, irritable, or depressed. The Counseling Center can help students who are having current difficulties because of past problems like sexual or physical abuse or incest. They also help students who are concerned about alcohol or drug use, dealing with eating problems, are experiencing difficulty grieving about a loss or are dealing with a crisis in their lives such as experiencing sexual harassment or other kinds of discrimination. Call 588-7085 for an appointment or visit <http://inside.loras.edu/sites/counseling/default.aspx> for more information.

PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS FOR PSYCHOLOGY MAJORS

While not every student who takes this course will choose to major in psychology, I believe it is worth including in this syllabus behavioral expectations our program has for our majors. These recommendations should benefit students of any major:

- Respect the dignity and worth of all individuals regardless of ethnicity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or gender orientation.
- Promote accuracy, honesty and truthfulness in one's conduct

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- Manage conflicts in a direct and respectful manner.
- Assume and honor commitments and responsibilities.
- Assume a leadership role in modeling positive behavior for other students.
- Demonstrate an excitement about learning by becoming engaged in classroom discussions and activities, and going beyond what is required in the pursuit of knowledge.
- Develop and value an active investment in the discovery of accurate, reliable information.
- Reflect on what you are learning and become adept at making connections with material from many classes.

*Instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus and schedule when necessary. Modifications will be made following notification via e-mail, eLearn, Twitter and/or in class announcement

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Schedule*

Day	Topic	Reading	Assignment
1/3 AM	Intro to Stress / Overview of Course	Sapolsky, CH 1	Sign-up Course Intro Social Media DS / Blog
1/3 PM	Brain Anatomy	CH 2	Room Assignments for Retreat
1/4 AM	Effects of Stress	CH 3 CH 4 CH 5	Syllabus Signed
1/4 PM	The Immune System	CH 8 CH 10 CH 11	
1/5 AM	How to Research		
1/5 PM	Yoga w/ Deb May **1:30 to 2:30** **In Ballroom D**	(Ross & Thomas, 2010)	Dress Comfortably, bring mat/towel Research Journal
1/6 AM	Exercise Keegan Parrott, M.S.	(Bassuk, Shari; Church, Timothy; Manson, JoAnn, 2013; Plante, Coscarelli, & Ford, 2001)	Yoga Journal
1/6 PM	Workout **Graber / AWC**		Dress comfortably for working out
1/9 AM	Psychological Stress	CH 13	Presentation Exercise Journal
1/9 PM	Coping	Ch 14, 16, 18	Presentation
1/10 AM	Pets Special Guests: Senge and Axl	(Headey, 2003; O’Haire, 2010)	Presentation
1/10 PM	Music	(Jiang, Rickson, & Jiang, 2016) CH 12	Presentation
1/11 AM	Spirituality	(George, Linda; Larsons, David; Koeing, Harold; McCullough, Michael, 2000; Laubmeier, Zakowski, & Bair, 2004)	Presentation
1/11 PM	Living Long	(Epel & Lithgow, 2014)	Presentation One-Page Due

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1/12 – 1/13	Retreat Sinsinawa Mound – Meet in Keane Hall parking lot 12:15PM We'll return to Loras 1/13 after 2:00PM	(Misra, Ranjita; McKean, Michelle, 2000; Song et al., 2014; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010)	
1/16 AM	MLK JR Day - Prejudice and Discrimination **9:30 – 11:30**	(Dion, 2002; Meyer, 2003)	Presentation Retreat Journals
1/16 PM	Social Support	(Taylor, Shelley, 2006) CH 17	Presentation
1/17 AM	Meditation **9:00 – 11:00**	(Davidson & Lutz, 2008; Koch, 2013)	Presentation Infographic Due
1/17 PM	Nutrition ** Locust Hy-vee for lunch** **11:30 – 1:30**	(Barrington, Beresford, McGregor, & White, 2014)	
1/18 AM	Parenting, Family Relationships	(Crouter & Bumpus, 2001; Wang, Repetti, & Campos, 2011) CH6	Presentation Nutrition Journal
1/18 PM	Emotion	(Gohm, Corser, & Dalsky, 2005)	Presentation
1/19 AM	Nature	(Maller, 2005; Pearson & Craig, 2014)	Presentation
1/19 PM	Nature Hike ** Swiss Valley ** **2:00 to 3:00 PM**	(Hartig et al., 2011)	Nature Hike Journal
1/20 AM	Jake in Ames – No Class		
1/20 PM	Jake in Ames – No Class		DS Due 4:00PM