

# Psychology Capstone

PSY492-03, Fall 2022

T/Th, 11:30am

1115 ASH

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## Instructor

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2218 ASH

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## Office Hours & Schedule

In-person office hours: T/Th 1:30-2:30pm (2218 ASH)

Virtual meetings [by appointment](#)

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## Course Overview

Welcome to Advanced General Psychology (Capstone), a culminating course for senior psychology majors. Capstone offers a survey of important research findings and theoretical perspectives in psychological science and fosters critical discussion of methodological and conceptual issues. It provides an opportunity to collectively consider the implications of psychological theory and research for public discourse, policy, and programs benefitting ourselves and the broader society. Finally, the course is designed to help students recognize the unique understanding and skills acquired through the psychology and liberal arts curriculum and to collectively consider the ways this unique perspective can help you navigate through your continued studies and professional lives. You have learned much as psychology students (perhaps more than you realize!), and you have much to offer.

The course will be taught using a [seminar, discussion-based format](#), which is more collaborative and participatory than the traditional lecture approach. You will do a significant amount of reading and thoughtful reflection about the readings, and most class periods will include a facilitated student-centered discussion about the readings. Participation of all students is essential to meaningful discussion, so please plan on attending every class session and be prepared to discuss the course materials.

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## Course Content

Although we will pull material from a number of disciplines, the course is primarily grounded in the social psychological literature. We will discuss many theories, and our discussion of research and theory will be infused with a discussion of the “So what?” -- applications and implications beyond the classroom. This emphasis on theory and application has a long tradition in social psychology. Indeed, founder Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) is famously quoted as saying “there’s nothing so practical as a good theory” and “no research without action, no action without research.” Our focus on application is also consistent with [APA’s mission](#) of promoting “the advancement, communication, and application of psychological science and knowledge to benefit society and improve lives.”

We will critically examine the research, theories, and applications through different lenses and at different levels of analysis, and we’ll revisit a number of themes throughout the semester, including the interplay between individual and system-level factors; the role of bias and values in research and practice; and the application of psychological research for the common good. Throughout the course you will also be pushed to think critically about your own assumptions and beliefs, and about claims made by others in the academic and popular literature. Although you will not have tests, you will be asked to do a great deal of reflective reading and writing, so plan to spend a significant amount of time (6-8 hours) on course-related work each week.

**The overarching focus of the course is well-being**, which we will examine at the level of the individual and the broader community. While we’ll explore a number of conceptualizations of well-being, most of our discussion will be devoted to subjective well-being and social justice, with particular **emphases on poverty and racism**. These specific topics are well-suited for the capstone course in that they are 1) informed by a substantial theoretical and empirical literature; 2) complex and interdisciplinary; and 3) highly relevant in our 2022 social landscape.

While topics such as **racism and poverty** are suitable for inquiry and discussion and clearly important to our society, they can also be very difficult to read and talk about, particularly for those who have first-hand experience with them. Please know that my intent in covering the content is not to make you feel targeted or to invite conflict, but to seriously grapple with the issues so we can make informed judgements and

effectively and ethically apply psychological research, theory, and tools. If you have never experienced racism or poverty, I encourage you to push yourself beyond your comfort zone and embrace the uncomfortable and the awkwardness that can come from a rigorous examination of the topics. I will do my best to make the classroom a space for everyone to engage with the material in a safe and intellectually challenging way. That being said, I know we all have different limits and triggers. If you know of particular course material that may be traumatizing to you, I'd be happy to discuss any concerns you have before the topic comes up in class. If at any time you find yourself nearing your limit with a topic or assignment please let me know, so we can discuss strategies for minimizing your discomfort while still meeting the course requirements. Likewise, if you find a discussion to be traumatizing or otherwise too difficult, you may choose to not participate in the discussion or to leave the classroom. If you choose to stay, you will not be called on to share your own experiences or expected to speak on behalf of an entire social or identity group.

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## Learning Objectives

Before graduating, students majoring in psychology should be able to engage in deep reading and reflection; think critically about claims and assumptions; make evidence-based decisions; write well-developed, clear papers; plan and facilitate group discussion; and prepare and deliver presentations based on the psychological literature. The course objectives listed below reflect this mission and our goals for psychology majors.

Upon completion of this Capstone course you should be able to:

- Identify and apply concepts associated with major theoretical perspectives and empirical findings in social psychology.
- Describe and synthesize alternative theoretical perspectives within the discipline
- Recognize sources of bias in psychological research, and understand how they can affect the interpretation or usefulness of research findings
- Analyze and explain interdisciplinary approaches to psychological questions
- Recognize professional writing, and complete a number of professional-level papers

In addition, you should have further developed the following skills and abilities:

- The ability to think critically in interpreting and applying psychological theory and research
  - The ability to critically reflect on the values implicit in approaches to understanding social issues
  - The ability to work in groups to synthesize key readings and plan and facilitate class discussion
  - Skills related to the development and delivery of an engaging, evidence-based presentation
  - Skills related to the application of psychological theory and research to the good of society
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## Class Policies & Expectations

**Professionalism & respect.** Students learn at their full potential only when they feel as if they are heard and respected in and outside of the classroom. Thus, **maintaining a climate that is inclusive and respectful** is not only socially responsible and ethical, it is key to a successful learning experience. We live in a time of incredible divisiveness, stress, and loss, when personal attacks and the public expression of strong emotions have become more and more commonplace. It is particularly important, therefore, that we use considerate language and behavior toward one another, and that we make a conscious effort to affirm the contributions of all.

**Academic integrity.** You are expected to do your own work in Capstone and to not engage in any form of academic dishonesty; breeches of academic integrity are likely to result in a zero on the relevant assignment (at a minimum). Because you are seniors, I assume you know what is considered appropriate academic behavior. If you need additional information, please ask me and/or consult GVSU's academic integrity policy and guidelines ([GVSU's guidelines](#)).

**Disability support.** If you require formal accommodations, please contact me early in the term so we can work together to make appropriate arrangements. If you encounter difficulties in the course that interfere with your learning, please let me know, and if you think you may benefit from formal accommodations, contact GVSU's Office of Disability Support Resources ([gvsu.edu/dsr/](mailto:gvsu.edu/dsr/)) at (616) 331-2490 or [dsrgvsu@gvsu.edu](mailto:dsrgvsu@gvsu.edu).

**Other university policies.** In addition to the policies described above, you'll be expected to comply with other course-related policies at GVSU (<http://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies/>).

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## Coursework and Activities

As indicated above, the course will be taught using a seminar format. Among other things, this means there will be a shift in class structure and coverage of content, with a greater emphasis on a critical examination of the theoretical and empirical literature, an integration of diverse perspectives, and a collaborative exploration of evidence-based applications. Classes will be discussion based, and you will be required to do considerable reading and reflective writing outside of class. Grades will be based on written responses to focused reflection questions, integrative papers, class planning and facilitation, and participation.

### Reading & Note-taking

Readings and other course materials include books, scholarly articles and chapters, readings from the popular press, podcasts, and TEDtalks and other web-based speeches (see below for a complete list). You will need to purchase or borrow two books: **Rank, Eppard, and Bullock's (2021), *Poorly Understood***, and **Wilkerson's (2020) *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents***. Links to the other readings will be posted on our class Blackboard site. I recommend using hard copies of the readings to facilitate note-taking to make it easier to find pages and excerpts referenced during our class discussion.

Please plan on spending considerable time each week reading and thoughtfully reflecting upon the readings and integrating the various perspectives they offer. This type of deep reading goes beyond an understanding of the authors' words; it's an active process of identifying inconsistencies and exploring links between the readings, and it requires frequent questioning about the claims, evidence, potential bias, interpretations, and applications. It requires more time and effort than scanning or surface reading, so you should budget your time accordingly and plan to read when you are not fatigued or distracted. I recommend taking notes or annotating the works while you read by circling key terms and phrases; highlighting or underlining important theories, studies, and concepts; and/or writing brief comments and questions in the margins. This note taking will facilitate your understanding and memory of the readings and make it easier for you to complete the integrative assignments.

Similarly, I recommend that you engage in a dialogue of sorts with yourself and/or the authors. Delve into the content, critically consider claims, and push yourself to examine links to other class material, content covered in previous courses, your own life, and our current social backdrop. Some questions that will be helpful as you engage in this process are:

#### Questions to help you deeply and critically consider the authors' perspectives and claims:

- What claims do the authors make, and what evidence do they present to support the claims?
- What are the authors' underlying assumptions, and to what extent are they valid?
- What theoretical framework or approach do the authors use? Are there other frameworks that should be considered?
- Does the author seem to represent the ideas of others accurately? Do they seem to oversimplify complex ideas?

#### Questions to help you consider the readings in relation to one another, your own experiences, and other ideas you've encountered:

- What are the connections among the various readings? Do any common ideas or viewpoints run through them?
- In what ways are the authors' claims related to other sources you have read or theories and research you have studied?
- How does this perspective relate to previous texts and discussions we have had, as well as concepts you've encountered outside of this course?
- How does the reading "land on" you? What thoughts and emotional reactions do you have when you read it?
- Does the reading challenge your own values, beliefs, and/or assumptions?

#### Questions to help you examine possible implications, extensions, and applications of concepts discussed:

- What questions does the reading raise for you, and how could they be addressed?
- Does the reading cause you to think about additional research questions or hypotheses? If so, what type of study could be designed to test these hypotheses?
- What are the implications of concepts and findings discussed?
- How might the ideas or findings discussed in the reading be applicable to other contexts or subjects?

### Class Participation

Because Capstone uses a seminar format, most class sessions will be centered around a discussion of the weekly assigned readings, related podcasts, and videos, and on connections between the current week's materials and previously discussed readings. Thus, active participation of all students in the discussion is essential and will be included in course grades. In addition to completing the assigned readings before

class, you should prepare for the discussion by critically and thoughtfully considering answers to questions that can be brought into the discussion (such as the questions listed above). If you find it difficult to speak in front of a group, you might consider preparing a written list of points related to each reading and bring them to the relevant class period.

At the end of each class, you will be asked to submit complete a participation form in which you describe your reactions to the class discussion and activities, including something you learned and/or gave you a new perspective. For each class session you will receive a score of up to 3 points for your participation, based largely on these descriptions. The lowest two participation scores will be dropped at the end of the semester.

### Experiential learning through volunteering

As part of the course, you will be asked to complete an assignment requiring you to consider the applications of psychology in the context of volunteering. You will need to volunteer for at least four hours on an activity designed to effect social change, such as work related to social justice, well-being, civil discourse, or environmental sustainability. After completing the volunteer hours, you will give a brief (5-minute) presentation to the class and submit a 2-3 page paper describing your participation and linking it to course content. The volunteer experience, paper, and presentation will be worth a total of 20 points.

### Writing

Because the ability to articulate an understanding and analysis of evidence and ideas is essential to a liberal arts education, the course requires students to do a considerable amount of writing. You will write a number of reflection papers and other assignments requiring you to summarize, reflect upon, synthesize, and/or analyze one or more of the course readings.

**Thought questions.** Approximately once each week you will be required to write a paper in which you thoughtfully respond to questions related to the assigned readings. The papers will be graded based on relevance and correctness of the content, depth and thoughtfulness of your responses, and coherence and clarity of your writing. Most thought papers will be worth 8 points.

**Self-narrative papers.** You will be asked to write three 10-point papers in which you reflect on your personal experiences, values, motivations, and self-concept, based on a set of prompts. While these papers will be tied to the course themes, they will not draw on specific course-related readings.

**Reflection on racism paper.** You will also be asked to complete a paper in which you reflect on your experiences with racism, using specific prompts and course-related materials. It will be worth 15 points.

**Integrative paper.** Finally, you will be required to write a final paper requiring you to summarize, analyze, and/or synthesize course readings, and critically discuss the readings in the context of your own experiences and belief systems. While this paper will be similar in some ways to the thought questions, it will be longer and require more breadth and depth of discussion. The paper will be worth 40 points and will be evaluated based on the quality of writing, and the depth, thoughtfulness, relevance, and accuracy of the content.

### Course grades

Your grades will be based on class participation, focused reflection papers, integrative papers, self-narrative papers, class planning and facilitation, and a self-introduction slide. The approximate weighting of each and the grading scale used to determine final grades are given below.

	Approximate <u># of points</u>	Approximate <u>Weight</u>
Thought question papers	80 pts	31%
Participation (3pts/class)	72 pts	28%
Self-narrative papers (3 papers)	30 pts	12%
Reflect on racism paper	15 pts	6%
Volunteer experience project	20 pts	8%
Final integrative paper	40 pts	16%

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A	92.5-100%	B+	87.5-89.5%	C+	77.5-79.5%	D+	67.5-69.5%
A-	90-92%	B	82.5-87%	C	72.5-77%	D	60-67%
		B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%	F	0-59.5%

## Tentative Class Schedule

Week 1		
8/30 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Introduction to Capstone</b> Assignment: <a href="#">Introduction slide</a>
9/1 (Th)	Topic Preparation	<b>Using psychology: Know yourself, be curious, and learn broadly</b> 1) Read syllabus; Read Bain (2012), Ch.1 2) Assignment: <a href="#">Self-Narrative Paper 1</a>
Week 2		
9/6 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Using psychology: Biases &amp; theories</b> Assignment: <a href="#">Self-Narrative Paper 2</a>
9/8 (Th)	Topic Preparation	<b>Using psychology: Critical thinking &amp; biases; theory &amp; evidence</b> 1) Listen to Jonathan Rauch interview ( <a href="#">On Point</a> ) 2) Assignment: <a href="#">Thought Questions</a>
Week 3		
9/13 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Subjective wellbeing: Adaptability &amp; limits to adaptability</b> 1) Read Diener, Lucas, & Oishi (2018), pp. 1-22 2) Assignment: <a href="#">Thought Questions</a>
9/15 (Th)	Topic Preparation	<b>Subjective well-being: Needs &amp; goals; Belonging &amp; social relations</b> Read DeHaan & Ryan (2015)
Week 4		
9/20 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Subjective well-being: Benefits &amp; caveats; Fostering SWB</b> Read-Diener et al (2018), pp. 23-30
9/22 (Th)	Topic Preparation	<b>Subjective well-being: Fostering SWB (cont.)</b> Assignment: <a href="#">Self-Narrative Paper 3</a>
Week 5		
9/27 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Poverty &amp; community well-being; Homelessness in the U.S.</b> 1) Read Rank et al. (2021), Chs. 2, 3, 4, 5 2) Watch first 24 min of webinar by Shinn & Khadduri ( <a href="#">SPSSI webinar</a> ) 3) Assignment: <a href="#">Thought Questions</a>
9/29 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Poverty: The experience and effects of homelessness &amp; deep poverty</b> 1) Read Lee & Shinn (2021), pp. 21-23 2) Read Rank et al. (2021), Chs. 10 & 11
Week 6		
10/4 (Th)	Topic Preparation	<b>Poverty: Structural causes</b> Read Rank et al. (2021), Chs. 6-9
10/6 (Th)	Topic Preparation	<b>Poverty: Classism, invisibility, &amp; stigma</b> 1) Read Rank et al. (2021), Chs. 16 & 17 2) Assignment: <a href="#">Thought Questions</a>
Week 7		
10/11 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Poverty: Psychological theories; causes &amp; perpetuation</b> 1) Read Lott (2002) – pp. 100-104 & 107-108 only 2) Read Bullock & Reppond (2018) 3) Assignment: <a href="#">Thought Questions</a>
10/13 (Th)	Topic Preparation	<b>Poverty: Evidence-based solutions</b> Read Rank et al. (2021), Chs. 20 & 21

Week 8		
10/18 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Racism in our society: Historical context</b> Read Wilkerson (2020), Chs. 2-6
10/20 (Th)	Topic Preparation	<b>Racism in our society: The psychology of American racism</b> 1) Read Roberts & Rizzo (2021) 2) Assignment: <a href="#">Thought Questions</a>
Week 9		
10/25 (T)		<b>No Class (Fall Break)</b>
10/27 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Racism in our society: The 8 pillars of caste systems</b> 1) Read Wilkerson (2020), Part 3 2) Assignment: <a href="#">Thought Questions</a>
Week 10		
11/1 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Racism in our society: Structural causes; CRT (note: VIRTUAL CLASS)</b> 1) Read Boynton-Jarrett et al. (2021) 2) Read Bailey, Feldman, & Bassett (2021) 3) Read George (2021), "A lesson on critical race theory" article ( <a href="#">ABA</a> )
11/3 (Th)		<b>No class</b> (Work on <a href="#">Reflection on Racism Assignment</a> , due at midnight)
Week 11		
11/8 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Racism in our society: Aversive racism, implicit bias, &amp; microaggressions</b> 1) Read Dovidio, Pearson, & Penner (2019), pp. 16-24 only 2) Read Wilkerson (2020), Chs 11, 14, & 15 3) Assignment: <a href="#">Thought Questions</a>
11/10 (T)		<b>No class</b> (Release time to work on volunteer experience project)
Week 12		
11/15 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Racism in our society: Consequences; Stereotype threat</b> 1) Read Wilkerson (2020), Ch. 29 2) Listen to "How they see us," with Claude Steele ( <a href="#">Hidden Brain</a> podcast) 3) Read transcript of David Williams interview ( <a href="#">Williams, Harvard Gazette</a> )
11/17 (Th)	Topic Preparation	<b>Evidence-based interventions</b> 1) Read Dovidio, Love, Schellhaas, & Hewstone (2017), pp. 606-612 2) Read Wilkerson (2020), Ch. 31 and Epilogue 3) Assignment: <a href="#">Thought Questions</a>
Week 13		
11/22 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Advocacy &amp; social change; Student volunteer experiences</b> 1) Reading TBD 2) Assignment: <a href="#">Thought Questions</a>
11/24 (Th)		No Class (Thanksgiving break)
Week 14		
11/29 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Advocacy &amp; social change; Student volunteer experiences</b> 1) Reading TBD 2) Assignment: <a href="#">Thought Questions</a>
12/1 (Th)	Topic Preparation	<b>Advocacy &amp; social change; Sharing volunteer experiences</b> Reading TBD
Week 15		
12/6 (T)	Topic Preparation	<b>Advocacy &amp; social change; Sharing volunteer experiences</b> 1) Reading TBD 2) Assignment: <a href="#">Volunteer Experience Assignment</a>
12/8 (Th)	Topic	<b>Recap &amp; final discussion</b>
Finals Week		
12/15 (Th)		Deadline for <a href="#">Final Integrative Paper</a>



## Readings

- American Psychological Association (2000). Resolution on poverty and socioeconomic status. <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/poverty-resolution>
- Bailey, Z.D., Feldman, J.M., & Bassett, M.T. (2021). How structural racism works – racist policies as a root cause of U.S. racial health inequities. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 384, 768-773.
- Bain, K. (2012). The roots of success. In *What the Best College Students Do* (pp. 1-31). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Boynton-Jarrett, R., Raj, A., & Inwards-Breland, D.J. (2021) Structural integrity: Recognizing, measuring, and addressing systemic racism and its health impacts. *The Lancet*, 36, 1-2.
- Bullock, H.E., & Reppond, H.A. (2018). Of “takers” and “makers”: A social psychological analysis of class and classism. In P.L.H. (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Social Psychology and Social Justice* (pp. 223-243). Oxford University Press.
- Coates, T. (2015). *Between the world and me*. New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau.
- DeHaan, C.R. & Ryan, R.M. (2015). Symptoms of wellness: Happiness and eudaimonia from a self-determination perspective. In K.M. Sheldon, & R.E. Lucas (Eds.), *Stability of happiness: Theories and evidence on whether happiness can change* (pp. 37-55). Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier. Doi 10.1016/b978-0-12-411-478-4.00003-5
- Diener, E., Lucas, R.E., & Oishi, S. (2018). Advances and open questions in the science of subjective well-being. *Collabra: Psychology*, 4(1). DOI: 10.1525/Collabra.115
- Diener, E., & Tay, L. (2013). The remarkable benefits of happiness for successful and healthy living. In *Happiness: Transforming the development landscape* (pp. 90-117). The Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH.
- Dovidio, J.F., Pearson, A.R., & Penner, L.A. (2019). Aversive racism, implicit bias, and microaggressions. In G. C. Torino, D. P. Rivera, C. M. Capodilupo, K. L. Nadal, & D. W. Sue, & (Eds.), *Microaggression Theory: Influence and implications* (pp. 16-31). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Dovidio, J. F., Love, A., Schellhaas, F.M.H., & Hewstone, M. (2017). Reducing intergroup bias through intergroup contact: Twenty years of progress and future directions. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 20, 606-620.
- Lott, B. (2002). Cognitive and behavioral distancing from the poor. *American Psychologist*, 57, 110-110.
- Lott, B. (2012). The social psychology of class and classism. *American Psychologist*, 67(8), 650-658.
- Rank, M.R., Eppard, L.M., & Bullock, H.E. (2021). *Poorly understood: What America gets wrong about poverty*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Roberts, S.O., & Rizzo, M.T. (2020). The psychology of American racism. *American Psychologist*, 76, 475-487.
- Shinn, M., & Khadduri, J. (2020). *In the midst of plenty: Homelessness and what to do about it*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wilkerson, I. (2020). *Caste: The origins of our discontents*. New York, NY: Random House.