SOCPSY 2F03: Psychology of close Relationships

Winter 2022

**Instructor:** Dr. Taigan MacGowan

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**Pronouns:** she/her  
**You can call me**: Dr. Mac / MacGowan  
**Lecture:** Synchronous online delivery on Zoom; Mondays 11:30am to 1:20pm (Recordings will be posted)   
**Office Hours:** Thursdays 12:30 to 1:30 (<https://mcmaster.zoom.us/j/95867012356>)

**Drop-In Tutorial:** Wednesdays 11:30am to 12:20pm at Social Psychology TA Office  
**TAs**: Jessica Aranyush ([aranyusj@mcmaster.ca](mailto:aranyusj@mcmaster.ca)) and Julia Harrington ([harrij30@mcmaster.ca](mailto:harrij30@mcmaster.ca))

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# Course Description This course explores social psychological theories and research on romantic relationships, friendships, and family relations. Topics include relationship initiation, maintenance, and dissolution, and links between relationship processes and psychopathology.

# Course Objectives

The Honours Social Psychology Program has 6 program learning objectives. This course meets the following 4 objectives in the following ways:

1. **Appreciate the interdisciplinary nature of Social Psychology and evaluate the contributions that different disciplines contribute to the field** 
   * Students will examine class material through social, developmental, socio-cognitive, and diversity-centered approaches
   * Close relationships will be discussed in terms family, friends, intimate, and romantic relationships at various points in development
2. **Understand critically the major theoretical perspectives and debates in the field and be able to articulate a position**
   * Students will engage in weekly readings that grant direct exposure to empirical studies in the field of psychology
   * Students will be exposed to psychological theories regarding the initiation, maintenance, and dissolution of close relationships
3. **Demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills through participation in class discussions, debates, activities, presentations, course papers and assignments**
   * Students will have the opportunity to exchange thoughts and ideas with one another during informal (class discussions) and formal (participation boards) discussions
   * Students will further refine communication skills through academic writing (research proposal) and visual methods (infographic)
4. **Understand and apply a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods relevant to the field**
   * Students will analyze empirical articles in an area of interest, identify gaps in the literature, and propose a study that will answer a question in the subject area of close relationships

# Materials and Texts

* OPTIONAL TEXT: Bradbury & Karney; ‘Intimate Relationships’
* E-text available for online purchase: <https://wwnorton.com/books/9780393640250>
* Additional Readings Outlined Below
* Students will sign up for a free Canva account to complete their infographic

# Class Format

Lectures will be delivered synchronously over Zoom on Mondays from 11:30am to 1:20pm. Lecture recordings will be posted on Monday afternoons. Synchronous attendance is not mandatory, but strongly encouraged. Lecture slides will be posted before 11:30am each Monday. Class participation will be evaluated through weekly Discussion Board posts (see more below).

Drop-in TA Office Hours will be held in person on a weekly basis from 11:30am to 12:20pm at the Social Psychology TA Office.

# Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Discussion Board Participation (10%), Due every Friday by 8pm
2. Research Topic and Annotated Bibliography (5%), Due Friday, Feb 4 at 8pm
3. Midterm Exam (25%), Monday, February 14
4. Infographic (10%), Due Friday, March 11 at 8pm
5. Final Research Proposal (20%), Due Friday, April 8 at 8pm
6. Final Exam (30%), Scheduled by the Registrar

Specifications for these evaluations, including instructions and rubrics, will be posted on Avenue and discussed in class well before their due dates. Please note that all course requirements will be governed by McMaster’s policies on academic misconduct.

# Course Evaluation – Details

## Discussion Board Participation (10% total), due most Fridays by 8pm

Most weeks, students will be prompted with a question or topic to explore on the course discussion board in a submission of at least 5 sentences. Learners will be invited to create their own post or respond to the post of another student in the class. All submissions should be respectful and crafted with academic language. Posts will be submitted to the corresponding Discussion Boards on Avenue to Learn. Each post will be worth 1% for a total of 10% at the end of the term.

## Research Topic and Annotated Bibliography (5%), due Friday, Feb 4 at 8pm

Students will submit a short document describing the research topic that they would like to pursue for their final research proposal. Topics that involve clinical psychology, including disorders and/or interventions, will not be accepted. Learners will also include an annotated bibliography of at least 10 key references. Topics must be approved by the instructional team before submission of the Research Proposal.

## Midterm Exam (25%), Monday, February 14 at 11:30am

The midterm exam will be held virtually on Avenue to Learn during the allotted class time. This assessment will cover course content from Weeks 1 to 5 and will include T/F, multiple choice, and short answer questions.

As the midterm is worth 25%, it is not eligible for an online MSAF. If the midterm on February 14th is missed, please email me and reach out to the Faculty of Social Science for relief. Where appropriate, you will be granted an accommodation**.** There is no make-up test for a missed midterm.

## Infographic (10%), due Friday, March 11 at 8pm

Students will create a double-sided infographic on Canva or another chosen program, providing educational details on a chosen course subject area. Learners will outline information provided within course lectures and from outside sources. Students should target the infographic at a specific audience (ex. parents, university students, married couples, etc.).

## Research Proposal (20%), due Friday, April 8 at 8pm

Students will independently write a detailed research proposal on a topic of their choice. Topics will be approved following the Annotated Bibliography submission in February. Learners are encouraged to investigate participants at any stage of the lifespan. Students will include background information on the subject, as well as hypotheses, proposed sample, proposed research methodology, and expected results. Further instructions will be posted on Avenue to Learn.

## Final Exam (30%), Details TBA by the Registrar

The time, day, and location of the final exam will be scheduled by the registrar. This assessment will cover course content from Weeks 8 to 13 and will include T/F, multiple choice, and short answer questions.

As the exam is worth 30%, it is not eligible for an online MSAF. If the exam is missed, please email your respective Faculty office with appropriate documentation for the Faculty to review.

# Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

## Week 1 – January 10

### Introduction and Why and How we Study Relationships

Notes: Discussion Board Due Friday, Jan 14 by 8pm

## Week 2 – January 17

### Early Attachment and Social Cognitive Development

Readings:

Moore, C. & Corbit, J. (2019). Social cognition in infancy. *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*. [Available on Avenue]

Grossmann, K. & Grossmann, K. E. (2019). The impact of attachment to mother and father and sensitive support of exploration at an early age on children’s psychosocial development through young adulthood. *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*. [Available on Avenue]

Notes: Discussion Board Due Friday, Jan 21 by 8pm

## Week 3 – January 24

### Growing up with Family

Readings:

Kramer, L. & Conger, K. J. (2009). What we learn from our brothers and sisters: For better or for worse. In L. Kramer & K. J. Conger (Eds.), *Siblings as Agents of Socialization: New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 126,* 1-12. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Waldinger, R. J., & Schulz, M. S. (2016). The long reach of nurturing family environments: Links with midlife emotion-regulatory styles and late-life security in intimate relationships. *Psychological Science*, *27*(11), 1443–1450.

Notes: Discussion Board Due Friday, Jan 28 by 8pm

## Week 4 – January 31

### Friendship

Readings:

Glick, G. C., & Rose, A. J. (2011). Prospective associations between friendship adjustment and social strategies: Friendship as a context for building social skills. *Developmental Psychology*, *47*(4), 1117–1132.

Schoonover, K., & McEwan, B. (2014). Are you really just friends? Predicting the audience challenge in cross-sex friendships. Personal Relationships, 21, 387-403.

Notes: Research Topic and Annotated Bibliography due Friday, Feb 4 by 8pm; Discussion Board Due Friday, Feb 4 by 8pm

## Week 5 – February 7

### Attraction and Mate Selection

Readings:

Dai, X., Dong, P., & Jia, J. S. (2014). When does playing hard to get increase romantic attraction? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology: General, 143,* 521-526.

Fletcher, G. J., Kerr, P. S., Li, N. P., & Valentine, K. A. (2014). Predicting romantic interest and decisions in the very early stages of mate selection: Standards, accuracy, and sex differences. *Personality & Social Psychology bulletin*, *40*(4), 540–550.

Meltzer, A. L., McNulty, J. K., Jackson, G. L., & Karney, B. R. (2014). Sex differences in the implications of partner physical attractiveness for the trajectory of marital satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *106*(3), 418–428.

Notes: Midterm Review Session will be held at some point this week; Discussion Board Due Friday, Feb 11 by 8pm

## Week 6 – February 14

**MIDTERM EXAM – ON AVENUE**

## Week 7 – February 21

### READING WEEK – NO CLASS

## Week 8 – February 28

**Modern Dating: From Sexting to Ghosting**Readings:

Dai, M. & Robbins, R. (2021). Exploring the influences of profile perceptions and different pick-up lines on dating outcomes on Tinder: An online experiment. *Computers and Human Behavior, 117*, 106667.

Wright, M. F., & Wachs, S. (2021). Moderation of technology use in the association between self-isolation during COVID-19 pandemic and adolescents' romantic relationship quality. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, *24*(7), 493–498.

Notes: Discussion Board Due Friday, March 4 by 8pm

## Week 9 – March 7

### Responsiveness and Support

Readings:

Weigel, D. J. & Ballard-Reisch, D. S. (2014). Constructing commitment in intimate relationships: Mapping interdependence in the everyday expressions of commitment. *Communication Research, 41,* 311-332.

Winczewski, L. A., Bowen, J. D., & Collins, N. L. (2016). Is empathic accuracy enough to facilitate responsive behavior in dyadic interaction? Distinguishing ability from motivation. *Psychological Science, 27*(3), 394–404.

Notes: Infographic Due Friday, March 11 by 8pm; Discussion Board Due Friday, March 11 by 8pm

## Week 10 – March 14

### Beliefs and Expectations

Readings:

Lydon, J. E., Fitzsimons, G. M., & Naidoo, L. (2003). Devaluation versus enhancement of attractive alternatives: A critical test using the calibration paradigm. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29(3), 349–359.

Solomon, B. C., & Vazire, S. (2014). You are so beautiful...to me: Seeing beyond biases and achieving accuracy in romantic relationships. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 107(3), 516–528.

Notes: Discussion Board Due Friday, March 18 by 8pm

## Week 11 – March 21

### Stress, Conflict, and Aggression

Readings:

Larsen, P.H.H., Bendixen, M., Grøntvedt, T.V. et al. (2021). Investigating the emergence of sex differences in jealousy responses in a large community sample from an evolutionary perspective. *Scientific Reports, 11***,**6485.

Salvatore, J.E., Kuo, S.I., Steele, R.D., Simpson, J.A., Collins, W.A. (2011). Recovering from conflict in romantic relationships: A developmental perspective. *Psychological Science, 22,* 376-383.

Notes: Discussion Board Due Friday, March 25 by 8pm

## Week 12 – March 28

### Diversity in Romantic Relationships

Readings:

Moors, A. C., Schechinger, H. A., Balzarini, R., & Flicker, S. (2021). Internalized consensual non-monogamy negativity and relationship quality among people engaged in polyamory, swinging, and open relationships. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *50*(4), 1389–1400.

Notes: Discussion Board Due Friday, April 1 by 8pm

## Week 13 – April 4

### Breaking up, Loss, and Bereavement

Readings:

Fagundes C. P. (2011). Implicit negative evaluations about ex-partner predicts break-up adjustment: the brighter side of dark cognitions. *Cognition & Emotion*, *25*, 164–173.

Lavner, J. A., Bradbury, T. N., & Karney, B. R. (2012). Incremental change or initial differences? Testing two models of marital deterioration. Journal of Family Psychology, 26(4), 606–616.

Stroebe, M. S., Abakoumkin, G., Stroebe, W., & Schut, H. (2012). Continuing bonds in adjustment to bereavement: Impact of abrupt versus gradual separation. *Personal Relationships*, *19*(2), 255-266.

Notes: RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE April 8

## Week 14 – April 11

### Final Exam Review Session

# Course Policies

## Submission of Assignments

Specifications for these evaluations, including instructions and rubrics, will be posted on Avenue and discussed in class well before their due dates. Please note that all course requirements will be governed by McMaster’s policies on academic misconduct.

Documents will be submitted to Avenue to Learn under ‘Assignments’ in 12 pt. Times New Roman, double spaced, with 1-inch margins, a title page, and APA reference style.

## Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

| **MARK** | **GRADE** |
| --- | --- |
| 90-100 | A+ |
| 85-90 | A |
| 80-84 | A- |
| 77-79 | B+ |
| 73-76 | B |
| 70-72 | B- |
| 67-69 | C+ |
| 63-66 | C |
| 60-62 | C- |
| 57-59 | D+ |
| 53-56 | D |
| 50-52 | D- |
| 0-49 | F |

## The instructor reserves the right to adjust final marks up or down on an individual basis in the case of special circumstances. Final grades may also be adjusted up or down on a class-wide basis depending on overall performance.

## Late Assignments

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work” www.mcmaster.ca/msaf. Valid MSAF requests received by the instructor within 24 hours (including weekends) of the missed evaluation(s) will be accommodated. In the event of an MSAFed assignment, the student will the given a three-day extension. I do not require the disclosure of any personal, family, or medical details, but you may need to provide documentation to the Faculty in the case of an MSAF for evaluations worth 25% or more.

If you are planning to obtain a Faculty-approved absence for any evaluation, you must alert me as soon as possible, ideally before the due date. Do not simply wait for the paperwork to come through to me, as this can take many days.

**Requests to ‘bump’ final grades to the next grade level or earn extra credit will not be granted in this course** to maintain fairness among students. If you are struggling with any material, please reach out to your instructor or TAs as soon as possible so that we can best help you.

## Course Modification

The instructor reserves the right to modify elements of the course during the term. If any modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

# University Policies

## Academic Integrity

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [*Academic Integrity Policy*](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy-1-1.pdf), located at https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

* plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
* improper collaboration in group work.
* copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection

***Some courses may*** use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster’s use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

## Courses with an On-line Element

***Some courses may*** use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## Online Proctoring

**Some courses may** use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

## Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [*Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities*](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Code-of-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities.pdf)(the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

## Academic Accommodation of Students With Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [*Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities*](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Academic-Accommodations-Policy.pdf)policy.

## Requests For Relief For Missed Academic Term Work

[McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF):](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/msaf-mcmaster-student-absence-form/) In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

## Academic Accommodation For Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/02/Academic-Accommodation-for-Religious-Indigenous-and-Spiritual-Observances-Policy-on.pdf) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office ***normally within 10 working days*** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

## Copyright And Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

## Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.