COURSE DESCRIPTION

Stress is a ubiquitous part of daily life and individual experience. However, the individual's perceptions and causes of stress are fundamentally and profoundly influenced by social structures, values and norms, resources, and relationships. This course is not designed to teach students how to cope with stress, but, through empirical findings and their own guided inquiry into the topic, students will develop a more comprehensive sense of why we experience stress and empirically-based ideas about how to address stress.

Our primary focus is to examine the many factors outside of the individual that influence whether and how one experiences stress, the kinds of stress that are experienced by some individuals but not others, the consequences of stress, the role of different methods of coping with stress, and how those are socially and culturally variant. The values and assumptions underlying the psychological or behavioral models of stress are not necessarily the same as those underlying the sociological perspective on stress. We will draw on the vast and rapidly-growing sociological literature on stress to generate our own questions and to evaluate analytically and empirically, the nature and meaning of stress, the consequences of stress, coping strategies, and how and why stress and its consequences are patterned by historical, social, and interpersonal processes. Consequently, some of the findings and conclusions in this course might radically depart from what you hear from your family and peer networks or other forms of conventional wisdom, self-help guides, the media, or even health care providers. Individual will and the currently popular idea of “resilience” are sure to influence stress and coping; however, personal will and resilience are themselves shaped by social forces, including access to resources, positive relationships, strong and supportive social networks, roles, and life course experiences.

My aim for this course is to nurture curiosity and the art of asking good questions, which will allow students to develop a working knowledge of the important social factors that influence stress exposure, the experience of stress, and coping. I emphasize active learning and provide students with opportunities to apply what you have read and what we discuss in our class meetings.

By the end of the course, students will be able to explain why stress exposure, perceptions of stress, and responses to stress vary across individuals, social groups, and societies. Students will also be able to suggest empirically-supported social interventions for reducing and managing stress. Come prepared to think and engage in this fascinating and relevant topic!
GENERAL APPROACH TO AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE COURSE

This course generally uses an inquiry-based approach to learning and thus, is more like a curiosity-driven discussion among a community of scholars. As it sounds, this learning method generally involves learning through collective inquiry -- asking and answering central questions about a topic or subject matter in order to address issues and solve problems. Building on what you learn through course materials and discussions, you will develop questions using systematic methods of inquiry -- research -- to find answers. The answers often lead to more questions, just like the professional research process. Engaging in inquiry-based learning can increase cognitive flexibility and further one's capacity to learn.

Starting with practice generating and posing questions during class discussions, students will become more adept at formulating effective and focused research questions, seeking answers by engaging in research, and, generating additional questions, leading to further acquisition of knowledge. The development of higher-order and analytical thinking requires that students be active participants in the learning process. However, there is value in lecture, too; instructors are often in charge of the course because they have experience and expertise of value to students. Thus, early on in the semester, I will help students develop a framework for future learning by giving a few lectures, always interwoven with time for questions and open discussion. But most of the class will involve critical dialog among everyone in the class, with me as both moderator and collaborator. Come to every class prepared to be curious, collaborative, engaged, and active in our community of learners!

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, the student will be able to meet each of the following Student Learning Objectives (SLOs):

**Course-specific SLOs**

2. Describe the epidemiology of stress and consequences of stress.
3. Differentiate forms of stress and identify which are most consequential.
4. Explain or illustrate how social factors, such as structural forces, resources, statuses, roles, values, and norms, shape stress exposure, perceptions of stress, use of coping strategies, and consequences of stress.
5. Articulate how social structure and status influence the use of coping strategies.
6. Apply sociological concepts, principles, and data to derive possible interventions for problems related to stress.
7. Select appropriate measures of stress for empirical analysis.

**Liberal Studies SLOs for the Social Sciences**

1. Discuss the role of social factors in contemporary problems or personal experiences related to stress.
2. Analyze claims about social phenomena related to stress. Specifically, students will apply appropriate research methods to analyze and interpret data on stress using sociological concepts and principles.

**Liberal Studies SLOs for E-Series**

1. Analyze major questions or problems related to the definition, social correlates, and consequences of stress using various intellectual perspectives.
2. Demonstrate the relevance of ideas or findings from the course.
3. Communicate arguments central to the course using clear, coherent prose that utilizes the conventions of standard American English.
4. Discuss relevant ideas from the course using sources from a variety of text types such as tables, charts, causal models (diagrams), or maps of operationalization of concepts to variables.

Information about Liberal Studies requirements can be found here: [http://liberalstudies.fsu.edu/](http://liberalstudies.fsu.edu/)

Note: The course is not approved as an E-Series course for Fall 2017, but might be during the semester. In any case, the above learning objectives are built into my assessments as I think they are valuable for students and provide structure for the course. If you matriculated at FSU from Summer C 2015 or later, please ask me if you have questions about whether you can get Liberal Studies credit for successful completion of the Fall 2017 course.

REQUIRED READINGS


These texts are available at the FSU Bookstore and at Bill’s. Chapters to read for each week will be listed in the syllabus calendar. Other required readings are posted on our course website.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1  Foundations: The Sociological Perspective
Readings
Sociology Guides Key Sociological Concepts.

• Meeting 1: T, Aug. 29  Introduction to the course and the sociological perspective, syllabus review, hopes and expectations for the course.
  *First day mandatory attendance. You must attend class or you will be dropped per FSU policy.*
• Meeting 2: R, Aug 31  Core sociological concepts and forms of inquiry.
  First question set for 20 Questions assignment due.

Week 2  Definitions and Meanings of Stress
Readings

• Meeting 1: T, Sep. 5  Meet at Strozier Library on the lobby side of the entrance turnstiles. Introduction to library resources at FSU, meet your “embedded” course librarian, Assign. 1 prep.
  Online biography must be completed by 11 PM.
• Meeting 2: R, Sep. 7  Second question set for 20 Questions assignment due.

Week 3  Contrasting Perspectives on Stress: Biological, Psychological, Popular, and Sociological Definitions.
Readings

• Meeting 1: T, Sep. 12.  Assignment 1, Most/Least Stressed States due (*Turnitin* by 11 PM).
• Meeting 2: R, Sep. 14  Third question set for 20 Questions assignment due.

Week 4  Causes of Stress
Readings
Bethune, Sophie and Elizabeth Lewan. “APA's Survey Finds Constantly Checking Electronic Devices Linked to Significant Stress for Most Americans”. in *Stress in America*  

• Meeting 2: R, Sep. 21  Assignment 2, Article Search and Review due (*Turnitin* by 11 PM).
Week 5  Why Should I Care About Stress? Consequences of Stress.

Readings
http://www.macses.ucsf.edu/downloads/Reaching_for_a_Healthier_Life.pdf  Read pages 34-37 only.


Optional: Barr, Donald. 2014. Chapter 4., "Understanding how Low Social Status Leads to Poor Health" in *Health Disparities in the United States* by Donald Barr. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.

- Meeting 1: T, Sep. 26  Unequal Causes video and discussion.
- Meeting 2: R, Sep. 28  Fifth question set for *20 Questions* assignment due.

Week 6  Types of Stress and the Stress Process

Readings


- Meeting 1: T, Oct. 3  Mini lecture and discussion.
- Meeting 2: R, Oct. 5  Sixth question set for *20 Questions* assignment due.

Week 7  Asking the Right Questions and Making the Right Observations: Measures of Stress & Research Methods

Readings

http://www.macses.ucsf.edu/research/psychosocial/stress.php

- Meeting 2: R, Oct. 12  Research Methods 101  Skim the following reading as an example of a metanalytic research paper on stress, a good model for your literature reviews.

Tolin, David and Foa, Edna. 2006. “Sex Differences in Trauma and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Quantitative Review of 25 Years of Research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132:959 –992.” Note: This is a meta-analysis and a model for your literature reviews. We will discuss this more in class.

Week 8  Mindfulness in the Classroom – Taking a Breath and Tying up Loose Ends

- Meeting 1: T, Oct. 17  Conduct Peer Reviews (bring copies of papers to class). Seventh question set for *20 Questions* assignment due.
- Meeting 2: R, Oct. 19  Class field trip: Institute for Successful Longevity’s Fall Speaker (co-sponsored by Road Scholars), Dr. Richard Schulz on “Caregiver Challenges.” Talk begins at 3:30 pm in the College of Medicine Auditorium. Take notes and incorporate into 20 questions for next week.
Week 9  The Epidemiology and Social Distribution of Stress

Readings

- Meeting 1: T, Oct. 24

Week 10  The Social Distribution of Stress (continued).

- Meeting 1: T, Oct. 31 Discuss the Yellow Wallpaper, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman Ninth question set for 20 Questions assignment due.
- Meeting 2: R, Nov. 2 Meet in Strozier Library. Literature Search and Review Workshop. Bring feedback on Assignment 3 (introduction to research paper). Be ready to ask good questions!

Week 11  Applying the Sociological Lens to Stress

Readings
Gilman, C.P. *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

- Meeting 1: T, Nov. 7 In-class writing assignment: Sociological Analysis of The Yellow Wallpaper.
- Meeting 2: R, Nov. 9 Meet with Jesse Klein, course-embedded librarian, for additional help on research papers.

Week 12  Coping and Resilience

Readings

- Meeting 1: T, Nov. 14 Mini lecture on coping and class activity
- Meeting 2: R, Nov. 16 Informal feedback on research progress: questions, conundrums, and exciting developments. Tenth (and final) question set for 20 Questions assignment due.

Week 13  Institutional Contexts and Stress (emphasis on college experiences) & Interventions

Readings

- Meeting 1: T, Nov. 21 Team-based learning work: Reducing Stress on Campus
- Meeting 2: R, Nov. 23 NO CLASS: Thanksgiving. Eat turkey (or Tofurky).
Week 14  Reducing Stress on Campus – Applied work.

- **Meeting 1:** T, Nov. 28  Team-based learning work: Reducing Stress on Campus (continued).
- **Meeting 2:** R, Nov. 30  Present plans and extend thinking (if resources were not a constraint…).

Week 15  It’s a Wrap! Reflections on and Conclusions about Stress

- **Meeting 1:** T, Dec. 5  More informal feedback on research progress.
- **Meeting 2:** R, Dec. 7  Summing up the Sociology of Stress.  
  Final Research paper due by 11 PM to Turnitin.

GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Blackboard.** Submit written assignments and tests to Turnitin as requested by the instructor. Please check Blackboard regularly to keep up with newly posted information and changes to the syllabus.

**Attendance.** Student attendance is required and expected. I will take attendance each week. Though I will not assign points for attendance, I will consider overall attendance if your final score is a couple of points away from the next higher letter grade at the end of the semester. I expect you to be present for all scheduled events or you will not get points for activities that are part of course assessment (e.g., in-class assignments including 20 questions work, peer reviews, team-based learning activities, etc.). You may not make them up except in emergency situations for which you have valid documentation. If you have an emergency and cannot attend class, please let me know ASAP (preferably well before class). Class attendance and grades are very highly correlated (I have actually run correlation analyses for my classes to test this!).

**Assigned Readings:** Lectures, class discussion, and in-class work will build on ideas and concepts in the readings so you should finish assigned readings prior to coming to the class on the date assigned in the schedule. Being prepared for each class will also enhance your learning experience and allow you to ask questions about the material during the lecture on the assigned topic.

**In-class Learning Activities**  
You will complete the following in-class activities, which are designed to increase processing of course information, leading to better performance on tests as well as transfer and retention of material. They include:

1. 20 questions assignments.
2. Peer review of research papers.
3. Team-based learning project.

**Format for the In-class Team-Based Learning Assignments.**  
In your assigned teams, drawing on course materials, lecture, and discussion, you will discuss the pros and cons of various campus interventions designed to prevent and reduce stress. With your team, you will summarize an intervention plan and provide justification for the plan using course concepts. You will turn in the write-up as a group at the end of the class period. Note: This does not require you to do any work outside of the class with peers. Life (and schedules) are just too complicated. Also, doing the work in the classroom means I can facilitate the discussions and answer questions. You MUST be in class that day to get credit for any of these in-class activities unless you have a valid and clearly documented excuse (illness, emergency). Please DO NOT SCHEDULE trips, flights, interviews, medical appointments, or any other events on dates on which group work/TBLs or in-class writing assignments (including 20 questions work) are scheduled.
I reserve the right to deduct 3 points the first day that an assignment is late, 3 more points on the second day after the due date and after 3 days I will give you a zero for that assignment. I also reserve the right to deduct up to 3 points per day late for late submissions to Turnitin even if a hard copy is turned in.

GRADING AND EVALUATION

- You will not receive letter grades for exams or assignments; I will add your points for all exams and assignments to derive your final grade for the course.
- Grades assigned will be based on a class curve, so that grades are distributed roughly according to class performance. This works in the students’ favor (feel free to ask me more about this). I will periodically post grade distributions and “approximate letter grade equivalents” for total scores up to the date of posting so you know your status along the way. Note that anything at or below 50% of points possible will earn an “F” regardless of the class curve.

Extra Credit: I will not give extra credit in this course. If you attend regularly, keep up with readings, study for exams and complete assignments on time, you will not need to do extra credit.

SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING

Course grades will be based on the following weighting of course requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Due Date*</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-line bio</td>
<td>Submit via Blackboard site</td>
<td>T, 9/5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>Most/Least Stressed States analysis</td>
<td>T, 9/12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>Article Search and Review</td>
<td>R, 9/21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td>Introduction to Research Paper</td>
<td>T, 10/10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 4</td>
<td>In-class analysis of Yellow Wallpaper</td>
<td>T, 11/7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 5</td>
<td>TBL: Campus Plan to Reduce Stress</td>
<td>R, 11/30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 6</td>
<td>Final Research Paper on Stress</td>
<td>R, 12/7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Questions (10)</td>
<td>Generating course-relevant questions.</td>
<td>As scheduled</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>180</td>
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</tbody>
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Note: Additional points for attendance taken will be added to the base (numerator and denominator) and used to calculate final grade. I will take attendance randomly and up to 15 additional points may be added.

I use full letter grades in this course. I use the conventional cut-points but I often assign the next highest grade if one’s score is 2-3 points from the cut point and if attendance, timeliness, and participation are all excellent. Cut-points for letter grades are: A=90-100%; B= 80-89%; C=70-79%; D=60-69%; F≤ 59%

ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY

Students are expected to abide by the Academic Honor Policy of the Florida State University, including the statement on Values and Moral Standards published in The Florida State University General Bulletin. The Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of these expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty throughout the process. Please see the following website for a complete explanation of the Academic Honor Policy:

http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/honorpolicy.htm

The on-line biography assignment will quiz you on some aspects of this policy.

CLASSROOM and E-MAIL ETIQUETTE

Classroom courtesy is necessary to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn without distractions. Please set and adhere to appropriate norms of courtesy to the instructor and other students. Definitely. No. Web. Surfing.

In every e-mail note you send me please include your first and last name and the course or day/time of our class. If you include this information, I can reply to your note more quickly than without it.
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, please contact:
Student Disability Resource Center, 108 Student Services Bldg., Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167, (850)644-9566 (voice), (850)644-8504
(TDD) E-mail: SDRC@admin.fsu.edu
Website: http://www.fsu.edu/~staffair/dean/StudentDisability/

EXCUSED ABSENCES
Only the following absences are eligible to be excused: Religious holidays, as specified in FSU policy, and when a student represents FSU at official functions, including intercollegiate debating or varsity sports events. You must inform me in advance if you will miss a class for any scheduled events (e.g., religious holidays, FSU functions, planned surgery, job interviews, court dates). Verified emergencies and/or medical illness are also excused. Medical illness refers to conditions that are serious in nature and require treatment by medical professionals and/or surgical or other treatments. I require valid documentation for absences to be excused. You are responsible for all materials assigned outside and covered in class on the day(s) missed.

INCOMPLETE GRADES
Missing work or uncompleted assignments are insufficient reasons for a grade of Incomplete. An Incomplete grade will not be given except under extenuating circumstances at the instructor’s discretion. Note that College of Social Science guidelines require that students seeking an "I" must have completed a substantial portion of the course and have a passing grade at the time the Incomplete is requested.

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY
Except for changes that would substantially affect the grading policy, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice. In order to make the class dynamic and responsive to the needs of the group of students in the class, topics, assignments, and scheduling may be modified by the instructor as circumstances dictate. If I modify the reading assignments, it will only be to reduce them to make room for more conversation and higher-order thinking during class. I will announce in class meetings and/or via e-mail any changes in advance so please stay tuned!

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE
Tutoring
• ACE Learning Studio @ Johnston Ground (WJB). Tutoring and workshops are helpful. http://ace.fsu.edu/
• Strozier & Dirac Libraries: For detailed information about all tutoring offered at Strozier and Dirac, please visit https://www.lib.fsu.edu/tutoring-information
• The Reading and Writing Center. The RWC is on the second floor of the William Johnston building and has satellite locations including Dirac Library and Strozier Library. If you aren’t doing well with your writing or if you just want to do better and get more experience as a writer, call the Reading/Writing Center (R/WC) and make an appointment. Teachers in the R/WC are college writing teachers and are trained to help you with any aspect of writing for any class or for your own projects. You can also call for a single appointment and be a "walk-in."
  When you call, the person answering the phone will arrange a time when you can come to the center. Call 24 hours ahead: 644-6495. The center is open 8:30-4:30, Monday-Friday. For more information and to schedule an appointment on line, go to: http://wr.english.fsu.edu/Reading-Writing-Center/Hours-of-Operation

Assistance with personal issues that might affect course performance
I am happy to meet with students to discuss any aspect of course performance and for feedback and help on course work. However, if you wish to seek other appropriate professional help there are also other resources for you at FSU:
• Division of Undergraduate Studies (for lower-division students who need help sorting out academic issues): http://undergrad.fsu.edu/departments/office-undergraduate-studies
• Your College Dean’s office (for students who have declared a major): http://admissions.fsu.edu/majors/
• Dean of Students Office: http://deanofstudents.fsu.edu/
• Victim’s Advocacy program (within the Dean of Student’s Office)
• FSU Counseling Center: http://counseling.fsu.edu/