

Harvard University Department of Psychology

Junior Tutorials – Current and Recent Offerings

PSY 980AA Adapting to Adversity. Approximately 70% of people will experience a traumatic event in their lifetime. Yet, while some individuals will recover naturally, others will experience lasting effects on how they think, feel, and behave. Together we will explore the many ways humans adapt to adversity and consider reconceptualizing disorders that arise from traumatic and stressful events (e.g., trauma- and stressor-related disorders, personality disorders, anxiety, depression, substance use, and more). The course will also provide an expansive view of how people adapt to adversity, including natural recovery and post-traumatic growth. We will take a deep dive into understanding diagnostic criteria of trauma-related disorders (and the application of criteria across cultural groups) and explore why some people are more vulnerable to developing traumatic stress. We will also consider factors impacting recovery, evidence-based treatments for trauma-related disorders, and related controversies in the field.

PSY 980AB Habits and Habit Change. This course will examine habits, habit formation, and habit change at several levels of analysis, including the biological (neurobiological and endocrine), psychological (emotional, cognitive, and behavioral), and socio-cultural levels. We will examine several different models of how habits are formed and look at different approaches for behavioral change that can either moderate or overwrite old habits and replace them with either more adaptive habits or with more mindful, less automatic (habitual) behavior.

PSY 980AD Psychopathology and the Family. In this course, we will explore how the family impacts psychopathology, including relapse, recovery, and resilience, for a member with a mental disorder. We will examine the relationship between the family and mental health conditions like anxiety, autism, depression, personality disorders, and schizophrenia from a life course and a family systems perspective. We will also examine these relationships by discussing the biopsychosocial features of the family that impact child and adolescent psychopathology. The course will focus on contemporary approaches to family life (e.g., dual-earner families, gender equality, LGBTQ+ families, etc.), and the role these approaches play in family functioning.

PSY 980AH Psychology of Cults. In November of 1978, 909 members of The People's Temple perished in Jonestown, Guyana after drinking Kool Aid laced with cyanide. David Berg of the Children of God convinced his followers to abandon their monogamous marriages, encourage pedophilia, and allow their children to be sex trafficked. How do certain groups convince people to harm and even kill themselves and their children? This

course will explore the psychological mechanisms that enable cults to form and to take human belief and behavior to such extremes. What do cults share with other groups (mainstream religions, nations, everyday social interactions, etc.), and what makes them stand apart? In what ways are cults an environment in which many of our psychological tendencies (toward ingroup conformity, heuristic decision making, rationalization, etc.) are magnified? And what do cults reveal about the profound power of our social environment? We will examine case studies through the lens of empirical psychological science to uncover how psychological research can shed light on cult behavior, and how cult behavior can shed light on our everyday psychology.

PSY 980CL Psychology and Criminal Law. Why do eyewitnesses often identify the wrong suspect? Why would an innocent person confess to a crime they did not commit? Can we predict who will commit a violent crime in the future? This course examines how behavioral science can be used to answer these and other questions central to the legal system. Psychologists with expertise at the intersection of psychology and criminal law conduct empirical research, interpret study findings and provide explanations to judges and juries, evaluate the mental states of criminal defendants and victims, consult with attorneys and law enforcement agencies, and serve in a variety of roles to help improve the fairness of our criminal justice system. Drawing on key areas of research from clinical and social psychology, we will delve into theories of criminal behavior, forensic evaluation, the role of bias in the courtroom, false confessions, eyewitness testimony, and deception. Research will be applied to real-world cases.

PSY 980HU Psychology of Humor. What makes some jokes funny but others dull? Why does the act of laughing feel good? From an evolutionary perspective, if seeking food, finding mates, and detecting predators served a clear purpose, what could be gained by mirthful laughter? What benefits could justify the energy cost of laughing? The answers to these questions are deeply rooted in ancient neurocognitive mechanisms that evolved over long periods of time. In this course, we will critically evaluate scientific perspectives on humor from different subfields of psychology including clinical psychology, social psychology, and cognitive neuroscience. Covered topics will include different styles of humor, why some jokes are funnier when we laugh with friends, why it feels hurtful when others laugh at us, and how humor and laughter are affected across certain mental health disorders.

PSY 980PS Psychosis. Psychosis is among the most mysterious states of the human mind. When someone experiences psychosis they can struggle to tell the difference between what is real and what is not. Psychosis, which can result from mental illness, exposure to trauma, stress, illness, substance use and even surgery, impairs overall functioning and

may leave a person confused and distressed. In this course, we will gain a comprehensive understanding of this dynamic area of clinical science research by focusing on the following topics: 1) the psychological and neurological characteristics of psychosis; 2) the biological and environmental contributions to psychosis as well as its developmental trajectory; 3) the epidemiology, diagnosis, and treatment of psychosis; 4) the impact of psychosis, including discussion of stigma, quality of life, policy, and advocacy; and 5) the continuing debate as to how the range or spectrum of psychotic disorders should be regarded.

PSY 980SC Psychology of Social Connection and Belonging. For the past few years, we have been living under extraordinary psychological circumstances. We have been constantly reminded that human interaction informs much of how we think, feel, and behave. In this course, we will discuss humans' fundamental drive to form social connections, ranging from casual interactions, to building and maintaining relationships, to the loss or total absence of social contact. In doing so, we'll identify factors that can facilitate (e.g., humanization, empathy) or challenge (e.g., rejection, quarantine) the ability to form social connections and will explore parallels and differences in online interactions. This course will be highly interactive and will incorporate weekly practicum activities rooted in psychological science that encourage students to build strong social connections through direct experience.

PSY 980T Eating Disorders. The goal of this course is to provide a comprehensive overview of DSM-5 feeding and eating disorders (EDs) with a primary focus on anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder. We will explore the etiology (i.e., biological and environmental factors), symptom presentation, and empirically supported treatments across these EDs. Additional topics will include cultural considerations, gender and EDs, medical complications, impact of media/social media, and novel directions and treatments for these disorders.