

# SS4715: INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

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## Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

## Part I Course Overview

### Course Title

Introduction to Health Psychology

### Subject Code

SS - Social and Behavioural Sciences

### Course Number

4715

### Academic Unit

Social and Behavioural Sciences (SS)

### College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

### Course Duration

One Semester

### Credit Units

3

### Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

### Medium of Instruction

English

### Medium of Assessment

English

### Prerequisites

SS2028 Basic Psychology II; and SS3708 Design & Analysis for Psychological Research II

### Precursors

Nil

### Equivalent Courses

Nil

### Exclusive Courses

Nil

## Part II Course Details

### Abstract

This course aims to examine the interplay among biological, psychological, and social factors in the development and maintenance of and recovery from physical illnesses. The course will begin with an introduction to the traditional models and theories in health psychology and methodology in health research. We will then look at the mind-body connection underlying various health conditions, and how health beliefs and health behaviours influence the management of these conditions. Finally, we will analyze factors that facilitate behavioural change, and promote healthcare utilization and illness prevention at the individual and population levels. Current scientific findings and cultural aspects of health psychology will also be discussed.

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Describe theories, concepts, methods and issues in psychological research relevant to health and illness;	20	x	x	
2	Identify the psychosocial factors contributing to the development and maintenance of various physical illnesses and health behaviour;	20	x	x	
3	Apply health psychology theories in intervention design to facilitate behavioural change and promote well-being;	20	x	x	x
4	Evaluate critically the key classical and contemporary empirical studies in health psychology;	20	x	x	x
5	Analyze the psychological aspects of health promotion and disease prevention.	20	x	x	x

#### A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

#### A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

#### A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

### Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	Students will learn major theories and concepts in health psychology. Lectures will either expand upon the text by considering some topics in greater detail or include material not discussed in the text.	1, 2, 3

2	Class Discussions	Students will read and discuss recent empirical studies on areas related to the lecture content. These discussions will give students the opportunity to critically evaluate and assess published work in the field. These discussions will give students insights and learning opportunities which can be applied to their own writing.	2, 3, 4	
3	Research Presentation	Students, in groups of 5, will present a research proposal on a selected topic in health psychology. Students will review the literature, formulate their research questions and hypotheses, and design an empirical study.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
4	Behavioural Change Project	Students will attempt to change one habit of their choice for 3 weeks by applying the models and theories in health psychology. They will record their progress, review the strength and limitations of the strategies used, reflect on the difficulties they encounter along the way, and provide suggestions for improvement.	1, 2, 3, 5	

**Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)**

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Quiz I	1, 2, 3	20	-	No
2	Quiz II	1, 2, 3	30	-	No
3	Research Presentation	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	25	to brainstorm and generate initial ideas	Yes
4	Behavioural Change Project	1, 2, 3, 5	25	-	No

**Continuous Assessment (%)**

100

**Examination (%)**

0

## Assessment Rubrics (AR)

### Assessment Task

Quiz I

#### Criterion

Quiz I will cover all the materials in the first half of the course (weeks 1-5). A 90 min quiz will be set to assess students' abilities in mastering, applying and synthesising theories and concepts explained in the course, and to evaluate the applicability of health psychology principles to practical situations. Quiz items will be designed to test students' understanding of terminology and concepts and students' ability to integrate and apply these concepts to analyse hypothetical and/or real-life examples. Not all material covered in the textbook will be covered in lectures, and some materials discussed in lectures may not be found in the textbook. Materials for the quiz will come from both the textbook and lectures. The quiz format will consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions.

#### Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Score of 75 or above out of 100

#### Good (B+, B, B-)

Score of between 60 and 74 out of 100

#### Fair (C+, C, C-)

Score of between 45 and 59 out of 100

#### Marginal (D)

Score of between 40 and 44 out of 100

#### Failure (F)

Score of 39 or below out of 100

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### Assessment Task

Quiz II

#### Criterion

Quiz II will cover ALL the materials but the content of the second half of the course (weeks 7-12) will be the focus. A 90 min quiz will be set to assess students' abilities in mastering, applying and synthesising theories and concepts explained in the course, and to evaluate the applicability of health psychology principles to practical situations. Quiz items will be designed to test students' understanding of terminology and concepts and students' ability to integrate and apply these concepts to analyse hypothetical and/or real-life examples. Not all material covered in the textbook will be covered in lectures, and some materials discussed in lectures may not be found in the textbook. Materials for the quiz will come from both the textbook and lectures. The quiz format will consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions.

#### Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Score of 75 or above out of 100

#### Good (B+, B, B-)

Score of between 60 and 74 out of 100

#### Fair (C+, C, C-)

Score of between 45 and 59 out of 100

#### Marginal (D)

Score of between 40 and 44 out of 100

**Failure (F)**

Score of 39 or below out of 100

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**Assessment Task**

Research Presentation

**Criterion**

A group presentation on proposed research in health psychology is designed to critically evaluate the applicability of theories and concepts to understand selected contemporary issues in health psychology. Each group of 5 will give a 15-minute presentation in the discussion sessions between weeks 8 and 12.

Below are the guidelines for your research presentation.

**Background**

Review the relevant literature and provide an up-to-date overview of your research topic. You can start by highlighting the prevalence and importance of the problem you are looking into. Then, you can introduce the relevant concepts or theoretical framework. Discuss the existing literature by comparing and contrasting the methods and findings of a few relevant studies; you can also criticize the limitations of these previous studies. Finally, identify the research gaps.

**Aims of research**

Based on the gap in the existing literature, what is your primary research objective? What are the research questions you would like to answer? Any directional hypotheses based on previous findings?

**Design and methodology**

Explain how you would conduct your research so that your research questions can be addressed. What quantitative research methods will you use (e.g., experiments or surveys? cross-sectional or longitudinal? group comparison or correlation and prediction?) Who will be your targeted participants? What subjective or objective measures will you use? What statistical analyses will you use?

**Significance and Implications**

Justify the importance of your research. Theoretically, how will the findings extend the current understanding of the field or affect future studies? Practically, how will people benefit from your research? How will the findings affect clinical practice or policy decisions?

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

- Thorough and critical review of the literature with the research gaps clearly identified
- Consistently demonstrate a logical flow from literature review to study formulation and the proposed study is able to address the research questions
- The scientific content is well-selected and accurately presented
- Ideas and arguments are always well-articulated with excellent use of language.
- The presentation is well-structured and supported with attractive visual aid. Significant effort to engage the audience.

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

- Reasonably thorough and critical review of the literature with the research gaps clearly identified
- Mostly demonstrate a logical flow from literature review to study formulation and the proposed study is able to address the research questions
- The scientific content is well-selected and accurately presented
- The intervention plan is informative and shows some elements of originality
- Ideas and arguments are mostly well-articulated with good use of language.
- The presentation is well-structured and supported with appropriate visual aid. Good effort to engage the audience.

### **Fair (C+, C, C-)**

- Brief review of the literature with the research gaps clearly identified
- The flow from literature review to study formulation is loosely connected but the proposed study is able to address the research questions
- The scientific content is presented with some minor errors and unclarity
- Ideas and arguments are clearly articulated with some language errors.
- The presentation can be followed by the audience with some effort and is supported with appropriate visual aid. Some effort to engage the audience.

### **Marginal (D)**

- Brief review of the literature with the research gaps vaguely identified
- The flow from literature review to study formulation is loosely connected and the proposed study can partially address the research questions
- The scientific content is presented with substantial errors and unclarity
- Ideas and arguments are poorly articulated with a number of language errors.
- The presentation is poorly structured and can only be followed by the audience with substantial effort. Limited effort to engage the audience.

### **Failure (F)**

- Brief review of the literature without identifying the research gaps
- The flow from literature review to study formulation is not connected and the proposed study cannot address the research questions
- The scientific content is not relevantly chosen and presented with substantial errors
- Ideas and arguments are poorly articulated with no reference to research and with significant language errors.
- The presentation is poorly structured and the audience has a hard time understanding. No effort to engage the audience.

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## **Assessment Task**

### **Behavioural Change Project**

#### **Criterion**

Each student will design and carry out a behavioural modification plan to change one target habit for 3 weeks, and they will write an essay (1400-1500 words) to record and evaluate their experience.

Behavioural change is one of the objectives of Psychology. In this project, each student will choose to change an undesirable habit or develop an adaptive one for 3 weeks. You will

- Identify the target behaviour you would like to change
- Set up your goal(s)
- Develop and implement a plan (what strategies will you use?)
- Monitor and record your progress (you can consider using tables and graphs)
- Evaluate your experience (did the strategies work? If not, what were the main obstacles? What do you think is the most important factor that would facilitate the change you desire? What would you do differently next time?)

The word limit is 1400-1500 words (excluding references, citations, tables, and appendices). You will not be graded on how successful you were in achieving your goal per se. Rather, this assignment will be based on the addressing of the target behaviour and recording of the progress (20%), application of theories (30%), critical evaluation of the strategies used and self-reflection (30%), and clarity and organization (20%).

### **Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

- Clear identification of target behaviour and goals
- Appropriate recording of the whole process without mistakes/ missing information
- Consistently demonstrate intellectual engagement with a broad range of relevant concepts and theories from multiple perspectives
- Critical evaluation of the usefulness of each strategy and suggestion of logical modification to address the problems with high self-reflection and insights

- The essay is well-structured with good use of language

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

- Identification of target behaviour and goals
- Appropriate recording of the whole process with a few minor mistakes/ missing information
- Mostly demonstrate intellectual engagement with a broad range of relevant concepts and theories from multiple perspectives
- Some critical evaluation of the usefulness of each strategy and suggestion of modification to address the problems with some self-reflection and insights
- The essay is well-structured with few language errors

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

- Identification of target behaviour and goals with some ambiguity
- Appropriate recording of the whole process but with a number of mistakes/ missing information
- Some intellectual engagement with relevant concepts and theories from multiple perspectives
- Superficial evaluation of the usefulness of each strategy and suggestion of modification to address the problems with limited self-reflection and insights
- The essay is rather well-structured with a number of language errors

**Marginal (D)**

- Unclear and inaccurate identification of target behaviour and goals
- Inappropriate recording of the process
- Limited intellectual engagement with relevant concepts and theories from a single perspective
- Simply state the usefulness of each strategy without suggestions of modification to address the problems and with little self-reflection and insights
- The essay is poorly structured with a number of language errors

**Failure (F)**

- No identification of target behaviour and goals
- No recording of the process
- Absence of intellectual engagement with relevant concepts and theories
- State a few strategies used without evaluating their usefulness or offering suggestions of modification to address the problems
- The essay is poorly structured with significant language errors

## Part III Other Information

**Keyword Syllabus**

Mind-Body Connection; Biopsychosocial Model; Health-Seeking Behaviour; Health Behaviour Change; Treatment Adherence; Symptom Perception; Illness Representation; Stress; Coping; Pain; Sleep; Injury; Substance Use and Abuse; Disordered eating; Chronic Illness; Terminal Illness; Bereavement; Health Promotion and Intervention

**Reading List**

**Compulsory Readings**

Title	
1	Sanderson, C. (2018). Understanding the Mind-Body Connection (3rd Ed.). London: Sage.

**Additional Readings**

Title	
1	Dallman, M. F., Pecoraro, N., Akana, S. F., La Fleur, S. E., Gomez, F., Houshyar, H., ... & Manalo, S. (2003). Chronic stress and obesity: a new view of “comfort food” . Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 100(20), 11696-11701.

2	Deary, V., Chalder, T., & Sharpe, M. (2007). The cognitive behavioural model of medically unexplained symptoms: a theoretical and empirical review. <i>Clinical psychology review</i> , 27(7), 781-797.
3	Killgore, W. D. (2010). Effects of sleep deprivation on cognition. <i>Progress in brain research</i> , 185, 105-129.
4	Kok, G., Schaalma, H., Ruiter, R. A., Van Empelen, P., & Brug, J. (2004). Intervention mapping: protocol for applying health psychology theory to prevention programmes. <i>Journal of health psychology</i> , 9(1), 85-98.
5	Kobau, R., Seligman, M. E., Peterson, C., Diener, E., Zack, M. M., Chapman, D., & Thompson, W. (2011). Mental health promotion in public health: Perspectives and strategies from positive psychology. <i>American journal of public health</i> , 101(8), e1-e9.
6	Linton, S. J., & Shaw, W. S. (2011). Impact of psychological factors in the experience of pain. <i>Physical therapy</i> , 91(5), 700-711.
7	Lobban, F., Barrowclough, C., & Jones, S. (2003). A review of the role of illness models in severe mental illness. <i>Clinical psychology review</i> , 23(2), 171-196.
8	Martin, L. R., Haskard-Zolnieriek, K. B., & DiMatteo, M. R. (2010). <i>Health behavior change and treatment adherence: Evidence-based guidelines for improving healthcare</i> . Oxford University Press, USA.
9	McEwen, B. S. (2017). Neurobiological and systemic effects of chronic stress. <i>Chronic stress</i> , 1, 2470547017692328.
10	Middleton, K. R., Anton, S. D., & Perri, M. G. (2013). Long-term adherence to health behavior change. <i>American journal of lifestyle medicine</i> , 7(6), 395-404.
11	Perry, B. D., Pollard, R. A., Blakley, T. L., Baker, W. L., & Vigilante, D. (1995). Childhood trauma, the neurobiology of adaptation, and “use - dependent” development of the brain: How “states” become “traits” . <i>Infant mental health journal</i> , 16(4), 271-291.
12	Petrie, K. J., Jago, L. A., & Devcich, D. A. (2007). The role of illness perceptions in patients with medical conditions. <i>Current opinion in psychiatry</i> , 20(2), 163-167.
13	Resnicow, K., DiIorio, C., Soet, J. E., Borrelli, B., Hecht, J., & Ernst, D. (2002). Motivational interviewing in health promotion: it sounds like something is changing. <i>Health Psychology</i> , 21(5), 444.
14	Stroebe, M., Schut, H., & Stroebe, W. (2007). Health outcomes of bereavement. <i>The Lancet</i> , 370(9603), 1960-1973.
15	Turk, D. C., & Okifuji, A. (2002). Psychological factors in chronic pain: evolution and revolution. <i>Journal of consulting and clinical psychology</i> , 70(3), 678.