

STRESS AND COPING  
PSY 795, FALL 2009  
12:25 – 3:10pm Monday Poe 214

INSTRUCTOR: Shevaun D. Neupert, Ph.D.

Office: Poe 732 A

Office hours: Tuesdays 1-3pm & by appointment

E-mail: shevaun\_neupert@ncsu.edu

Telephone: 919.513.7952

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This graduate seminar is designed to review the historical basis and current research on stress and coping. Our concern will generally be psychosocial stress (daily stressors, life events, etc) instead of physical or environmental stress. The emphasis is on current empirical findings and methodology, as opposed to more popular treatments in this area. Students are expected to critically read all of the assigned papers, lead and actively participate in discussions, and write a research proposal on a particular aspect of stress and coping.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Readings will be available via the course website on WebVista (<http://vista.ncsu.edu>).

EVALUATION:

Reaction papers	Due each week	25%
Leading discussion	Date determined first day of class	20%
Research proposal paper	Due December 14 at noon	40% (includes presentation)
Discussion participation	Throughout semester	15%

Overall course grades will conform to the following as designated by the university: A+ (97-100%), A (93-96%), A- (90-92%), B+ (87-89%), B (83-86%), B- (80-82%), C+ (77-79%), C (73-76%), C- (70-72%), D+ (67-69%), D (63-66%), D- (60-62%), F (anything below 60%).

*Reaction papers* are brief (approximately 2 pages) weekly assignments that you will write in preparation for each weekly meeting, after you have read the chapters and articles for the upcoming week. These papers will help you integrate the current readings with previous readings, and will also allow you to point out issues which you would like to address in the discussion of the readings. Critical thinking is an important component of the reaction papers. No article or theory is perfect – it will be your job to point out areas which were not considered (which should be), issues with samples or methods, and any other aspect of the reading which you feel is important to critically evaluate. All reaction papers will be due at the **beginning** of the class meeting. Late papers will be accepted with a 10% per day deduction in points.

*Leading a discussion* entails briefly summarizing as well as integrating the articles and proposing at least four points of discussion. Bringing in concepts from other courses or references is perfectly appropriate, especially if they help draw distinctions and clarify concepts. Each student will lead one class meeting. Selection of who leads a given discussion will be determined during the first class meeting.

The *research proposal paper* will be a 15-20 page paper on stress and coping. The major goal of the paper will be to integrate and synthesize your knowledge of the current state of the field based on the readings from this course, and then critically evaluate what important area(s) remains to be explored. To accomplish this, you will write a literature review which focuses on the relevant readings from this course (you may also bring in other sources) and sets the stage for your research proposal of a novel study idea. The remaining portion of the paper will be a description of your proposed study (sample, measures, procedure), with rationales for each decision included. Each student will give a brief (15-20 minute) presentation on his or her research proposal which will take place during the last class meeting. A more detailed description of the requirements will be distributed later.

*Discussion participation* includes: (a) being in class every week; (b) being well-prepared by having carefully read all the assigned readings; and (c) contributing actively to critical discussions in class about the readings.

#### ATTENDANCE POLICY:

In the event of an excused absence that is accepted by the instructor (see REG02.20.3 for definitions of an excused absence), the student will have one week after returning to class to make up the missed work. Such make-up work shall be at a comparable level of difficulty with the original assignment.

#### INCOMPLETE GRADES:

An incomplete grade may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor as an interim grade for a course in which the student has: (1) completed a major portion of the course with a passing grade, (2) been unable to complete course requirements prior to the end of the term because of extenuating circumstances, and (3) obtained agreement from the instructor and arranged for resolution of the incomplete grade.

#### ACCOMODATIONS:

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. Please register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. For more information on NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation (REG02.20.1).

#### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students will adhere to the University's Code of Student Conduct ([http://www2.ncsu.edu/prr/student\\_services/student\\_conduct/POL445.00.1.htm](http://www2.ncsu.edu/prr/student_services/student_conduct/POL445.00.1.htm)). Consistent with the provisions of this Code, academic dishonesty is defined as cheating, plagiarism, and aiding and abetting others to cheat or plagiarize. It is understood that the student's signature on any exam or assignment means that the student neither gave nor received unauthorized aid. Students who are accused of violations of the Code will be referred to the Coordinator, Office of Student Conduct.

## Schedule of Readings/Topics

*Note: Schedule subject to change/update*

### **August 24, Course Overview and Introduction to the Study of Stress**

Aldwin, C.M. (2007). Why is stress important? *Stress, coping, and development: An integrative perspective*. (pp. 13-22).

Aldwin, C.M. (2007). Definitions of stress. *Stress, coping, and development: An integrative perspective*. (pp. 23-36).

Breznitz, S., & Goldberger, L. (1993). Stress research at a crossroads. In L. Goldberger & S. Breznitz (Eds.), *Handbook of stress: Theoretical and clinical aspects* (pp. 3-6). New York: Free Press.

### **August 31, Types of Stress**

Almeida, D.M. (2005). Resilience and vulnerability to daily stressors assessed via diary methods. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14, 64-68.

Dickerson, S.S., & Kemeny, M.E. (2004). Acute stressors and cortisol responses: A theoretical integration and synthesis of laboratory research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 130, 355-391.

Wheaton, B. (1999). The nature of stressors. In A.V. Horowitz & T.L. Scheid (Eds.), *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health* (pp. 176-197). New York: Cambridge University Press.

### **September 7, NO CLASS: LABOR DAY**

### **September 14, Individual Differences in Stress Exposure, Reporting, and Appraisal**

Eaton, R.J., & Bradley, G. (2008). The role of gender and negative affectivity in stressor appraisal and coping selection. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 15, 94-115.

Pearlin, L.I. (1999). The stress process revisited: Reflections on concepts and their interrelationships. In C.S. Aneshensel & J.C. Phelan (Eds.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health* (pp. 395-415). New York: Plenum.

Turner, R.J., & Avison, W.R. (2003). Status variations in stress exposure: Implications for the interpretation of research on race, socioeconomic status, and gender. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 44, 488-505.

Watson, D., & Pennebaker, J.W. (1989). Health complaints, stress and distress: Exploring the central role of negative affectivity. *Psychological Review*, 96, 234-254.

### **September 21, Models of Coping (continued on next page)**

Aldwin, C.M. (2007). Theoretical approaches to coping. *Stress, coping, and development: An integrative perspective*. (pp. 98-126).

Aspinwall, L.G., & Taylor, S.E. (1997). A stitch in time: Self-regulation and proactive coping. *Psychological Bulletin*, 121, 417-436.

Lazarus, R.S. (1999). Coping. *Stress and emotion: A new synthesis*. (pp. 101-125).

Taylor, S.E., & Stanton, A.L. (2007). Coping resources, coping processes, and mental health. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 3, 377-401.

### **September 28, Developmental Issues**

Aldwin, C.M. (2007). Developmental studies of coping. *Stress, coping, and development: An integrative perspective*. (pp. 271-304).

Graham, J.E., Christian, L.M., & Kiecolt-Glaser, J.K. (2006). Stress, age, and immune function: Toward a lifespan approach. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 29, 389-400.

Kiecolt-Glaser, J.K., & Glaser, R. (2001). Stress and immunity: Age enhances the risks. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 10, 18-21.

Lehman, B.J., Taylor, S.E., Kiefe, C.I., & Seeman, T.E. (2009). Relationship of early life stress and psychological functioning to blood pressure in the CARDIA study. *Health Psychology*, 28, 338-346.

Taylor, S.E., Lerner, J.S., Sage, R.M., Lehman, B.J., & Seeman, T.E. (2004). Early environment, emotions, responses to stress, and health. *Journal of Personality*, 72, 1365-1393.

### **October 5, Methodological Issues**

Aldwin, C.M. (2007). Design and measurement issues in stress research. *Stress, coping, and development: An integrative perspective*. (pp. 55-83).

Aldwin, C.M. (2007). Measurement of coping strategies. *Stress, coping, and development: An integrative perspective*. (pp. 127-160).

Almeida, D.M., Wethington, E., & Kessler, R.C. (2002). The daily inventory of stressful events: An interview-based approach for measuring daily stressors. *Assessment*, 9, 41-55.

Somerfield, M.R., & McCrae, R.R. (2000). Stress and coping research: Methodological challenges, theoretical advances, and clinical applications. *American Psychologist*, 55, 620-625.

Turner, R.J., & Wheaton, B. (1997). Checklist measurement of stressful life events. In S. Cohen, R.C. Kessler, & L.U. Gordon (Eds.), *Measuring stress: A guide for health and social scientists* (pp. 29-58). New York: Oxford University Press.

### **October 12, Coping as a Moderator (continued on next page)**

Neupert, S.D., Almeida, D.M., & Charles, S.T. (2007). Age differences in reactivity to daily stressors: The role of personal control. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 62B, P216-P225.

Taylor, S.E., & Aspinwall, L.G. (1996). Mediating and moderating processes in psychosocial stress: Appraisal, coping, resistance, and vulnerability. In H.B. Kaplan (Ed.), *Psychosocial stress*:

*Perspectives on structure, theory, life-course, and methods* (pp. 71-110). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Thoits, P.A. (2006). Personal agency in the stress process. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 47, 309-323.

Wheaton, B. (1985). Models for the stress-buffering functions of coping resources. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 26, 352-364.

### **October 19, Cognitive Responses and Brain Issues**

McEwen, B.S. (2000). The neurobiology of stress : From serendipity to clinical relevance. *Brain Research*, 886, 172-189.

Lupien, S.J., Fiocco, A., Wan, N., Maheu, F., Lord, C., Schramek, T., & Tue, M.T. (2005). Stress hormones and human memory function across the lifespan. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 30, 225-242.

Kirschbaum, C., Wolf, O.T., May, M., Wippich, W., & Hellhammer, D.H. (1996). Stress and treatment induced elevations of cortisol levels associated with impaired declarative memory in health adults. *Life Sciences*, 58, 1475-1483.

Neupert, S.D., Almedia, D.M., Mroczek, D.K., & Spiro, A. III. (2006). Daily stressors and memory failures in a naturalistic setting: Findings from the VA Normative Aging Study. *Psychology and Aging*, 21, 424-429.

### **October 26, Health and Well-Being Outcomes**

Faulkner, S., & Smith, A. (2009). A prospective diary study of the role of psychological stress and negative mood in the recurrence of herpes simplex virus (HSV1). *Stress and Health*, 25, 179-187.

Kiecolt-Glaser, J.K. (1999). Stress, personal relationships, and immune function: Health implications. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, 13, 61-72.

Murray, V.M., Harrell, A.W., Brody, G.H., Chen, Y., Simons, R.L., Black, A.R., Cutrona, C.E., & Gibbons, F.X. (2008). Long-term effects of stressors on relationship well-being and parenting among rural African American women. *Family Relations*, 57, 117-127.

Wadsworth, M.E., & Santiago, C.D. (2008). Risk and resiliency processes in ethnically diverse families in poverty. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22, 399-410.

### **November 2, Individual Differences in Reactivity: Sex (continued on next page)**

Dedovic, K., Wadiwalla, M., Engert, V., & Pruessner, J.C. (2009). The role of sex and gender socialization in stress reactivity. *Developmental Psychology*, 45, 45-55.

Heffner, K.L., Kiecolt-Glaser, J.K., Loving, T.J., Glaser, R., & Malarkey, W.B. (2004). Spousal support satisfaction as a modifier of physiological responses to marital conflict in younger and older couples. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 27, 233-254.

Taylor, S.E., Klein, L.C., Lewis, B.P., Gruenewald, T.L., Gurung, R.A.R., & Updegraff, J.A. (2000). Biobehavioral responses to stress in females : Tend-and-befriend, not fight-or-flight. *Psychological Review*, 107, 411-429.

### **November 9, Individual Differences in Reactivity: SES**

Grzywacz, J.G., Almeida, D.M., Neupert, S.D., & Ettner, S.L. (2004). Socioeconomic status and health: A micro-level analysis of exposure and vulnerability to daily stressors. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 45, 1-16.

Pearlin, L.I., Schieman, S., Fazio, E.M., & Meersman, S.C. (2005). Stress, health, and the life course: Some conceptual perspectives. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 46, 205-219.

Neupert, S.D., Miller, L.M.S., & Lachman, M.E. (2006). Physiological reactivity to cognitive stressors: Variations by age and socioeconomic status. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 62, 221-235.

Taylor, S.E., Repetti, R.L., & Seeman, T. (1997). Health psychology: What is an unhealthy environment and how does it get under the skin? *Annual Review of Psychology*, 48, 411-447.

### **November 16, Individual Differences in Reactivity: Personality**

Aldwin, C.M. (2007). Stress-related growth and transformational coping. *Stress, coping, and development: An integrative perspective*. (pp. 305-340).

Bolger, N., & Zuckerman, A. (1995). A framework for studying personality in the stress process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 890-902.

Neupert, S.D., Mroczek, D.K., & Spiro, A. III. (2008). Neuroticism moderates the daily relation between stressors and memory failures. *Psychology and Aging*, 23, 287-296.

Seegerstrom, S.C., Taylor, S.E., Kemeny, M.E., & Fahey, J.L. (1998). Optimism is associated with mood, coping, and immune change in response to stress. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 1646-1655.

### **November 23, NO CLASS: GSA CONFERENCE**

### **November 30, Presentations and wrapping up**

### **December 7, Research proposal paper due at noon**

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