

Current Issues Capstone PSYC 190

Fall 2026 Section 05 In Person 3 Unit(s) 08/19/2026 to 12/07/2026 Modified 08/05/2026

Contact Information

Instructor:	Jennifer Gregg, Ph.D.
Class Days/Time:	Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30 - 2:45pm
Class Location:	DMH 167
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Office Hours:	Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 - 1:30pm and by appointment

Course Description and Requisites

Integrative survey of current issues in psychology, how they developed and likely future directions. Completion of the research methods requirement prior to enrollment in this course is recommended.

Prerequisite: PSYC 100W and senior standing.

Co/Prerequisite: PSYC 118 or PSYC 120

Letter Graded

Classroom Protocols

This classroom is a professional environment for you, and should be treated that way. There is a lot of interaction in this class, both with the professor and with your fellow students, so professionalism on your part is very important. **Turn your phone on silent before class begins and never, ever take your phone out during class.**

My office is room DMH 317. If I am not in my office, please email me. I will have regular office hours as posted at the top of this syllabus. If you cannot make one of these times, you can e-mail me or see me after class to set an appointment. I want to be available to you. The best time to catch me is right after class, but let me know if you need to see me at another time. With office hours it is first come, first served. If you do not want to wait or were not able to see me, please set a time with me individually. During office hours we can discuss course questions, psychology as a career, or other topics of interest to you.

Please be respectful of the thoughts, opinions, and experiences of others. Many of the topics in this class may have personal significance to some students. Please make a special effort to listen to one another.

Program Information

Program learning outcomes (PLOs) are skills and knowledge that students will have achieved upon completion of the Psychology BA degree. Each course in our curriculum contributes to one or more of these PLOs. The PLOs for the Psychology BA degree are:

1. Knowledge Base of Psychology. Students will be able to demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.
 2. Research Methods in Psychology. Students will be able to design, implement, and communicate basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretations.
 3. Critical Thinking Skills. Students will be able to use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and a scientific approach to address issues related to behavior and mental processes.
 4. Applications of Psychology. Students will be able to apply psychological principles to individual, interpersonal, group, and societal issues.
- Values in Psychology. Students will value empirical evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and recognize their role and responsibility as a member of society.

Course Goals

The two primary goals of the course are (1) to provide students with a general understanding of the various constructs thought to be related to psychological well-being, and (2) to develop an ability to think critically about these constructs and the empirical study of them.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

CLO1: have a familiarity with the main constructs thought to be related to psychological well-being

CLO2: think critically about the empirical study of constructs related to psychological well-being

CLO3: understand, interpret, and apply knowledge gained from empirical studies of constructs related to psychological well-being

Course Materials

This course will not utilize a textbook, but instead students will utilize peer reviewed studies and readings provided by the instructor for each topic. Reading will be found on the course Canvas page.

Course Requirements and Assignments

The following assignments will make up your grade:

1. Well-Being Activities (14 Total, 20 points each)

In order to allow you to think critically about the readings and assignments for this course, you will do a Well-Being Activity for each topic covered in the class.

Each week you will complete a Well-Being Response Activity. Each Activity includes:

- 1 – performance of an out-of-class intervention designed to improve well-being
- 2 – an in-class brief quiz over assigned readings
- 3 – sharing your experience with the activity (and tying it to the readings) with other students in class

2. Critical Thinking Discussion Participation (100 points)

Every week we will have a critical thinking discussion after everybody has shared. (Note: a presentation is typically a requirement for Psyc 190. Instead of a formal presentation, you will present to the class 14 times by summarizing the articles and your results each week in class and participating in the critical thinking discussion). You will be asked to sign in to class each session, as you cannot participate on a day you are not present.

3. Final Essay Exam (100 points)

There will only be one exam and it will be an essay exam integrating critical thinking topics from the semester

Grading Information

Grading is based on the sum of the following:

14 Well-Being Response Activities, 20 points each (CLO1, CLO2, CLO3)

Lowest WBR Activity dropped

260 points total (72% of grade overall, each activity is worth about 5% of total grade)

+

Critical Thinking Discussion participation (CLO1, CLO2, CLO3)

100 points

+

1 in-class essay exam (CLO1, CLO2, CLO3)

100 points (28% of grade overall)

460 points possible in the course

Breakdown

The grading policy for the course will be the following:

	A = 100 -93	A- = 92.9-90%
B+ = 89.9-87%	B = 86.9-83%	B- = 82.9-80%
C+ = 79.9-77%	C = 76.9-73%	C- = 72.9-70%
D+ = 69.9-67%	D = 66.9-63%	D- = 62.9-60%
F = 59.9-0% Unsatisfactory		

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance,

counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings	Due
week 1			
8-20-26	Overview of the Course		
Week 2			
8/25	Introduction to Well-Being as a Concept and Goal, Defining & Measuring Well-Being	Seligman, M.E.P. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. American Psychologist, 55 (1), 5-14.	Well-Being Activity 1 - Serious Introduction
8/27		AND Mauss, I.B., Tamir, M., Anderson, C.L. & Savino, N. (2010). Can seeking happiness make people unhappy? Paradoxical effects of valuing happiness. Emotion, 11, 807-815.	
Week 3			

9/1		Fredrickson, B.L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden and build theory of positive emotions. <i>American Psychologist</i>, 56, 218-226. AND Burton, C. M., & King, L. A. (2004). The health benefits of writing about intensely positive experiences. <i>Journal of research in personality</i>, 38(2), 150-163.	Well-Being Activity 2 – Intensely Positive Experiences Intervention
9/3			
Week 4			
9/8	Strengths-Based Approach	Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2009). Character strengths: Research and practice. <i>Journal of college and character</i>, 10(4), 1-10. AND Proyer, Gander, Wellenzohn, & Ruch (2015). Strengths-based positive psychology interventions: a randomized placebo-controlled online trial on long-term effects for a signature strengths- vs. a lesser strengths-intervention. <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>.	Well-Being Activity 3 – Strengths in a new way Intervention
9/10			
Week 5			

9/15	Counting blessings	Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: an experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. <i>Journal of personality and social psychology</i> , 84(2), 377.	Well-Being Activity 4 – Counting Blessings Intervention
9/17		AND Kerry, N., Chhabra, R., & Clifton, J. D. (2023). Being Thankful for what you have: a systematic review of evidence for the effect of gratitude on life satisfaction. <i>Psychology Research and Behavior Management</i> , 4799-4816.	
Week 6			
9/22	Gratitude	Algoe, S.B. (2012), Find, Remind, and Bind: The Functions of Gratitude in Everyday Relationships. <i>Social and Personality Psychology Compass</i> , 6: 455-469	Well-Being Activity 5 – Gratitude Letter Intervention
9/24		AND Regan, A., Walsh, L. C., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2023). Are some ways of expressing gratitude more beneficial than others? Results from a randomized controlled experiment. <i>Affective Science</i> , 4(1), 72-81.	
Week 7			

9/29	Awe	Ballew, M. T., & Omoto, A. M. (2018). Absorption: How Nature Experiences Promote Awe and Other Positive Emotions. <i>Ecopsychology</i>, 10(1), 26-35. AND Tyrväinen, L., Ojala, A., Korpela, K., Lanki, T., Tsunetsugu, Y., & Kagawa, T. (2014). The influence of urban green environments on stress relief measures: A field experiment. <i>Journal of Environmental Psychology</i>, 38, 1-9.	Well-Being Activity 6 – Nature Immersion Intervention
10/1			
Week 8			
10/6	Generosity	Dunn, E., Aknin, L.B. & Norton, M.I. (2008). Spending money on others promotes happiness. <i>Science</i>, 319, 1687. AND Lyubomirsky, S, Sheldon, and Schkade. "Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change." <i>Review of General Psychology</i> 9.2 (2005): 111.	Well-Being Activity 7 – Random Acts of Kindness Intervention
10/8			
Week 9			

10/13	Mindfulness	Brown, K. W., Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. <i>Journal of Personality & Social Psychology</i> , 84, 822-848.	Well-Being Activity 8 – Mindfulness Meditation Intervention
10/15		AND Oman, D., Shapiro, S. L., Thoresen, C. E., Plante, T. G., & Flinders, T. (2008). Meditation lowers stress and supports forgiveness among college students: A randomized controlled trial. <i>Journal of American College Health</i> , 56(5), 569-578.	
Week 10			
10/20		Fredrickson, B. L., Cohn, M. A., Coffey, K. A., Pek, J., & Finkel, S. M. (2008). Open hearts build lives: positive emotions, induced through loving-kindness meditation, build consequential personal resources. <i>Journal of personality and social psychology</i> , 95(5), 1045.	Well-Being Activity 9 – Loving Kindness Meditation Intervention
10/22	Meditation: Loving Kindness		
Week 11			

10/27	Forgiveness	McCullough, Michael E., Lindsey M. Root, and Adam D. Cohen. "Writing about the benefits of an interpersonal transgression facilitates forgiveness." <i>Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology</i> 74.5 (2006): 887.	Well-Being Activity 10– Finding Benefits Intervention
10/29		AND McNulty, J. K., & Fincham, F. D. (2012). Beyond positive psychology? Toward a contextual view of psychological processes and well-being. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 67(2), 101..	
Week 12			
11/3	Meaning and Values	Ryan, R.M. & Deci, E.L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 55, 68-78.	Well-Being Activity 11 – Best Future Self Intervention
11/5		AND King, L. A. (2001). The health benefits of writing about life goals. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i> , 27(7), 798-807.	
Week 13			

11/10	Savoring	Quoidbach, J., & Dunn, E. W. (2013). Give it up: A strategy for combating hedonic adaptation. <i>Social Psychological and Personality Science</i>, 4(5), 563-568. AND Armenta, C., Bao, K. J., Lyubomirsky, S., & Sheldon, K. M. (2014). Is lasting change possible? Lessons from the hedonic adaptation prevention model. In <i>Stability of happiness</i> (pp. 57-74). Academic Press.	Well-Being Activity 12 – Give it up Intervention
11/12			
Week 14			
11/17	Savoring continued	Quoidbach, J., & Dunn, E. W. (2013). Give it up: A strategy for combating hedonic adaptation. <i>Social Psychological and Personality Science</i>, 4(5), 563-568. AND Armenta, C., Bao, K. J., Lyubomirsky, S., & Sheldon, K. M. (2014). Is lasting change possible? Lessons from the hedonic adaptation prevention model. In <i>Stability of happiness</i> (pp. 57-74). Academic Press.	Well-Being Activity 12 – Give it up Intervention
11/19			

Week 15			
11/24	Social Connection	Epley, N., & Schroeder, J. (2014). Mistakenly seeking solitude. Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 143(5), 1980.	Well-Being Activity 13 – Small Talk Intervention
11/26		Diener, E. & Seligman, M.E.P. (2002). Very happy people. Psychological Science, 13, 81-84.	
Week 16			
12/1	Social Relationships & Love	Aron, A., Melinat, E., Aron, E. N., Vallone, R. D., & Bator, R. J. (1997). The experimental generation of interpersonal closeness: A procedure and some preliminary findings. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 23(4), 363-377.	Well-Being Activity 14 – Love Map Intervention
12/3		AND Holt-Lunstad J., Smith, T. B., & Layton, J. B. (2010) Social relationships and mortality risk: A meta-analytic review. PLoS Med 7(7)	

12/15	1:00 - 3:00pm	final exam	
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