

Wise Interventions (Psych 138/238; PubPol 238)

Instructor: Greg Walton
 Pronouns: He/him
gwalton@stanford.edu

Website/Forum: On Canvas, once you have registered

Class meets: Monday and Wednesday 1:30-2:50 pm, in Building 380-380Y

Office Hours: By appointment (Building 420, Room 246)

Enrollment Limit: 60 students

Ways Certification: Social Inquiry

Welcome!

This course is intended for upper-year undergraduates and for graduate students, especially students with an interest in psychology and in how psychological principles can be used to make the world a better place. No background in psychology is required. In fact, expertise in other areas is also valuable. Psychology majors or students who have taken courses in social psychology may find that they have been exposed to some of the material before but I expect you will see this course cover that material in new ways.





Writing-in-the-Major Requirement

This course fulfills the Writing-in-the-Major requirement for psychology majors.

Teaching Team

We are lucky to have five wonderful TAs for this course. Here is more about them, and me:

Instructor	Research and Fun Facts
Ayo Dada (Head TA) 	<p><i>Ayo's (he/him) research focuses on communities with gender disparities in education and how interventions aligned to the people's cultural values (e.g., the desire to leave a legacy for their grandchildren) could help parents recognize the importance of keeping their daughters in school. He is finding that parents who are led to think of the legacy they could leave for their grandchildren report more willingness to invest in education for their daughters.</i></p> <p>Contact: ayo.dada@stanford.edu</p>
Juliane Gruß (TA) 	<p><i>Juliane Gruß (she/her) is a senior majoring in Psychology with minors in International Relations and Modern Languages. Originally from Germany, she now resides on the island of Mallorca, Spain. Her work centers on advancing mental health awareness and accessibility, with a focus on underserved communities. As the co-founder of Mallorca's first mental health campaign, she is dedicated to reducing stigma and fostering a deeper understanding of mental health issues.</i></p> <p>Contact: gruju@stanford.edu</p>

<p>Stacia King (TA)</p> 	<p><i>Stacia (she/her) is a current 4th year PhD student in the psychology department. Lansing, MI is her hometown, and she is a proud alumna of the illustrious Howard University. Stacia is interested in the use of punishment in American society, as well as the topic of intergroup relations. Her research focuses on what motivates people away from punitive strategies to more restorative and transformative solutions. As a Stanford SPARQ affiliate, she studies the impact of television on intergroup relations and assesses the scope of televisual media as an interventive tool. Fun Fact: She apparently lives for adventure and has been both scuba and sky diving.</i></p> <p>Contact: staciak@stanford.edu</p>
<p>Daniel Ogunbamowo (TA)</p> 	<p><i>Daniel (he/him) received his BA in Interdisciplinary Studies (Psychology and Neuroscience) and Political Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After college, he worked as a project coordinator overseeing a large social network and well-being study. He is currently a 2nd year PhD student in the Department of Psychology interested in using computational neuroscience methods to study psychopathology and affective processes. In his free time, he enjoys trying out new recipes in the kitchen and watching his childhood sports team, Liverpool FC.</i></p> <p>Contact: dogun@stanford.edu</p>
<p>Sophia Wang (TA)</p> 	<p><i>Sophia (she/her) is a Junior majoring in Psychology with a minor in Human Biology and Theatre and Performance Studies. Being from China, she is interested in how culture affects people's psychology and how interventions can help improve lives of people in rural China. She is also interested in studying human emotions. Outside of Psychology, she loves watching movies, acting, traveling, learning French, and doing Wushu.</i></p> <p>Contact: sophiaw4@stanford.edu</p>
<p>Greg Walton (Professor)</p> 	<p><i>My research explores psychological processes that contribute to major social problems, especially processes that undermine belonging and contribute to inequality in education, and psychologically “wise” interventions that can address these processes and help people flourish. To learn more about me and my research, go here: http://gregorywalton-stanford.weebly.com/.</i></p> <p><i>I graduated from Stanford with A. B. in 2000, where I majored in philosophy and minored in psychology (and did an honors thesis in psychology). I am also a direct descendant of a woman convicted of being a witch and killed in the Salem Witch Trials. My wife (also Stanford class of 2000) and I and our two kids, Lucy and Oliver, live on campus.</i></p>

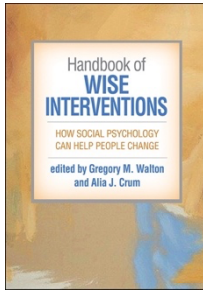
For course logistics, questions about assignments, and related matters, the TA who leads your section should be your first point of contact. Ask your TA how to schedule meetings with them (by appointment, via youcanbook.me, regular office hours). Ayo Dada is the head TA for the class. You may always contact him, Professor Walton, or any of us.

Land

We recognize that Stanford sits on the ancestral land of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. This land is of great importance to the Ohlone people, and has been since time immemorial. Consistent with our values of community and diversity, we have a responsibility to acknowledge, honor and make visible the university's relationship to Native peoples.

MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THE CLASS

Readings



The course textbook is the *Handbook of Wise Interventions: How Social Psychology Can Help People Change*. An online version is available for free through the Stanford library. You can also get a print copy at the bookstore, from the publisher's website (<https://www.guilford.com/books/Handbook-of-Wise-Interventions/Walton-Crum/9781462543830>), or on Amazon. Additional readings will be posted on Canvas.

Readings will be posted on Canvas. A reading schedule is below. You are expected to do the readings before class. Readings are mandatory and will be on the tests (whether discussed in class or not).

Class Sessions

Format. This class is designed for interactivity, with lecture interspersed with questions, dialogue, and small- and large-group conversations.

How can I learn best? First, pay attention and stay engaged. Second, what you see on slides will generally be the structure of a study or background, such as methods and results. But often the most important take-aways are what is said. *Please review the discussion of the goals of the tests below.* Our focus is not on memorization but on conceptual understanding.

Laptop policy. To help everyone focus, we will have no laptops during class. Please bring paper and pencil for notes, or another kind of handwriting device. There is strong evidence this can support learning and engagement. For example:

- Ravizza and colleagues (“Logged In and Zoned Out,” 2016 *Psych Sci*) show that, when laptops are permitted, students in psych courses often use laptops for non-academic purposes and this negatively predicts classroom performance.
- Sana and colleagues (“Laptop Multitasking Hinders Classroom Learning for Both Users and Nearby Peers,” 2013 *Computers & Education*) show that multitasking with laptop also distracts classmates, and undermines their learning too.
- Mueller & Oppenheimer (“The Pen is Mightier Than the Keyboard,” 2014 *Psych Sci*) show that taking notes with longhand promotes learning better than taking notes on a laptop, it seems because longhand forces you to summarize and consolidate (i.e., to think).
- Kalkstein and colleagues (“Social Norms Govern What Behaviors Come to Mind—And What Do Not,” 2022 *JPS*) show that students struggle to regulate their laptop use in class—but almost universally value course policies that prohibit laptops once they are implemented, because they find these policies help them focus, be present, and engage.

If you need an exception, please let us know.

Lecture slides. Slides will be posted after class, but not before.

Section

Section is mandatory and contributes to your final grade. In section you will review and discuss readings and lectures, form research groups, present and discuss research proposal and provide helpful, critical feedback to other students when they present their proposals.

The section times are:

- Sophia: Wednesdays at 3:30-4:20 pm in 160-326
- Ayo: Wednesdays at 5:30-6:20 pm in 100-101K
- Daniel: Thursdays at 10:30-11:20 am in Green Earth Sciences 131
- Juliane: Thursdays at 12:30-1:50 pm in 160-319
- Stacia: Thursdays at 4:30-5:20 pm in 300-303

Sign up for section on Canvas, by Wednesday, January 8. The section times are set. If you cannot make any of the section times, please do not take the course. The enrollment limit for each section is 12. If some sections are oversubscribed and others under, we will ask if students can switch.

Certain sections will begin with a 7-minute quiz on the recent readings. Generally, this will be composed of 1 or at most 2 open-ended questions. The reading quiz will cover the readings for the most recent two lectures that week. The purpose of this quiz is to give you the chance to organize your thoughts and focus the discussion. It will contribute to your section grade.

Assignments and Grading

Grading. Grades will be determined as follows:

	<i>% of Final Grade</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Grant Topic	5%	January 13
Test 1	15%	February 5
Letter of Intent for Grant	10%	February 12
LOI Review	15%	February 21
Full Grant Proposal	20%	March 7
Test 2	20%	March 19
Final Presentation	5%	[Last section]
Section Participation	10%	-

Late Policy. Without an adequate excuse, late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a grade point each day (a perfect assignment 1 day late receives an A-; 2 days late a B+, etc.).

Accommodations. Students who have a disability that may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class, must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). The OAE will evaluate the request with required

documentation, recommend appropriate accommodations, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the OAE as soon as possible; timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations. **Please share your OAE letter here:** <https://forms.gle/PYbG7NQVysiwYLK86>

Grant Proposal Assignment. For details of this assignment, the “Grant Proposal” document.

Tests.

Why do we have tests? (And why we value academic integrity). In this class, we fully believe in creating a classroom environment in which everyone belongs and can learn and grow. Sometimes students have asked, then, “Why do we have tests.” The answer is simple: To help you learn and grow. The best tests are an opportunity for a student to focus on challenging material, to give it your full attention, to consolidate your learning across areas, to gain confidence and pride in what you have learned, and to find out what you don’t fully understand yet.

That means that, on rare occasion when a student takes a short cut on a test or other assignment, whether that act is a formal violation of the syllabus or Honor Code or not, it is not just disrespectful toward your fellow students (even when a course is not curved, as is the case in this course, because it undermines the learning community) or a teaching team (your TAs will stay up until the wee hours grading your tests). Most important, it is disrespectful to yourself as a learner. It denies you those opportunities.

Our goal in raising these issues is to reaffirm the collective commitment we all make to each other at Stanford to create an academic environment that supports everyone in their learning and growth. The Honor Code was created by students, staff, and faculty working together, and it has been affirmed and revised for many years. The Honor Code is by us and for us. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves of the reasons we make this commitment, the values and goals that lie behind it, and reaffirm that commitment.

So please take the opportunity these tests present you. And if there are ways we can improve these tests, so they can better support your learning, please let us know.

When and what is covered? There will be two tests. Both will be administered in class.

- Test 1 is February 5. It will cover material through February 3.
- Test 2 is March 19. It will cover material through March 12, but may also include some material from the first half of the course.

For both tests, all material, from both lectures and readings, is fair game, including material covered in one context but not the other.

What is the format? Both tests will feature (1) short identifications and (2) short essays. There will be no multiple choice. For short identifications, you will receive a term, concept, or topic of investigation and be asked to show your understanding by (a) identifying/defining

it, (b) explaining its significance, (c) citing and describing research, where relevant, and (d) explaining the psychological process at play, where relevant. For short essays, you will receive a multipart question to answer in a narrative form. Be sure to cite and describe relevant research, and describe the key psychological processes.

The tests are traditional handwritten, bluebook tests. No technology, books, or references are permitted.

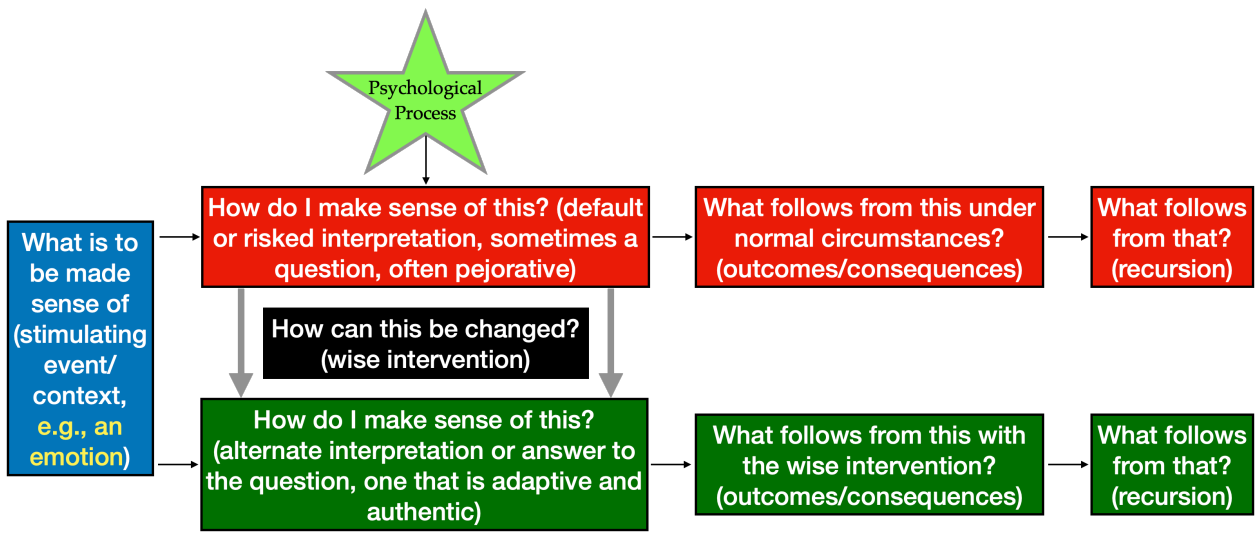
What is valued on the tests and how can I study effectively for them? This class is designed to push your thinking—to understand what makes a study and a given intervention “wise,” how one wise intervention relates to others, and how you can apply this psychological wisdom to new contexts. It’s essential to understand the critical psychological processes.

Accordingly, while the tests and your responses in them will refer to particular studies and interventions we have learned about in class, they will also ask you to go beyond memorizing and reproducing existing facts that were on the lecture slides. For instance, you may be asked to describe how two interventions relate to one each other, how multiple interventions could apply to one problem and which you think might be more effective and why, or whether an intervention examined in one context might be effective or not in another context and why.

In some psychology classes, tests, especially early tests, can focus on memorizing what happened in each study while conceptual material comes later. In this class, the tests will be conceptual and broad-based from the beginning.

As a way to push your thinking—and as a tip for studying—consider the figure below (from Class 1). For each study we discuss, can you complete each of the boxes (some will be more relevant in some studies than others)? When you do, can you tell the “story” the study tells about people’s experience and behavior, in both typical conditions and with the intervention?

What’s a “psychological process”? How does a “wise” intervention affect it?



RESOURCES TO HELP YOU LEARN

Online Repositories of Psychological Wise Interventions

Wiseinterventions.org. This website summarizes more than 325 interventions drawn from Walton & Wilson (2018). If you want to learn more about a specific intervention, type of intervention, or problem space, play with this.

SPARQ Solutions Catalog. This website provides accessible and slightly longer summaries of a smaller number of interventions (<https://sparq.stanford.edu/solutions>).

Resources to Help You Write Better

Hume Writing Center. The Hume Center for Writing and Speaking works with Stanford students taking WIM classes and any course that includes writing assignments. In free one-to-one sessions, trained writing consultants help students brainstorm and get started on assignments; learn strategies for revising, editing, and proofreading; and improve organization, flow, and argumentation. We also have digital media consultants who work with students to develop strategies to improve visual and multimodal communication in media such as research posters and PowerPoint and oral communication tutors to help students prepare or refine a presentation. Students can make an appointment with a lecturer or advanced graduate student consultant or with an undergraduate peer tutor. To see the Center's hours, to book an appointment, or to learn about drop-in tutoring, please visit the Hume Center website at <http://hume.stanford.edu>.

How To Write Better. This 1-page document from SPARQshop provides some tips about how to make your writing more powerful and more persuasive. Available on Canvas.

Draft No. 4 by John McPhee. This wonderful piece by the famed author and long-time Princeton writing instructor shares the difficulties and aggravations of writing first drafts—and their importance, as all problems you identify in writing the first draft, which can feel so frustrating, are part of the process of refining your work in a second draft. Available on Canvas.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
Important Dates and Deadlines

Jan 13 - **Due** Grant Topic by 5pm on Canvas

Jan 24 - **Due** Research Group Division of Labor by 5pm on Canvas

Feb 5 - Test #1 (in class)

Feb 12 - **Due** Letter of Intent by 5pm on Canvas

Feb 14 - *Receive* LOI to review by 5pm

Feb 21 - **Due** LOI Review by 5pm on Canvas

Feb 24 - *Receive* LOIs and reviewer and TA comments by 5pm on Canvas

March 7 - **Due** Final Grant Proposal and Final Presentation Slide by 5pm on Canvas

March 14 - **Due** Full Circle Evaluation at 5pm on Canvas

March 19 1 - Test #2 (final exam period)

COURSE SCHEDULE

A general reading tip: Read older papers first. Sometimes more recent papers refer to prior papers and, when this is the case, you'll know what they're talking about.

Note: We may revise reading assignments as class proceeds.

		Lecture and Readings	Section
Week 1	Jan 6	<p><u>Introduction</u> Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Social problems we care about • Definitions: What is “wise”? What is a “psychological process”? What is “recursion”? • Course overview 	Get to know each other; Reading reactions
	Jan 8	<p><u>Three Approaches to Social Problems</u> Reading(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McCord (1978). A thirty-year follow-up of treatment effects. • Walton & Wilson (2018). Wise interventions, pages 617-625. <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective change in situations • Objective change in people • Psychologically wise interventions change <i>meanings</i> 	
Week 2	Jan 13	<p><u>Psychologically Wise Interventions</u> Reading(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lewin (1958). Group decision and social change. • Walton & Wilson (2018). Wise interventions, pages 625-640. <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweetmeats • Toxic questions • Three needs: To make sense of matters reasonably, to belong and for self-integrity. • Intervening <i>on</i> vs. intervening <i>with</i>; <i>offering</i> ideas <p>**ASSIGNMENT DUE 1/13 by 5 pm on Canvas**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant Topic 	Assigned to research work groups; Read group members' grant topic assignment; Discuss common interests.
	Jan 15	<p><u>Making Sense of Selves I: Self-Identity (Who Am I?)</u> Reading(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bryan, Walton, Rogers, & Dweck (2011). Motivating voter turnout by invoking the self. • Hameiri, Porat, Bar-Tal, & Halperin (2016). Moderating attitudes in times of violence through paradoxical thinking intervention. <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attribution theory: People as lay scientists trying to figure things out as best they can. • Who am I? Who do I want to be? Who do I not want to be? 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications for prosocial behavior and achievement, civic engagement, health, and intergroup attitudes and relationships 	
Week 3	Jan 20	<u>No Class (Happy MLK Day!)</u>	Reading reactions; Meet with research group, discuss Division of Labor; Plan intervention
	Jan 22	<u>Making Sense of Selves II: Self-Identity (How Might I Be Seen?)</u> Reading(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bauer, Boemelbug, & Walton (2021). Resourceful actors, not weak victims: Reframing refugees' stigmatized identity enhances long-term academic engagement. • Yeager et al. (2014). Breaking the cycle of mistrust: Wise interventions to provide critical feedback across the racial divide. Themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotype threat • Wise feedback • Identity reframing ** ASSIGNMENT DUE (1/24 by 5 pm on Canvas)** <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Group Division of Labor 	
Week 4	Jan 27	<u>Making Sense of Selves III: Of Emotions and Internal States</u> Reading(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Handbook of Wise Interventions</i> (Chapters 9 [Crum et al.] and 10 [Jamieson & Hangen]) Themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test anxiety reframed • Expressive writing, achievement, and health 	Reading reactions; Meet with research group; Plan intervention
	Jan 29	<u>Making Sense of Selves IV: Of Goals (Special Guest Lecturer: Ayo Dada!)</u> Reading(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Handbook of Wise Interventions</i> (Chapter 11 [Bryan]) Themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind me again, what were my goals? Goal priming to promote safe sex and healthy eating • How and when will I accomplish my goals? Flu shots and studying • What are <i>my</i> goals? Adolescent healthy eating. Parents' investment in daughters' education in northern Nigeria 	
Week 5	Feb 3	<u>Making Sense of Selves V: Of Control and the Possibility of Change</u> Reading(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Langer & Rodin (1976). The effects of choice and enhanced personal responsibility for the aged: A field experiment in an institutional setting. • <i>Handbook of Wise Interventions</i> (Chapter 1 [Dweck]) Themes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I control the things that matter to me? Improving retirement homes • Changing attributions for academic setbacks to raise achievement 	Meet with research group, finish LOI

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth mindsets to promote achievement (and reduce school bullying, improve health, and lose weight) 	
	Feb 5	<p><u>No Lecture: Test 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test 1 	
Week 6	Feb 10	<p><u>Making Sense of Other People and Groups</u></p> <p>Reading(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Handbook of Wise Interventions</i> (Chapter 17 [Marigold]) <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do we expect of others? Implications for school achievement How am I seen? Improving achievement and dating relationships How do I make sense of other people and social groups? Implications for interpersonal and intergroup relationships 	Reading reactions and discussion; Meet with research group.
	Feb 12	<p><u>Making Sense of Personal and Social Experiences I: Personal experiences at school and the doctor's office.</u></p> <p>Reading(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crum, Leibowitz, & Verghese (2017). Making mindsets matter? Howe et al. (2019). Changing patient mindsets about non-life-threatening symptoms during oral immunotherapy: A randomized controlled trial. <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instilling meaning in school and at work Adaptive meanings of health-relevant experiences <p>**ASSIGNMENT DUE (2/12 by 5 pm on Canvas)**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter of Intent <p>**RECEIVE LOI TO REVIEW (2/14 by 5pm)**</p>	
Week 7	Feb 17	<u>No Class (Happy President's Day!)</u>	Reading reactions and discussion; Meet with research group.
	Feb 19	<p><u>Making Sense of Personal and Social Experiences II: Conflict</u></p> <p>Reading(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bugental et al. (2002). A cognitive approach to child abuse prevention <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With a difficult baby With a spouse you're fighting with With a misbehaving student <p>**ASSIGNMENT DUE (2/21 by 5 pm on Canvas)**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LOI Review 	
Week 8	Feb 24	<p><u>The Need to Belong I: Leveraging Social Norms and Identity Processes</u></p> <p>Reading(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Handbook of Wise Interventions</i> (Chapters 18 [Nolan et al.] and 19 [Sparkman]) <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need to belong 	Reading reactions and discussion; Meet with

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leveraging the need to belong to motivate positive behaviors; Applications to sustainability and prosocial behavior To license positive behaviors; Sweetmeats Overcoming negative norms: Delicensing misbehavior, altering misperceived norms, changing norms, and critiquing norms; Applications to crime reduction, drinking, eating and body image <p>**ASSIGNMENT RETURNED (2/24 by 5 pm on Canvas)**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LOI with TA and reviewer comments 	research group.
	Feb 26	<p><u>The Need to Belong II: Bolstering Belonging and Remediating Specific Threats to Belonging</u></p> <p>Reading(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walton et al. (2021). Lifting the bar. A relationship-orienting intervention reduces recidivism among children reentering school from juvenile detention. <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Happiness and social relationships Academic probation Anti-suicide caring notes Supporting teacher-student relationships 	
Week 9	March 3	<p><u>The Need to Belong III: Belonging Mindsets</u></p> <p>Reading(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Handbook of Wise Interventions</i> (Chapter 2 [Walton & Brady]) <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belonging uncertainty and inequality in school achievement 	Reading reactions and discussion; Meet with research group.
	March 5	<p><u>The Need for Self-Integrity I: Provoking Threat to Motivate Positive Attitude or Behavior Change</u></p> <p>Reading(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stone et al. (1994). Inducing hypocrisy as a means of encouraging young adults to use condoms. Rokeach (1971). Long-range experimental modification of values, attitudes, and behavior. <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cognitive dissonance Leveraging dissonance to improve honesty, health, and intergroup attitudes <p>**ASSIGNMENT DUE (3/7 by 5 pm on Canvas)**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Grant Proposal and Final Presentation Slide 	
Week 10	March 10	<p><u>The Need for Self-Integrity II: Reducing Threat to Help People Flourish</u></p> <p>Reading(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Handbook of Wise Interventions</i> (Chapter 3 [Sherman et al.]) <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Values affirmation Using affirmation to promote achievement and health 	Final presentations

	March 12	<u>Understanding and Changing Contexts</u> Reading(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bryan, Tipton, & Yeager (2021). Behavioural science is unlikely to change the world without a heterogeneity revolution. • Walton & Yeager (2020). Seed and soil: Psychological affordances in contexts help to explain where wise interventions succeed and fail. <i>Themes</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer norms and bullying in school • Psychological affordances • Empowering teachers to improve learning environments • Wrap up <p>**ASSIGNMENT DUE (3/14 at 5 pm via Qualtrics survey)**</p> Full Circle Evaluation	
Week 11	March 19	<u>Test 2</u> 3:30-6:30 PM	No section