

Designing Psychologically Wise Interventions Psychology 244

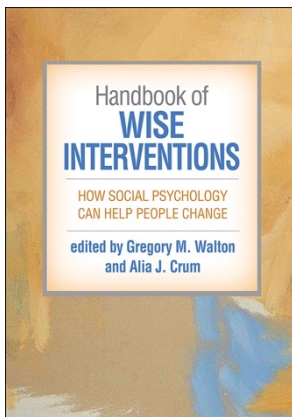
Instructors:	Greg Walton and Alia Crum Email: gwalton@stanford.edu and crum@stanford.edu
Website/Forum:	On Canvas
Class meets:	Thursdays 3-4:20 in Encina West 208
Grading:	Letter grades or credit/no credit
Enrollment:	Restricted to graduate students in psychology or in related fields actively doing intervention-based work.

Course Objectives

As Kurt Lewin says, “Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice.” How can you address the problems you care about through psychological science? Topics will address: What is a wise intervention? When are you ready to implement one (what do you need to know first and how can you learn it)? How can you make your intervention impactful and scalable? How can you assess impacts and key processes, especially over time? Where should you embed your intervention and what role do contexts play?

This class is based on student discussion and leadership. We look forward to a high level of involvement from all students. We would like students to (auditors are expected to do #1):

1. Attend all sessions, having done the readings and being ready to discuss them.
2. Prepare a short description (1-3 pages) of the problem area you are working in, what intervention you are building or envisioning and what psychological research it builds on. Comment specifically on what you have done so far, where you are trying to get, and where you are stuck now or what you are working on. *Be sure to be clear where you most want feedback.* This is due Tuesday October 3 at 5 pm and will be read by class members.
3. Comment and give feedback on at least three classmates’ short descriptions (#2), with particular focus on asking questions or suggesting ideas relevant to the area where the author most wants feedback. Students will be asked to read and provide written feedback to the student on the day they are workshopping their intervention (due midnight the day before their workshop session but can be refined/added to after the session).
4. Post a short paper on Canvas by Thursday December 14. Please upload to Canvas. This ~5-page paper should describe your take aways from the course. How has your thinking about the problem space and intervention developed? What have you learned? What will you do next and why?



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 on Amazon or from the publisher’s website. Links for additional readings provided below.

Laptop Policy: To facilitate discussion, we request that students refrain from using laptops except where necessary.

Course Schedule and Readings

Introductions

Week 1: Thursday, September 28: What Are Wise Interventions?

Read:

- [Walton & Wilson \(2018\)](#)
- *Handbook*, Introduction

Week 2: Thursday, October 5: Where Are You Now?

Due:

- A 1–3-page description of where you are. Please add your name with a link to a Word or Google Doc with your description to the class Google Doc main page by Tuesday October 3 at 5 pm.
- Read and comment on a subset (3-4) of students' descriptions of where they are through the Google Doc. Due at midnight the day before the workshop session but can be refined by the end of the week.

In Class:

- Each student briefly shares their problem space and problem. Full-group discussion and/or opportunities for all to contribute to comments on the Google Doc.
- Based on project stage, student and class needs, students choose a week when they will workshop their intervention with the rest of class.

Foundational Topics:

Each Foundational Topic week we will divide our time in class as follows:

1. Discuss the readings and relevant higher order lessons (≈ 50 min)
2. Give the student(s) signed up for this week space to describe in more detail their circumstance relevant to the topic at hand and discuss this problem space as a group (≈ 30 min)

Week 3: Thursday, October 12: Identifying the Psychological Process (Greg out/online)

Read:

- *Handbook* Chapters 2 and 9, with particular attention to the sections on “Psychological Processes”

Student Workshop 1: _____
 Feedback-Giver 1: _____
 Feedback-Giver 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 3: _____

Week 4: Thursday, October 19: Independent Variables

Reread:

- *Handbook* Chapters 2 and 9 on “Intervention Content and Implementation”

Read:

- *Handbook* Chapter 1 with particular attention to “Intervention Content and Implementation”

Student Workshop 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 1: _____

Feedback-Giver 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 3: _____

Week 5: Thursday, October 26: Special Issues in Independent Variables: Meta-Cognition

Read:

- *Handbook* Chapter 3 with particular attention to “Intervention Content and Implementation,”
- [Crum et al. \(2023\)](#)
- [Silverman et al. \(2013\)](#)

Optional additional readings relevant to meta-cognition:

Sherman et al. (2009); Walton et al. (2015); Yeager, Romero et al. (2016)

Student Workshop 3: _____
 Feedback-Giver 1: _____
 Feedback-Giver 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 3: _____

Week 6: Thursday, November 2: Special Issues in Independent Variables: Values Alignment and Sidelining Bias

Read:

- *Handbook* Chapters 11 and 14 with particular attention to “Psychological Processes” and “Intervention Content and Implementation,”
- [Okonofua et al. \(2022\)](#)

Student Workshop 4: _____
 Feedback-Giver 1: _____
 Feedback-Giver 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 3: _____

Week 7: Thursday, November 9: Special Issues in Independent Variables: When Less is More

Read:

- *Handbook* Chapters 16 and 17 with particular attention to “Psychological Processes” and “Intervention Content and Implementation”
- [Zion et al. \(2023\)](#); optional: [link to intervention content and films](#)

Student Workshop 5: _____
 Feedback-Giver 1: _____
 Feedback-Giver 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 3: _____

Week 8: Thursday, November 16: Getting to Scale, Fitting, and Affordances

Reread:

- *Handbook* Chapter 1 on “Empirical Evidence”

Read:

- *Handbook* Chapters 4 and 12 particularly on “Intervention Content and Implementation”
- [Walton et al. \(2023\)](#)
- [Walton & Yeager \(2020\)](#)

Student Workshop 6: _____
 Feedback-Giver 1: _____
 Feedback-Giver 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 3: _____

Week 9: Thursday, November 30: Student Workshops

Full class devoted to workshopping student projects with insights from earlier weeks.

Student Workshop 7: _____
 Feedback-Giver 1: _____
 Feedback-Giver 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 3: _____
 Student Workshop 8: _____
 Feedback-Giver 1: _____
 Feedback-Giver 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 3: _____
 Student Workshop 9: _____
 Feedback-Giver 1: _____
 Feedback-Giver 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 3: _____

Week 10: Thursday, December 7: Student Workshops

Full class devoted to workshopping student projects with insights from earlier weeks.

Student Workshop 10: _____
 Feedback-Giver 1: _____
 Feedback-Giver 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 3: _____
 Student Workshop 11: _____
 Feedback-Giver 1: _____
 Feedback-Giver 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 3: _____
 Student Workshop 12: _____
 Feedback-Giver 1: _____
 Feedback-Giver 2: _____
 Feedback-Giver 3: _____

Final Papers:

Due:

- Your ~5-page paper describing what you have learned and where you are going. Due to Canvas by Thursday December 14th.