Instructor: Prof. Brian Galla, Ph.D.
Office: 5940 Posvar Hall
Phone: (412) 648-7248
Email: gallabri@pitt.edu (I will respond to all messages within 48 hours)
Office Hours: by appointment

“I can resist everything except temptation.”
~Oscar Wilde

“Educate your children to self-control, to the habit of holding passion and prejudice and evil tendencies subject to an upright and reasoning will, and you have done much to abolish misery from their future and crimes from society.”
~Benjamin Franklin

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Self-regulation—known colloquially as “willpower”—is the process by which we guide our thoughts, emotions, and behavior in the service of valued goals. The capacity for self-regulation has been called “the greatest human strength,” yet people of all ages struggle to exercise self-regulation in their daily life. This course provides a comprehensive overview of psychological theory and research on self-regulation. It also covers the philosophical origins of self-regulation, in addition to research from related disciplines, including behavioral economics, education, cognitive science, and neuroscience. We will also consider the development of self-regulation and its expression in multiple contexts. Finally, we examine the practice and policy implications of self-regulation research for education, mental health, and youth development.

COURSE FORMAT
Course meetings will be a combination of seminar and lecture learning. Seminars will be peer-lead discussions on weekly readings; lectures will be used to supplement discussions and clarify important points.

REQUIRED READING
All readings will be provided on Courseweb at least one week prior to the assigned class period. There is no text to purchase.

Approach the readings in an active, systematic, and deliberate way (skipping occasional paragraphs or reading the texts out-of-order is often acceptable). Read to understand, not to memorize. After you complete a reading, you should be able to summarize the main argument and evaluate the research evidence presented in support of that argument.

For purposes of summarization, ask yourself the following: (a) What issues are of most concern to the author? (b) Why does the author think these issues are important? (c) What are the conceptual/theoretical underpinnings (framework) of the authors’ work? That is, what theoretical
assumptions guide the questions posed and the interpretation and integration of findings? (d) What are the main points made by the author and what is the most critical evidence presented by the author in support of these points?

For purposes of evaluation, ask yourself the following: (a) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the authors’ work (e.g., its theoretical or empirical contribution, the credibility/tenability of the assumptions, appropriateness of the research design, measures, and sample selection criteria relative to the question under investigation, the soundness of the interpretation of the data)? (b) How would you improve on the authors’ work? (c) What questions provoked by the authors' work merit further study? (d) What research designs or methods would be most fruitful in addressing these questions in future investigations?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participation, Attendance, and Discussion Seeds — Although there will be designated discussion leaders, everyone is expected to read the required material prior to each class and to participate in each class. Please come to class prepared to engage in a thoughtful and scholarly discussion of the readings.

In advance of each class meeting, everyone will prepare a discussion seed. The seeds should be 1-2 pages (double spaced) and raise 2-3 different issues or questions that arise from the readings. Issues may include empirical questions, unresolved controversies, interesting implications, contradictions, or claims that you just don’t buy. Discussion seeds should go beyond definitional issues or areas of confusion (we will address basic questions at the start of class so please do not include them in your discussion seeds). In particular, I expect that the seeds attempt to make links between the readings for the week and try to tie the current week’s topic with topics covered in other weeks. That is, discussion seeds should be based on a synthesis of the readings. It would also be acceptable to state an argument or point that you derive from the articles and ask if others agree. You could also propose an extension of the current work or an additional research question. Another approach is to consider how these theories can be applied in the real world, or how teachers, parents, clinicians can use these insights to help their students, children, or patients. In sum, the content and scope of your discussion seeds should be geared toward stimulating a good discussion of the readings and related issues. Weekly responses must be submitted to Courseweb by 9am on Wednesday prior to class. Late responses will not receive credit.

2. Leading Class Discussions — You will be asked to sign up to be a discussion leader during two weeks of class. You will be responsible for collecting and organizing discussion seeds, assisting in moderating the discussion, and expanding on ideas about the weekly readings. You are also encouraged to share additional insight from recommended readings, current events, personal experiences, or information gathered from outside experiences (research and practice). Be as creative as possible!

3. Self-Regulation Challenge — You will be asked to apply self-regulation to your own life! On October 13, you will each pick a self-regulatory goal (a challenging, but feasible goal to work on, and one that you also feel comfortable sharing with the class!). Over the
next two weeks, you will use this challenge to “live out” the theories and strategies discussed in this seminar. On October 27, you will turn in a one-page reflection paper that we will discuss in class. The reflection is an opportunity to highlight your successes and failures in the context of theory and practice. Did your experience align with certain theories of self-regulation or was it unique? What were the circumstances surrounding lapses and successes in your goal pursuit? What were the strategies you used? Were they helpful?

4. **Final Research Paper and Presentation** — A substantial part of this seminar is your final research paper, which will be accompanied by a 15-minute presentation on the last day of class. Your research paper should be based on a research question that you develop. The topic must relate to self-regulation and should be based, at least in part, on the content covered in the course. Papers typically involve either an extended literature review or a study proposal. The final paper should not exceed 20 double-spaced pages (excluding title page, abstract, references, and tables/figures), with a 12pt Times New Roman font, and 1 inch margins. The paper should adhere to APA formatting in all respects.

a. **On October 20**, you will give a five-minute “seed” presentation on your final paper in order to get feedback from the class.

b. Following this, you will write a one-page paper proposal, on which your classmates and I will provide feedback. **The one-page outline is due on November 3.** The proposal should clearly (a) state the purpose of your paper, (b) what topic/question your paper is addressing, and (c) what dataset you will be using to address your question if you plan on writing an empirical paper. This would be similar to the abstract and/or introductory paragraph of your paper.
   i. *Note:* It is possible to change your paper topic after this date; please talk to me for approval before starting on a new topic. It is not acceptable to use a paper that you have used for another course. It is acceptable to do a paper on a similar topic as long as you take a new perspective. It is acceptable for you to use this paper as an opportunity to develop a paper for another requirement (e.g., conference presentation, journal submission, dissertation proposal). You may propose a different format other than an empirical or review paper (e.g., theoretical paper, meta-analysis paper). Please discuss these options with me if you are interested.

c. **The final paper is due by 5pm on December 8.**

d. **The final presentations are on December 8.** You should prepare a 15-minute presentation with PowerPoint that covers the main points of your paper. Specifically, you should provide a clear statement about the purpose of the paper, a synthesis of the key issues or controversies surrounding your topic, and a conclusion summarizing the research findings, and possible implications for research and practice. This should be similar to the talks you see at national conferences.
RESEARCH PAPER GRADEXING CRITERIA
Below are the criteria that will be used to assess your paper. Please be sure to look this over carefully while you are writing the paper and use it to check your paper before turning it in the final paper to me.

Introduction
• Is the purpose of the paper clearly stated?
• Is the justification of the topic clear (why did you pick this topic and why is it important)?
• Is there a clear outline and overview to guide your readers?

Theoretical and Empirical Foundation
• What is/are the theoretical framework(s) guiding the study?
• Is the empirical evidence that is presented relevant to the purpose of the paper?
• If there are multiple viewpoints on the topic, are multiple sides presented?
• Are statements justified based on prior research/theory?
• Are relevant theories/ideas from class reading and discussion presented?
• Is information presented logically? Is the paper well organized and easy to follow?

Summary of the Study
• Summarize the limitations in the literature and how you will address them in your study
• Summarize the overarching research questions and hypotheses

Method
• What is your sample?
• What are your methods?
• What are your measures?
• What are your analytic strategies?

Conclusion
• Is the relevant evidence integrated and summarized coherently?
• Does the conclusion directly relate to the questions asked in the introduction?
• Does the conclusion seem warranted based on the evidence presented in the body?
• Are suggestions made for future directions? If applicable, are suggestions made for practice?

Form/Style
• References and citations in APA style
• Spelling and Grammar
• Clarity
• Page length/number of references in accordance with assignment guidelines
COURSE GRADING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Seeds</td>
<td>22 (2 points each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lead Discussion</td>
<td>20 (10 points each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Regulation Challenge</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Presentation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Grades will be calculated as follows:

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<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
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<td>A</td>
<td>93-96.9 points</td>
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<td>90-92.9 points</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.9 points</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.9 points</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82.9 points</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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THE FINE PRINT

Academic Integrity
All students are expected to adhere to the standards of academic honesty. Any student engaged in cheating, plagiarism, or other acts of academic dishonesty would be subject to disciplinary action. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating the University Policy.

Students with Disabilities
I wish to fully include all students in this course. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, no later than the 2nd week of the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Statement on Classroom Recording
To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student’s own private use.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Class Date</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>September 1</td>
<td>Overview &amp; Philosophy of Self-Regulation</td>
<td>Discussion Leader Sign-Up</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>September 8</td>
<td>Cybernetic Models, Self-Regulatory Strength Model</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>September 15</td>
<td>Dual-Systems Models, Integrative Models</td>
<td>Find a written item in news, online, etc. that represents self-regulation or self-control. Be prepared to share this item in class.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>September 22</td>
<td>Temporal Discounting and Visceral Influences</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>September 29</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>October 6</td>
<td>Executive Function and Delay of Gratification</td>
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<td>[Guest Lecture: Lindsay Page, 2:40PM]</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>October 13</td>
<td>Development in Context, and Effects of Environment on Self-Regulation</td>
<td>Self-Regulation Challenge Starts</td>
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<td>[Guest Lecture: Shannon Wanless, 2:40PM]</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>October 20</td>
<td>The Unique Challenge of Adolescence</td>
<td>“Seed” Presentation for Final Paper Due</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>October 27</td>
<td>Self-Regulation in Schools</td>
<td>One-Page Self-Regulation Challenge Reflection Paper Due</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>November 3</td>
<td>Self-Regulation in Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>November 10</td>
<td>Boosting Self-Regulation by Training Executive Function</td>
<td>One-Page Final Paper Proposal Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>November 17</td>
<td>Boosting Self-Regulation by Altering Beliefs, Motivation, and Strength</td>
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<td>[Guest Lecture: Omid Fotuhi, 2:40PM]</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>November 24</td>
<td>NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>December 1</td>
<td>Boosting Self-Regulation by Training Effective Strategies</td>
<td>Writing Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>December 8</td>
<td>FINAL CLASS MEETING</td>
<td>Final Paper &amp; Presentations Due</td>
</tr>
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DETAILED SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY READINGS

**September 1: Philosophical Origins of Self-Regulation**

**Required:**

**Recommended:**

---PART I: BASIC PROCESSES AND MECHANISMS---

**September 8: Cybernetic Models, Self-Regulatory Strength Model**

**Discussion Leader:** ________________________________

**Required:**

**Recommended:**

**September 15: Dual-Systems Models, Integrative Models**

**Discussion Leader:** ________________________________

**Required:**

**Recommended:**

**September 22: Temporal Discounting and Visceral Influences**

**Discussion Leader:** ________________________________

**Required:**

**Recommended:**
• Milkman, K. L., Rogers, T., & Bazerman, M. H. (2008). Harnessing our inner angels and demons: What we have learned about want/should conflicts and how that knowledge can help us reduce short-sighted decision making. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 3(4), 324-338.
September 29: NO CLASS

---PART II: DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-REGULATION---

October 6: Development of Executive Function and Delay of Gratification

Discussion Leader: ________________________________

Required:

Recommended:

October 13: Development in Context

Discussion Leader: ________________________________

Required:


Recommended:


October 20: The Unique Challenge of Adolescence

Discussion Leader: ____________________________________________

Required:


Recommended:

---PART III: SELF-REGULATION IN THE REAL WORLD---

October 27: Self-Regulation and Academic Performance

Discussion Leader: ____________________________________________
Required:

Recommended:

**November 3: Self-Regulation and Relationships**

Discussion Leader: ______________________________________

Required:

Recommended:

---PART IV: APPROACHES TO INTERVENTION---

November 10: Boosting Self-Regulation by Training Executive Function

Discussion Leader: ________________________________

Required:

Recommended:

November 17: Boosting Self-Regulation by Altering Beliefs, Goals, and Motivation

Discussion Leader: ________________________________

Required:

**Recommended:**

**November 24: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING**

**December 1: Boosting Self-Regulation by Teaching Effective Strategies**

**Discussion Leader:** ________________________________

**Required:**

**Recommended:**

**December 8: Class presentations & final paper due**