

**HHD 1014: Psychological Interventions in Real World Contexts**  
**University of Pittsburgh**  
**School of Education**  
**Department of Health and Human Development**  
**Applied Developmental Psychology Program**  
**Spring 2025**

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Class Schedule: Thursday 1:00pm – 3:30pm

Class Location: 5201 Wesley W. Posvar Hall

Instructor: Brian Galla, PhD

Email: [gallabri@pitt.edu](mailto:gallabri@pitt.edu) (I will respond to messages within 2 business days)

Office Hours: by appointment (Zoom or in person)

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**DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This course is an introduction to psychological interventions designed to solve real world problems. The focus is on interventions that are universally administered to adolescents in real world contexts, and which have grounding in developmental and social psychological theories. By the end of the course, students should be able to: (1) apply psychological theory to understand social problems and their solutions; (2) describe how different research designs and measurement approaches influence the conclusions that can be made about an intervention's effectiveness; and (3) act as a critical consumer of the empirical literature on psychological intervention. The overall goal of the course is to add to your existing skills in research and service provision with youth and families.

**FORMAT**

The course has a flipped format. The instructor will upload lecture videos and articles to Canvas and students will watch the videos and read the articles prior to each class. Students will also post written reflections on assigned topics to the Canvas Discussion Board. Class time will be used to review lecture content, do group lab activities, discuss writing reflections, and other things (e.g., exam prep, work on class presentations).

Canvas ([canvas.pitt.edu](https://canvas.pitt.edu)) will be used for announcements and Discussion Board postings. All materials (lecture videos, PowerPoint slides, articles, assignments, lab activities, etc.) will be provided on Canvas. There is no text to buy. Students are expected to check Canvas several times a week.

**GRADING**

**Attendance (10%)** — Students will complete weekly lab activities in class to get a deeper understanding of the readings and lectures. As such, students are expected to attend every class and participate in discussions. The instructor will take attendance during each class. Absences will be excused only with prior permission from the instructor. (Showing up to class late or leaving early—without prior permission—will result in half attendance points.)

**Exam 1 (30%)** — The first exam will cover material from classes 1 to 6.

**Exam 2 (30%)** — The second exam will cover material from classes 8 to 13.

**Intervention Report (10%)** — Students will work in small groups to review an intervention study described on [www.wiseinterventions.org](http://www.wiseinterventions.org).

**Presentation (10%)** — Students will deliver 10-minute presentations on the findings from their group intervention report.

**Writing Reflections (10%)** — Students will post semi-regular written reflections to questions about the course content. Reflections should be about 150 words (just under one double-spaced page) and show depth of engagement with the questions. Responses can include critiques, personal connections, societal implications, links to class lectures and readings, events in the world, and even popular culture. These responses will serve as a jumpstart to class discussions. **Reflections must be submitted to the Canvas Discussion Board by 5PM on Wednesday** (the day before class) so that the instructor can review and curate the conversation. Here is the grading rubric for the reflections:

- **0 points:** late submission / no submission
- **0.5 point:** response is too short (<150 words); response does not engage substantively with the question(s); response does not answer all parts of the question(s)
- **1 point:** response is appropriate length (≥150 words) and shows depth of engagement with the question(s); response answers all parts of the question(s)

#### Grading Scale:

The final grade will be calculated by dividing the number of points earned by the number of points possible, weighted by each section.

A+	≥	97%	C+	≥	77%
A	≥	94%	C	≥	74%
A-	≥	90%	C-	≥	70%
B+	≥	87%	D+	≥	67%
B	≥	84%	D	≥	64%
B-	≥	80%	D-	≥	60%
			F	<	60%

#### THE FINE PRINT

Assignments turned in late will receive lower points unless students receive prior permission from the instructor. Assignments turned in one day late will receive a maximum of 50% and assignments turned in two or more days late will receive a 0%.

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). 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 University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic. For hands-on practice, complete the [Academic Integrity Modules](#).

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](mailto:drsrecep@pitt.edu), (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

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.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

*\*The following course schedule/readings may change at the discretion of the instructor.*

OL=Online Lecture; LA=Lab Activity; WR=Writing Reflection (\*number refers to the class week)

Date	Topic	Assignments / Activities
Wk 1, Jan 9	Introduction: Small Edits, Lasting Changes <sup>1</sup>	
Wk 2, Jan 16 (A)	Principles of Psychological Intervention (Part I): Understanding Psychological Processes	OL2 / LA2 / WR2
Wk 3, Jan 23 (B)	Principles of Psychological Intervention (Part II): Using Psychologically “Wise” Techniques	OL3 / LA3 / WR3
Wk 4, Jan 30 (A)	Why Interventions to Influence Adolescent Behavior Often Fail but Could Succeed	OL4 / LA4 / WR4
Wk 5, Feb 6 (B)	Yeah, But Does It Work (Part I)? Measurement Schmeasurement	OL5 / LA5 / WR5
Wk 6, Feb 13 (A)	Yeah, But Does It Work (Part II)? Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Randomized Experiments	OL6 / LA6  Exam prep
Wk 7, Feb 20	Exam 1	
Wk 8, Feb 27 (B)	Harnessing Status and Respect to Boost Health Behaviors: Values Alignment Intervention	OL8 / LA8 / WR8
Wk 9, Mar 6	No Class – Spring Break	
Wk 10, Mar 13 (A)	Harnessing Status and Respect to Boost Achievement: Advice Giving Intervention	OL10 / LA10 / WR10  Explore <a href="http://www.wiseinterventions.org">www.wiseinterventions.org</a> and pick a study to report
Wk 11, Mar 20 (B)	Making Interactions with Adults more Respectful: Empathic Discipline Intervention	OL11 / LA11  Work on intervention report in class
Wk 12, Mar 27 (A)	Lessening the Effect of Threats to Status and Respect: Values Affirmation Intervention	OL12 / LA12  Work on report in class  <b><i>Intervention Report: First Draft Due by Saturday March 29 at 11:59PM</i></b>
Wk 13, Apr 3 (B)	Seed and Soil: How Contexts Shape Effects of Psychological Interventions	OL13 / LA13  Revise report and start presentations in class  Exam prep
Wk 14, Apr 10	Exam 2	<b><i>Presentation: First Draft Due by Saturday April 12 at 11:59PM</i></b>
Wk 15, Apr 17	Class Presentations	<b><i>Intervention Report: Final Version Due by 11:59PM</i></b>

<sup>1</sup> This idea of “small edits, lasting changes” is taken from chapter 1 of Timothy Wilson’s 2011 book, “Redirect: The surprising new science of psychological change.” We will be reading chapters 1 and 2 of this book in week 6.

## WEEKLY READINGS

### **Wk 2, Jan 16: Principles of Psychological Intervention (Part I): Understanding Psychological Processes**

Walton, G. M., & Wilson, T. D. (2018). Wise interventions: Psychological remedies for social and personal problems. *Psychological Review*, 125(5), 617-655. \*\*\***Read pages 617-625 & 632-640**\*\*\*

Witherspoon, E. B., Vincent-Ruz, P., & Schunn, C. D. (2019). When making the grade isn't enough: The gendered nature of premed science course attrition. *Educational Researcher*, 48(4), 193-204.

Optional reading: For a shorter summary of wise interventions, see Walton, G. M. (2014). The new science of wise psychological interventions. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 23(1), 73-82.

Optional viewing: Also consider watching this lecture by Greg Walton where he provides a good overview on wise interventions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phu1yH42jn0>

### **Wk 3, Jan 23: Principles of Psychological Intervention (Part II): Using Psychologically “Wise” Techniques**

\*Continue to review Walton and Wilson (2018, *Psychological Review*) from Wk2

Binning, K. R., Kaufmann, N., McGreevy, E. M., Fotuhi, O., Chen, S., Marshman, E., Kalender, Z. Y., Limeri, L., Betancur, L., & Singh, C. (2020). Changing social contexts to foster equity in college science courses: An ecological-belonging intervention. *Psychological Science*, 31(9), 1059-1070.

### **Wk 4, Jan 30: Why Interventions to Influence Adolescent Behavior Often Fail but Could Succeed**

Trenholm, C., Devaney, B., Fortson, K., Clark, M., Quay, L., & Wheeler, J. (2008). Impacts of abstinence education on teen sexual activity, risk of pregnancy, and risk of sexually transmitted diseases. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 27, 255-276.

Yeager, D. S., Dahl, R. E., & Dweck, C. S. (2018). Why interventions to influence adolescent behavior often fail but could succeed. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 13(1), 101-122.

Optional reading: For a shorter summary of these arguments, see Yeager, D. S. (2017). Social and emotional learning programs for adolescents. *The Future of Children*, 27(1), 73-94.

### **Wk 5, Feb 6: Yeah, But Does It Work (Part I)? Measurement Schmeasurement**

Duckworth, A. L., & Yeager, D. S. (2015). Measurement matters: Assessing personal qualities other than cognitive ability for educational purposes. *Educational Researcher*, 44(4), 237-251.

Flake, J. K., & Fried, E. I. (2020). Measurement schmeasurement: Questionable measurement practices and how to avoid them. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 3(4), 456-465.

### **Wk 6, Feb 13: Yeah, But Does It Work (Part II)? Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Randomized Experiments**

Wilson, T. D. (2011). *Redirect: The surprising new science of psychological change*. New York, NY: Little Brown/Hachette Book Group. Chapters 1 and 2.

### **Wk 8, Feb 27: Harnessing Status and Respect to Boost Health Behaviors: Values Alignment Intervention**

Galla, B. M., Choukas-Bradley, S., Fiore, H. M., & Esposito, M. V. (2021). Values-alignment messaging boosts adolescents' motivation to control social media use. *Child Development, 92*(5), 1717-1734.

West, S. L., & O'Neal, K. K. (2004). Project D.A.R.E. outcome effectiveness revisited. *American Journal of Public Health, 94*(6), 1027-1029.

### **Wk 10, Mar 13: Harnessing Status and Respect to Boost Achievement: Advice Giving Intervention**

Eskreis-Winkler, L., Milkman, K. L., Gromet, D. M., & Duckworth, A. L. (2019). A large-scale field experiment shows giving advice improves academic outcomes for the advisor. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 116*(30), 14808–14810.

Fryer, R. G. (2011). Financial incentives and student achievement: Evidence from randomized trials. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 126*(4), 1755-1798.

### **Wk 11, Mar 20: Making Interactions with Adults more Respectful: Empathic Discipline Intervention**

Okonofua, J. A., Paunesku, D., & Walton, G. M. (2016). Brief intervention to encourage empathic discipline cuts suspension rates in half among adolescents. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 113*(19), 5221-5226.

Petrosino, A., Turpin-Petrosino, C., & Buehler, J. (2003). Scared Straight and other juvenile awareness programs for preventing juvenile delinquency: A systematic review of the randomized experimental evidence. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 589*(1), 41-62.

### **Wk 12, Mar 27: Lessening the Effect of Threats to Status and Respect: Values Affirmation Intervention**

Cohen, G. L., Garcia, J., Apfel, N., & Master, A. (2006). Reducing the racial achievement gap: A social-psychological intervention. *Science, 313*(5791), 1307-1310.

### **Wk 13, Apr 3: Seed and Soil: How Contexts Shape Effects of Psychological Interventions**

Turnwald, B. P., Bertoldo, J. D., Perry, M. A., Policastro, P., Timmons, M., Bosso, C., Connors, P., Valgenti, R. T., Pine, L., Challamel, G., Gardner, C. D., & Crum, A. J. (2019). Increasing vegetable intake by emphasizing tasty and enjoyable attributes: A randomized controlled multisite intervention for taste-focused labeling. *Psychological Science, 30*(11), 1603-1615.

Walton, G. M., & Yeager, D. S. (2020). Seed and soil: Psychological affordances in contexts help to explain where wise interventions succeed or fail. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 29*(3), 219-226.