

Grand Valley State University
Psychology 492 Capstone: Advanced General Psychology Fall 2022
An Examination of Self and Identity

Instructor: Christine Smith, Ph.D. (pronouns: She/her/hers)
Office: 2221 AuSable Hall
Drop in and chat hours: M 11:30-12:00, T/TH: 1:00-2:00 or by appointment.
Phone: (616) 331-2424
Email: SmithC@GVSU.edu

Course Description

“It seems to me the beginning of wisdom of any kind, including knowledge of ourselves, is acknowledgment of the infirmity of our beliefs and the paucity of our knowledge.” – Mitchell Green

As a graduating senior majoring in psychology, it is likely that on countless occasions you have reflected on who you are and why you behave in the way that you have. Your chosen course of study has likely increased the desire to entertain such questions and it might very well have increased the confidence you have in the veracity of your answers to such inquiries. During the semester we will examine several “big questions” regarding the self and both personal and social identity. You will call upon the multiple abilities and skills you have developed during your undergraduate education and bring them to bear upon a critical examination of the self and identity. In so doing, you will develop further your ability to think critically and express yourself both verbally and in writing. Perhaps most important, you will also develop the capacity to entertain multiple diverse perspectives in this examination. It is my sincere hope that you will engage with me, your classmates, and the material in this course in a manner that is respectful, open, honest, and empathic.

This course is subject to the GVSU policies listed at <http://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies>

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify concepts associated with major theoretical perspectives and empirical findings in the discipline;
2. Engage in the application of major theoretical perspectives and empirical findings in the discipline;
3. Describe alternative theoretical perspectives within the discipline, and, where possible, integrate/synthesize across perspectives;
4. Recognize various sources of bias in psychological research, and how these can affect the interpretation or usefulness of research findings;
5. Analyze and explain interdisciplinary approaches to psychological questions;
6. Recognize and produce an appropriate level of professional-style writing.

Readings: All of the following are available at GVSU's bookstore, however, less expensive used versions can be found elsewhere. Your success in the course is very much dependent upon your ability to read this material closely. I will ask that you bring physical copies of the relevant reading material to class each day and will often refer to specific passages and pages in our discussion prompts. While the reading load for this course is heavy, it is not atypical for an advanced-level course, and you should be prepared to devote considerable time to reading the material closely.

Wilson, T. D. (2002). *Strangers to ourselves: Discovering the adaptive unconscious*. Belknap Press/Harvard University Press.

Sykes, B. (2001). *The seven daughters of Eve*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

Brown-Dean, K. (2019). *Identity politics in the United States*. Polity Press.

Junger, S. (2016). *Tribe: On homecoming and belonging*. New York: Twelve.

Williams, T. C. (2019). *Self-portrait in black and white: Unlearning race*. Highbridge.

Kroeger, B. (2003). *Passing: When people can't be who they are*. Public Affairs.

Dones, E. (2014). *Sworn virgin. And Other Stories*.

Additional readings in PDF format and digital links of podcasts/films will be posted to BB.

Classroom Discussions: We will work toward developing a sense of intellectual community by discussing course material and the many questions our readings stimulate each class period. It is my expectation that each student will actively participate in these discussions, therefore, staying on top of your reading is essential. I will not lecture in this class but will play a gradually decreasing role in facilitating our discussions. More specifically, it is my goal to stimulate conversations that will challenge you to think deeply about the self and identity. As we progress through the semester, our planned activities will require that students assume a larger role in planning and facilitating our classroom discussions.

Part of your grade will be based on participation. Our goal as a group will be to engage with each other in meaningful conversations about questions and issues related to well-being and social responsibility. Being in the room is necessary, but attendance is far from sufficient to earn a passing grade. Higher grades are likely to be achieved by students who consistently participate in our discussions by making substantive contributions and promoting dialogue, not by those who simply attend without contributing or by those who dominate the discussion. **You are allowed to miss two class periods without penalty.**

Writing Assignments: In addition to your weekly reading assignment, each student will be required to write a weekly summary of what they have read. This summary must be in your own words, must engage the assigned material in a deep way, and must include at least five questions that you believe would prompt an interesting conversational exchange within the classroom. Given the role that these weekly summaries play in promoting our classroom discussions, it is essential that they be submitted on time. More details regarding these summaries can be found on BB. Periodically, the week’s writing will require that you respond to a prompt in addition to your summary.

Collaborative Project: After reading the first three chapters of Brown-Dean’s Identity Politics in the United States, we will divide the class into four working groups with each group presenting on a specific identity (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender/sexual, and religious) in a class-period length presentation. I will make some class time available for working on this (see syllabus), however, students should expect to devote time outside of class to this work too. More details regarding this assignment will be posted to BB.

Individual Problem/Solution Pitch: Each student will be required to identify an identity-related problem of their own choosing. This should be a problem about which you feel a good deal of passion and interest. Each student will deliver an evidence-based “solution-pitch” presentation to the class (of about 10 minutes in length). More details regarding this assignment will be posted to BB.

Grades

Your grade in this class will be based on the following:

| | <u>Points</u> |
|---|---------------------------|
| Weekly Summaries: | 200 (10 @ 20 points each) |
| Discussion Participation | 200 |
| Collaborative Project | 250 |
| Substantiating Paper for problem/solution pitch | 100 |
| Problem/Solution Pitch Presentation | 200 |

Grade Distribution:

| | | | | | |
|---|---------------|----|-----------|----|-----------|
| A | 100-94% | A- | 93.99-90% | B+ | 89.99-87% |
| B | 86.99-84% | B- | 83.99-80% | C+ | 79.99-77% |
| C | 76.99-74% | C- | 73.99-70% | D+ | 69.99-67% |
| D | 66.99-60% | | | | |
| F | 59% and lower | | | | |

Weekly Schedule of Readings and Activities

Week 1: August 30-September 1

Introduction to the Capstone. Begin reading Wilson (about a 1/3 of it) & Sykes (about a 1/3 of it).

There is no reading summary due this week.

Week 2: September 6-September 8

Read Wilson (another 1/3) and Brown-Dean (Chapters 1 & 2)

Submit Reading Summary # 1 by 5:00 pm September 9

Week 3: September 13-September 15

Finish Wilson, Read Brown-Dean (Chapter 3) and assigned identity chapter in Brown-Dean.

Submit Reading Summary # 2 by 5:00 pm September 16

Week 4: September 20-September 22

Finish reading Sykes & PDFs posted to BB. You will have both Tuesday and Thursday in class to work on your collaborative project. Submit Reading Summary # 3 by 5:00 pm September 23.

Week 5: September 27-September 29

Read all Junger and PDFs posted to BB. Submit Reading Summary # 4 by 5:00 pm September 30.

Week 6: October 4-October 6

Read PDFs posted to BB. Submit Reading Summary # 5 by 5:00 pm October 7.

Week 7: October 11-October 13

Read first half of Kroeger and the two PDFs submitted by collaborative groups.

Collaborative presentation: Race on Tuesday Ethnic on Thursday.

Submit Reading Summary # 6 by 5:00 pm October 14

Week 8: October 18-October 20

Read last half of Kroeger and the two PDFs submitted by collaborative groups.

Collaborative presentation: Gender/Sexual Tuesday and Religious on Thursday.

Submit Reading Summary # 7 by 5:00 pm October 20

Week 9: October 25-October 27

Tuesday Fall Break

Thursday Class Discussion of Kroeger.

NO READING SUMMARY DUE FRIDAY.

Week 10: November 1-November 3

Read half of Williams and PDF posted to BB.

Submit Reading Summary # 8 by 5:00 pm November 4.

Week 11: November 8-November 10

Finish Williams and PDFs posted to BB.

Submit Reading Summary # 9 by 5:00 pm November 11.

Week 12: November 15-November 17

Read all Dones.

Submit Reading Summary # 10 by 5:00 pm November 18.

Week 13: November 22-November 24

No formal class on Tuesday, however, I will be available to consult with you on your problem/solution pitch papers/ideas.

Week 14 & Week 15 Problem solution pitches.