

**Psychology 7465**  
**Self-Regulation, Coping, Adaptation and Health**

Dr. Lisa G. Aspinwall

Office: Rm. 804

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Class Time: Thurs. 2-5 p.m., Rm. 801 Beh-S

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Office Hours: Tues. 2:30-3:30 p.m.; additional times by appointment

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**Overview**

How do chronic illness and other stressful life events influence people's beliefs about themselves and the world? What does it mean to adjust to or adapt to a stressor? How do personal and social resources influence both exposure to and coping with different kinds of stressors? This seminar examines current theory and research on self-regulatory and adaptational processes with a focus on the resources, strategies, goals, emotions, and social processes implicated in coping with chronic illness and other stressors.

Topics include theoretical models of self-regulation, stress, coping, and adaptation; psychological resources; kinds of goals and their implications for self-regulatory processes and outcomes; the role of personality in the stress process; reciprocal relations among stressful events and beliefs about the self and the world over time; the role of emotion in self-regulation, coping, and adaptation; proactivity and other aspects of future-oriented thinking as they apply to the anticipation and management of potential stressors; and psychological control and disengagement. These topics will be considered in the context of actual and potential stressors that vary in their complexity, controllability, uncertainty, stigmatization, and other important dimensions. The course will also examine contemporary issues in defining and understanding adaptational processes and outcomes, such as quality of life, post-traumatic growth, benefit finding, meaning and mastery. We will focus on these topics with respect to their underlying social-cognitive processes and their potential importance in understanding stress, coping, adaptation, and health in a wide range of stressful and challenging situations.

Course assignments will allow students to further their own research interests by either focusing on the self-regulatory, adaptational, and/or social challenges of a particular illness or condition or by focusing on self-regulatory, adaptational, and/or social processes that may apply across conditions or classes of conditions.

**Note:** This course deliberately underemphasizes certain highly important topics in order to reduce overlap with other departmental offerings, such as Gender, Culture, and Health; Social Support and Stress Physiology; and Relationships and Health Across the Lifespan.

**Readings**

Weekly readings will be made available for individual educational use in .PDF format. Please be sure to provide your current e-mail address to Angela Newman to receive weekly mailings. The reading list begins on p. 6 of this syllabus.

## Requirements & Grading

- Weekly discussion papers & discussion questions – 20%
- Presentation for student symposium – 25%
- Final paper – 45%
- Class participation\* – 10%

\*A high level of active regular participation in class discussion is expected in this advanced graduate seminar; exceptional participation may help in the case of borderline grades on other course requirements.

## Weekly Papers

Each week\*, students are required to prepare a 1- to 2-page thought paper based on the assigned readings\*\*. In this paper, you should develop some idea sparked by the readings and with reference to one or more of the assigned readings. This paper could develop a theoretical point, an idea for research, an integration across the readings, and/or an integration with material we have already discussed. The paper could also discuss ideas and examples that do not seem to fit the points made in the weekly readings. For the purposes of this assignment, it is much better to develop one or, at most, two points rather than to list several points that are less developed.

**Important:** Please distill the most important elements of your paper into a single underlined paragraph. All such paragraphs will be handed out as a stimulus to class discussion at the start of each class with attribution to you as author.

These materials are due by Thurs. 10 a.m. **Please e-mail your paper both to me at [lisa.aspinwall@psych.utah.edu](mailto:lisa.aspinwall@psych.utah.edu) and to Angela Newman at [angela.newman@psych.utah.edu](mailto:angela.newman@psych.utah.edu).** If you are turning in a hard copy, please turn it in to Angela in Room 820. Please be sure to bring a copy of your paper with you to class, as well. Your paper should be in 12-point type, with double spacing and 1-inch margins all around.

Weekly papers will be graded on a check (satisfactory), check-plus (outstanding), and check-minus (unsatisfactory) basis. Comments will be provided most weeks, either directly on your paper or in the course of class discussion.

\*In recognition of graduate students' busy schedules, there is an option to skip the discussion paper for one week during the semester without penalty. Please be sure to complete the readings for that week, however, so that you may participate in class discussion. If you elect not to use your "free" week, the extra completed weekly paper will be considered as extra credit.

\*\*On some weeks, there will be an option to select and bring in for discussion an article related to your own research or other professional interests that is related to the week's readings. You should be prepared to describe the rationale for and findings of this article in sufficient detail that those of us who have not read the article will be able to understand it and learn from your presentation.

## **Student Symposia**

A major requirement of the course is participation in a student-run symposium that will take place during class time during our last 2 meetings, December 6 and 13. Depending on course enrollment, panels will consist of 3 students, each of whom will speak for approximately 20 minutes on related topics of their choice that follow from course readings and discussion or that are related to their own research and/or their final papers for this course. Class discussion will follow. Alternative formats, such as debates or discussions of target articles and commentaries, are also possible.

Students will propose groups of related presentations at least two weeks prior to their scheduled symposium date. Students are required to provide a 300-word abstract of their remarks 1 week prior to the symposium for distribution to the class. Additional information will be provided in class.

## **Final Paper**

A research proposal or conceptual review of 12-15 pages is due on Wed., December 19, 3 p.m. by e-mail. If your paper contains any complicated tables or figures that may be altered by e-mail transmission, please also put a hard copy of your paper in my box on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. Ideally, this paper should represent an integration of relevant course concepts with your thinking in an area in which you are currently doing research or in which you plan to do research. Your paper may follow from your symposium topic, but it does not have to do so. Please clear your paper topic with me by November 15. With sufficient advanced notice, I would be happy to provide comments on a draft of your final paper and/or to meet with you to discuss your paper and to suggest references that might be useful to you.

## **Policy on Late Papers & Extensions**

Graduate students are often some of the busiest people on the planet, responsible for juggling multiple responsibilities for teaching, research, and their own coursework, as well as other personal responsibilities. If, after you look over your other obligations for the semester, you see that you may need an extension for any assignment, please ask me for one in advance of the due date. Late papers and other assignments will be penalized one half of a letter grade per day late if no prior arrangements are made.

## **Accommodations for Disability**

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. The instructor of this course is fully committed to both the letter and the spirit of this goal. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

### **Other Accommodations**

Students wishing to discuss potential accommodations for religious or other reasons should plan to meet with me during the first two weeks of the semester.

### **Other Registration and Grading Details**

*Withdrawals:* The last date for course withdrawal without instructor's permission is August 29. Following this period, instructor approval for course withdrawal will only be given for medical or personal emergencies and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

*Incompletes:* Incompletes are given only for extraordinary circumstances. For an incomplete to be given, the student must be passing the course and have completed the majority of the assignments. Please see your registration guide for more detailed information.

**Seminar Outline  
Weekly Schedule of Topics**

- Aug. 23**      **Introduction**
- Aug. 30**      **Models of Self-Regulation and Coping**
- Sept. 6**        **Coping: Conceptual Analyses and Methodological Critiques**
- Sept. 13**      **Coping with What?: Why Goals (and Standards) Matter**
- Sept. 20**      **Psychosocial and Structural Resources and the Stress Process:  
Loss, Depletion, Affirmation, and Challenges to Self-Beliefs**
- Sept. 27**      **Personality and Coping—Multiple Mechanisms**
- Oct. 4**         **Negative Affect and Coping: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly;  
Emotion-Focused Coping Reconsidered**
- Oct. 11**      **No Class – Fall Break**
- Oct. 18**      **Positive Affect and Coping**
- Oct. 25**      **No Class – LGA out of country for conference on emotion regulation and  
health. An independent assignment will be given for this week.**
- Nov. 1**         **Adaptation and Growth: For Real, for Whom, How and for How Long  
(and who says)?**
- Nov. 8**         **Adaptation and Growth II.**
- Nov. 15**      **Challenges to Psychological Control: Maintenance and Disengagement**
- Nov. 22**      **No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday**
- Nov. 29**      **Social Comparison Processes in Adaptation and Health**
- Dec. 6**         **Student Symposia I.**
- Dec. 13**      **Student Symposia II.**

## Weekly Schedule of Topics and Readings

Note: Articles appear in suggested reading order.  
Readings may be revised with advance notice to reflect student interests and new work.

### Aug. 23      **Introduction**

### Aug. 30      **Models of Self-Regulation and Coping**

Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2000). On the structure of behavioral self-regulation. In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich and M. Zeidner (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation* (pp. 41-84). San Diego: Academic Press.

Kirschenbaum, D. S. (1987). Self-regulatory failure: A review with clinical implications. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 7, 77-104.

Baumeister, R. F., & Heatherton, T. F. (1996). Self-regulation failure: An overview. *Psychological Inquiry*, 7, 1-15.

Aspinwall, L. G., & Taylor, S. E. (1997) A stitch in time: Self-regulation and proactive coping. *Psychological Bulletin*, 121, 417-436.

### Sept. 6      **Coping: Conceptual Analyses and Methodological Critiques**

Folkman, S., Lazarus, R. S., Dunkel-Schetter, C., DeLongis, A., & Gruen, R. J. (1986). Dynamics of a stressful encounter: Cognitive appraisal, coping, and encounter outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 992-1003.

Folkman, S., & Moskowitz, J. T. (2004). Coping: Pitfalls and promise. *Annual Review Psychology*, 55, 745-774.

Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Weintraub, J. K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, 267-283.

Stone, A. A., Greenberg, M. A., Kennedy-Moore, E., & Newman, M. G. (1991). Self-report, situation-specific coping questionnaires: What are they measuring? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61, 648-658.

Coyne, J. C., & Gottlieb, B. H. (1996). The mismeasure of coping by checklist. *Journal of Personality*, 64, 959-991.

Petticrew, M., Bell, R., & Hunter, D. (2002). Influence of psychological coping on survival and recurrence in people with cancer: systematic review. *British Medical Journal*, 325, 1066-1075. Retrieved August 2, 2007 from <http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/325/7372/1066>

In class, we will examine both the Ways of Coping Inventory and the COPE in detail. We will also examine some reconceptualizations of coping offered by Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood (2003) in a major Psychological Bulletin review (see reference at top of next page)

Skinner, E. A., Edge, K., Altman, J., & Sherwood, H. (2003). Searching for the structure of coping: A review and critique of category systems for classifying ways of coping. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 216-269.

**Sept. 13      Coping with What?: Why Goals (and Standards) Matter**

Brownlee, S., Leventhal, H., & Leventhal, E. A. (2000). Regulation, self-regulation, and construction of the self in the maintenance of physical health. In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich and M. Zeidner (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation* (pp. 369-416). San Diego: Academic Press.

Gignac, M. A. M., & Gottlieb, B. H. (1996). Caregivers' appraisals of efficacy and coping with dementia. *Psychology and Aging*, 11, 214-225.

Higgins, E. T. (1997). Beyond pleasure and pain. *American Psychologist*, 52, 1280-1300.

Elliot, A. J., Sheldon, K. M., & Church, M. A. (1997). Avoidance personal goals and subjective well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23, 915-927.

Coats, E. J., Janoff-Bulman, R., & Alpert, N. (1996). Approach versus avoidance goals: Differences in self-evaluation and well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 1057-1067.

Rothman, A. J., & Salovey, P. (1997). Shaping perceptions to motivate healthy behavior: The role of message framing. *Psychological Bulletin*, 121, 3-19.

Pearlin, L. I., Aneshensel, C. S., & Leblanc, A. J. (1997). The forms and mechanisms of stress proliferation: The case of AIDS caregivers. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 38, 223-236.

Emmons, R. A., & Kaiser, H. A. (1996). Goal orientation and emotional well-being: Linking goals and affect through the self. In L. L. Martin and A. Tesser (Eds.), *Striving and feeling: Interactions among goals, affect and self-regulation* (pp. 79-98). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Recommended:

Sivaraman Nair, K.P. (2003). Life goals: the concept and its relevance to rehabilitation. *Clinical Rehabilitation*, 17, 192-202.

**Note:** Students should choose any five of the above readings.

**Sept. 20      Psychosocial and Structural Resources and the Stress Process:  
Loss, Depletion, Affirmation, and Challenges to Self-Beliefs**

Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American Psychologist*, *44*, 513-524.

Hobfoll, S. E., Johnson, R. J., Ennis, N., & Jackson, A. P. (2003). Resource loss, resource gain, and emotional outcomes among inner city women. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*, 632-643.

Taylor, S. E., Repetti, R. L., & Seeman, T. (1997). Health psychology: What is an unhealthy environment, and how does it get under the skin? *Annual Review of Psychology*, *48*, 411-447.

Baumeister, R. R., Bratslavsky, E., Muraven, M., & Tice, D. M. (1998). Ego depletion: Is the active self a limited resource? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*, 1252-1265.

Creswell, J. D., Welch, W. T., Taylor, S. E., Sherman, D. K., Gruenewald, T. L., & Mann, T. (2005). Affirmation of personal values buffers neuroendocrine and psychological stress responses. *Psychological Science*, *16*, 846-851.

**Sept. 27      Personality and Coping—Multiple Mechanisms**

Aspinwall, L.G., & Taylor, S.E. (1997). A stitch in time: Self-regulation and proactive coping. *Psychological Bulletin*, *121*, 417-436. [Reread]

Bolger, N., & Zuckerman, A. (1995). A framework for studying personality in the stress process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *69*, 890-902.

Carver, C. S., Pozo, C., Harris, S. D., Noriega, V., Scheier, M. F., Robinson, D. S., Ketcham, A. S., Moffat, Jr., F. L., & Clark, K. C. (1993). How coping mediates the effect of optimism on distress: A study of women with early stage breast cancer. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *65*, 375-390.

Headey, B., & Wearing, A. (1989). Personality, life events, and subjective well-being: Toward a dynamic equilibrium model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *57*, 731-739.

Taylor, S. E., & Aspinwall, L. G. (1996). Mediating and moderating processes in psychosocial stress: Appraisal, coping, resistance and vulnerability. In H. B. Kaplan (Ed.), *Psychosocial stress: Perspectives on structure, theory, life-course, and methods* (pp. 71-110). San Diego: Academic Press.

NOTE: Instead of thought papers, students may choose an article to share with the class.

**Oct. 4 Negative Affect and Coping; Emotion-Focused Coping Reconsidered**

Cohen, S., & Rodriguez, M. S. (1995). Pathways linking affective disturbances and physical disorders. *Health Psychology, 14*, 374-380.

Leith, K. P., & Baumeister, R. F. (1996). Why do bad moods increase self-defeating behavior: Emotion, risk taking, and self-regulation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71*, 1250-1267.

Mathews, A. (1990). Why worry? The cognitive function of anxiety. *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 28*, 455-468.

Pyszczynski, T., & Greenberg, J. (1987). Self-regulatory perseveration and the depressive self-focusing style: A self-awareness theory of reactive depression. *Psychological Bulletin, 102*, 122-138.

Stanton, A. L., Danoff-Burg, S., Cameron, C. L., & Ellis, A. P. (1994). Coping through emotional approach: Problems of conceptualization and confounding. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66*, 350-362.

**Oct. 11 No Class – Fall Break**

**Oct. 18 Positive Affect and Coping**

Ashby, F. G., Isen, A. M., & Turken, A. U. (1999). A neuropsychological theory of positive affect and its influence on cognition. *Psychological Review, 106*, 529-550.

Fredrickson, B. L. (1998). What good are positive emotions? *Review of General Psychology, 2*, 300-319.

Aspinwall, L.G. (1998). Rethinking the role of positive affect in self-regulation. *Motivation and Emotion, 22*, 1-32.

Folkman, S. (1997). Positive psychological states and coping with severe stress. *Social Science and Medicine, 45*, 1207-1221.

Fredrickson, B. L., & Joiner, T. (2002). Positive emotions trigger upward spirals toward emotional well-being. *Psychological Science, 13*, 172-175.

Larsen, J. T., Hemenover, S. H., Norris, C. J., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2003). Turning adversity to advantage: On the virtues of the coactivation of positive and negative emotions. In L. G. Aspinwall & U. M. Staudinger (Eds.), *A psychology of human strengths: Fundamental questions and future direction for a positive psychology* (pp. 211-225). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

**Oct. 25**      **No Class – LGA out of country for conference on emotion regulation and health. An independent assignment will be given for this week.**

**Nov. 1**        **Adaptation and Growth I.: For Real, for Whom, How and for How Long (and Who Says)?**

Janoff-Bulman, R. (1989). Assumptive worlds and the stress of traumatic events: Applications of the schema construct. *Social Cognition*, 7, 113-136.

Taylor, S. E. (1983). Adjustment to threatening events: A theory of cognitive adaptation. *American Psychologist*, 38, 1161-1173.

Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 1069-1081.

Tsai, J. L., Knutson, B., & Fung, H. H. (2006). Cultural variation in affect valuation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 288-307.

Diener, E., Lucas, R.E., & Scollon, C.N. (2006). Beyond the hedonic treadmill: Revisions to the adaptation theory of well-being. *American Psychologist*, 61, 305-314.

**Nov. 8**        **Adaptation and Growth II. (Don't panic -- we will be reading a subset of the articles below.)**

Affleck, G., & Tennen, H. (1996). Construing benefits from adversity: Adaptational significance and dispositional underpinnings. *Journal of Personality*, 64, 899-922.

Aldwin, C. M., Sutton, K. J., & Lachman, M. (1996). The development of coping resources in adulthood. *Journal of Personality*, 64, 837-871.

Emmons, R. A., Colby, P. M., & Kaiser, H. A. (1998). When losses lead to gains: Personal goals and the recovery of meaning. In P. T. P. Wong and P. S. Fry (Eds.), *The human quest for meaning: A handbook of psychological research and clinical applications* (pp. 163-178). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

McFarland, C., & Alvaro, C. (2000). The impact of motivation on temporal comparisons: Coping with traumatic events by perceiving personal growth. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79, 327-343.

Taylor, S. E., Kemeny, M. E., Reed, G. M., Bower, J. E., & Gruenewald, T. L. (2000). Psychological resources, positive illusions, and health. *American Psychologist*, 55, 99-109.

Tedeschi, R.G., & Calhoun, L.G. (2004). Post-traumatic growth: Conceptual foundations and empirical evidence. *Psychological Inquiry*, 15, 1-18.

\* We will provide the table of contents for the entire above special issue and ask students to select among the critiques and commentaries.

**List of choices continues on next page.**

**Nov. 8            Adaptation and Growth II. (Continued).**

Lucas, R.E. (2005). Time does not heal all wounds: A longitudinal study of reaction and adaptation to divorce. *Psychological Science*, *16*, 945-950.

Lucas, R. E., Clark, A. E., Georgellis, Y., & Diener, E. (2003). Reexamining adaptation and the set point model of happiness: Reactions to changes in marital status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*, 527-539.

Lucas, R. E., Clark, A. E., Georgellis, Y., & Diener, E. (2004). Unemployment alters the set point for life satisfaction. *Psychological Science*, *15*, 8-13.

Wortman, C.B., & Silver, R.C. (2001). The myths of coping with loss revisited. In M. S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson, W. Stroebe, and Schut, H. (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research: Consequences, coping, and care* (pp. 405-429). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bonanno, G.A., Wortman, C.B., Lehman, D.R., Tweed, R.G., Haring, M., Sonnega, J., Carr, D., & Nesse, R.M. (2002). Resilience to loss and chronic grief: A prospective study from pre-loss to 18 months post-loss. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *83*, 1150-1164.

**Note: Students will be asked to divide up or otherwise select a subset of the above articles and those on the previous page to read for this week.**

**Nov. 15 Challenges to Psychological Control: Maintenance and Disengagement**

Thompson, S. C. (1981). Will it hurt less if I can control it? A complex answer to a simple question. *Psychological Bulletin*, *90*, 89-101.

Rothbaum, F., Weisz, J. R., & Snyder, S. S. (1982). Changing the world and changing the self: A two-process model of perceived control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *42*, 5-37.

Collins, R. L., Taylor, S. E., & Skokan, L. A. (1990). A better world or a shattered vision? Changes in life perspectives following victimization. *Social Cognition*, *8*, 263-285.

Thompson, S. C., Sobolew-Shubin, A., Galbraith, M. E., Schwankovsky, L., & Cruzen, D. (1993). Maintaining perceptions of control: Finding perceived control in low-control circumstances. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *64*, 293-304.

Wrosch, C., Scheier, M. F., Miller, G. E., Schulz, R., & Carver, C. S. (2003). Adaptive self-regulation of unattainable goals: Goal disengagement, goal reengagement, and subjective well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *29*, 1494-1508

Recommended:

Heckhausen, J., & Schulz, R. (1995). A life-span theory of control. *Psychological Review*, *102*, 284-304.

Skinner, E. A. (1996). A guide to constructs of control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *71*, 549-570.

Martin, L.L., Tesser, A., & McIntosh, W.D. (1993). Wanting but not having: The effects of unattained goals on thoughts and feelings. In D. M. Wegner (Ed.), *Handbook of mental control* (pp. 552-572). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

**Nov. 22 No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday**

**Nov. 29      Social Comparison Processes in Adaptation and Health**

Taylor, S. E., Wood, J. V., & Lichtman, R. R. (1983). It could be worse: Selective evaluation as a response to victimization. *Journal of Social Issues*, 39(2), 19-40.

Taylor, S.E., & Lobel, M. (1989). Social comparison activity under threat: Downward evaluation and upward contacts. *Psychological Review*, 96, 569-575.

Kulik, J. A., & Mahler, H. I. M. (1997). Social comparison, affiliation, and coping with acute medical threats. In B. P. Buunk & F. X. Gibbons (Eds.), *Health, coping, and well-being: Perspectives from social comparison theory* (pp. 227-261). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Aspinwall, L. G. (1997). Future-oriented aspects of social comparisons: A framework for studying health-related comparison activity. In B. P. Buunk & F. X. Gibbons (Eds.), *Health, coping, and well-being: Perspectives from social comparison theory* (pp. 125-165). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Recommended:

Buunk, B. P., & Gibbons, F. X. (Eds.). (1997). *Health, coping, and well-being: Perspectives from social comparison theory*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers. [Table of contents will be distributed to students.]

**Dec. 6      Student Symposia I.**

**Dec. 13     Student Symposia II.**

**Dec. 19     Final papers due at 3pm.**