

**Psychology 7962-001
Fall 2002
Psychology of Future-Oriented Thinking**

Dr. Lisa G. Aspinwall, Rm. 804, x7-9021

Class time: Wed. 1-4pm, Room 801

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Office Hours: Monday 1-2 pm or additional times by appointment

Overview

How do our beliefs and feelings about the future (what it may hold for us, and our ability to influence its course; emotions such as hope or dread) affect our thoughts, feelings, and behavior in the present? This course will examine social, developmental, and cognitive aspects of future-oriented thinking, including such topics as prevention, planning, proactivity, optimism, and mental simulation. The course will examine ways in which the individual differences, resources, and skills involved in future-oriented thinking affect multiple aspects of self-regulatory processes, as well as social processes, health behaviors, environmental attitudes, and later-life decision-making. Throughout the course, we will also examine ways in which a future-oriented perspective yields a different view of fundamental social cognitive and self-regulatory processes than is typically the case.

Readings

Weekly readings will be made available. Additional information will be provided in class. The reading list begins on p. 3 of this syllabus. A complete bibliography appears at the end of this syllabus.

Requirements & Grading

Weekly discussion papers -- 20%

Presentation for student symposium -- 25%

Final paper -- 45%

Class participation (10%) -- A certain (high) level 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 2-page thought paper based on the assigned readings. Two copies of your paper are due by Wed. 10am*. Each paper should have one underlined paragraph in which the essence of the question or comment is distilled. These underlined comments will be copied and distributed to course members to stimulate discussion. To facilitate this process, please turn in or e-mail one copy of your paper to Dr. Aspinwall and a second copy to

Requirements continued on p. 2.

Requirements, contd.

Angela Newman, the social area secretary, angela.newman@psych.utah.edu. If you submit your paper by e-mail, please use brackets to indicate the part of your paper that would ordinarily be underlined in a hard copy.

*We may need to adjust this time to allow more time for the materials to be prepared and copied. If this done, advance notice will be given.

Student Symposia

A major requirement of the course is participation in a student-run symposium that will take place during our last class of the semester. Depending on course enrollment, panels will consist of 3 students, each of whom will speak for approx. 20 min on related topics of their choice that follow from course readings and discussion. Class discussion will follow. Alternative formats, such as debates or target articles and commentary, are also possible.

Students will propose groups of related presentations at least 2 weeks prior to their scheduled symposium date. Students should provide a 300-word abstract of their remarks a day or two prior to the symposium. Additional information will be provided in class.

Final Paper

A research proposal or conceptual review, of approximately 15 pages, is due on Wed., Dec. 11, 1pm. This paper should ideally represent the integration of 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. With sufficient advance notice, I will be happy to provide comments on your final paper draft and/or to meet with you to discuss your paper in detail. All students are required to consult with me regarding their topic.

Schedule of Topics and Readings
(Revisions may be presented in class.)

Date Topic and Readings

8/28 Introduction

9/4 Jumping In: Self-Regulation, Goals, Proactivity & Planning

Aspinwall & Taylor (1997)
Gollwitzer & Moskowitz (1996) -- heavy duty coverage of goals
Scheier & Carver (2001) -- short and has the essential self-regulation model
Scholnick (1994) -- also short; classic developmental analysis of planning

optional: Carver & Scheier (1990)

9/11 Making the Future Happen: Control, Willpower, & Planning

Mischel (1996) on willpower
Berg, Strough, Calderone, Meegan, & Sansone (1997)
Skinner (1997) perceived control and planning
Trope & Fishbach (2000) counteractive self-control

9/18 Individual Differences: Expectations, Values & Preferences, Living in the Past

Aspinwall, Richter, & Hoffman (2001) on optimism
Norem (2001) on defensive pessimism
Strathman, Gleicher, Boninger, & Edwards (1994)
Zimbardo & Boyd (1999) on time perspective

9/25 Mental Simulation, Coping, & Planning: Fantasies, Expectations, Actions, & Reality

Taylor & Schneider (1989)
Taylor, Pham, Rivkin, & Armor (1998)
Oettingen (1996)
Sanna (2000) -- short

Recommended (but we won't discuss):
Oettingen, Pak, & Schnetter (2001)

10/2 Targets of Self-Regulation: Choice of Standards, Choice of Goal

Higgins (1987) self-discrepancy theory, promotion vs. prevention
Markus & Nurius (1986) possible selves
Elliot, Sheldon, & Church (1997) avoidance goals

10/9 Predictions for Self and Others: Accuracy, Motivational Functions, & Adjustment

Armor & Taylor (1998)
Metcalf (1998)
Newby-Clark, Ross, Buehler, Koehler, & Griffin (2000)
Sheppard, Findley, Kwavnick, Walker & Perez (2000) on bracing

Recommended (but we won't discuss):
Ross & Newby-Clark (1998)

Note: Class meets from 3-6pm on Tuesday 10/15, in place of Wed. 10/7.

10/16 Some Quirks in Planning and Future-Oriented Thinking: Why We Are So Often Wrong About What We Will Be Able to Do by a Deadline?

Buehler, Griffin, & Ross (1994) planning fallacy
Liberman & Trope (1998) temporal construal theory
Koole & Spijker (2000) furnishing plans with implementation intentions

10/23 Learning from Others: Social Comparison Processes and Future-Oriented Thinking

Aspinwall (1997)
Aspinwall, Hill, & Leaf (2002)
Pick one -- Each student locates a relevant article to share and discuss in class

FUTURE-ORIENTED EMOTIONS

10/30 Hope Debate

Snyder (in press) target article
Aspinwall & Leaf (in press) reply
Assignment: Create your own definition of hope and your own analysis of the Snyder article

11/6 Future-Oriented Emotions and Actions (or lack thereof)

Tykocinski & Pittman (1998) -- inaction inertia and regret
van der Pligt & Richard (1994) -- anticipatory regret and sexual risk behavior
Mellers & McGraw (2001) -- short; anticipated emotions and choice
Wilson, Wheatley, Meyers, Gilbert, & Axsom (2000) -- durability bias in affective forecasting

Recommended (but we won't discuss):

Buehler & McFarland (2001) -- intensity bias in affective forecasting

APPLICATIONS TO PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

11/13 Future-Or Thinking and Health: The Challenge of Preventive Health Behavior

Brown & Segal (1996) -- temporal orientation and hypertension management
Weinstein (1988) -- precaution adoption process
Chapman et al. (2001) -- value for the future and preventive health behavior
Rothman & Salovey (1997) -- message framing and prevention vs. illness detection

11/20 Therapeutic Applications of Future-Oriented Thinking: Adjustment to Trauma, Negative Life Events

Holman & Silver (1998)
MacLeod (2000)
Scheier & Carver (2001) -- repeated from 9/4, so not a new reading

11/27 (before holiday) No class (work on papers and presentations).

12/4 (last day of class) Student Symposia and Presentations

12/11 Final papers due, 1pm.*

*If this deadline conflicts with other obligations, please make alternate arrangements by 12/4.

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Psychology 7962-001: The Psychology of Future-Oriented Thinking

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