

Trauma

Justin Dainer-Best

Spring 2021

Course Number	Time	Location	Office Hours
PSY 217	T/F, 14:00-15:20	Olin 204	F, 12:00-13:45

Make an appointment to come to my office hours.

Pre-requisites: Introduction to Psychological Science or its equivalent in Sociology, Human Rights, or Anthropology.

This course fulfills the psychology major's Cluster A requirement.

1 Overview

This course explores what it means to experience, deal with, and overcome trauma. It investigates the psychological factors that contribute to trauma; symptoms relating to trauma; the evolution of our understanding of the term itself; and the etiology, diagnosis, consequence, and treatment of trauma-related disorders including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Topics will also include intimate partner violence, and the physiological impacts of trauma, transgenerational trauma, and race-based trauma. We will explore divergent theories of trauma; readings will include fiction and nonfiction accounts, empirical and review articles, and clinical case studies.

The course is discussion-based; you will be “getting your hands dirty” with research, discussions of treatment and case studies, and debates. There will rarely be a lecture-based class; you should come to class having read the reading for that day and prepared to ask questions and interrogate it.

This course will discuss topics that are sensitive or personal for many students. If something discussed in class leaves you feeling upset, please speak to a trusted person about your experience. Further, if you find that you are struggling to cope with some of the topics discussed in class, you may contact Bard Counseling Services, and make an appointment; you may also email counselingservice@bard.edu or call 845-758-7433.

In the spirit of truth and equity, it is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that this class will take place on the sacred homelands of the Munsee and Muhheaconneok people, who are the original stewards of this land. Today, due to forced removal, the community resides in Northeast Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We honor and pay respect to their ancestors past and present, as well as to future generations and we recognize their continuing presence in their homelands. We understand that our acknowledgment requires those of us who are settlers to recognize our own place in and responsibilities towards addressing inequity, and that this ongoing and challenging work requires that we commit to real engagement with the Munsee and Mohican communities to build an inclusive and equitable space for all.

1.1 Objectives

By the end of the semester you should...

- understand the many facets of our modern conceptualization of trauma,
- understand how context matters in the experience of traumatic experiences, and how chronic/complex traumas may impact individuals differently across culture and experience,

- be able to discuss methods of treating posttraumatic stress disorder and other experiences of trauma,
- know about designing clinical treatment studies, and
- understand how resilience impacts our ability to respond to traumas.

1.2 Instructor

The instructor for this course is Assistant Professor of Psychology Justin Dainer-Best (he/him/his).

2 Materials

2.1 Optional books

This course does not use a textbook. Readings will be assigned through PDFs posted to the Brightspace page. Some readings will be assigned from the following books; students who prefer to read from a physical text may choose to purchase copies. Again: readings will be assigned from these books, but you **do not need to purchase them** unless you choose to.

- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. ISBN 978-0-890-42554-1. (Available through the Bard library!)
- Herman, J. L. (2015). *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror*. Basic Books. ISBN 978-0-465-06171-6.
- Friedman, M. J., Keane, T. M., & Resick, P. A. (Eds.). (2007). *Handbook of PTSD: Science and practice*. Guilford Press. ISBN 978-1-4625-1617-9.
- Van der Kolk, B. A. (2015). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. Penguin Books. ISBN 978-0-14-312774-1.

All readings should be accessible to a screen reader; if you need one but it is not processed correctly, please let me know and I will convert it. You should complete each reading *in preparation for class*, as listed below on the schedule.

3 Class Policies

3.1 Attendance

We will move at a rapid pace; material that is missed due to absence will not be repeated in class or office hours. Our classes are designed as interactive, and your absence will impact both your own understanding and the class or your group. Missing multiple days of group work may impact your grade.

However, this is a college class and you are an adult; your attendance is your decision. Late arrivals can be disruptive to the class, especially in the current moment. Consistent patterns of lateness are unfair to other students. Please be on time.

If you are not feeling well, please do not come to class. Because of the need to remain home if you are ill, you may at **any point** choose to attend class remotely. Please let me know if you intend to do this (although I do not need to know why!), and I will make sure that you are able to attend. I have been encouraged to keep records of attendance in the interest of public health, but these will not be used for any other purpose.

If you are attending class online, please log in by the beginning of class. (I will begin promptly.)

3.2 Masks

Each of us shares responsibility for the health and safety of all in the classroom. I expect you to maintain six feet of distance from one another, to cover your nose and mouth with a functioning mask throughout class, and to stay home when you feel at all ill. These directives are consistent with Bard's policies and with the CDC guidelines. In the classroom, if you are not following these provisions (e.g., you remove your mask, or intrude on others' space), you will be reminded of these directives and then asked to leave.

3.3 Accommodations & Accessibility

Bard College is committed to providing equal access to all students. If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please contact me so that we can arrange to discuss. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. Together we can plan how best to support your learning and coordinate your accommodations. Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations through disability services should share their accommodation letter with me and make arrangements to meet as soon as possible.

If you have a learning difference or disability that may relate to your ability to fully participate in this class, but have not yet met with the Disability Support Coordinator at Bard, you can contact their office through <https://www.bard.edu/accessibility/students/>; the Coordinator will confidentially discuss the process to establish reasonable accommodations. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and thus you should begin this process as soon as possible if you believe you will need them.

Additionally, as my office in Preston Hall may be physically difficult to access, you may always request to meet with me in another location. This semester, however, I anticipate all office hours and meetings to occur online.

3.4 Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

It is important to me that this course provides an open and supportive learning environment for all students. I invite you to speak with me if you have concerns or questions regarding issues of belonging, safety, or equity in the classroom. I want our discussions to be respectful of all students. If I am not helping the classroom to feel like an inclusive environment, I invite you to provide me with [anonymous] feedback. Trauma and clinical experiences are topics about which many people have ideas or beliefs—all forms of knowledge are valuable. While we will primarily engage with the topic of trauma from an observational perspective, respect for all viewpoints is extremely important.

3.5 Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

I expect you to be familiar with what plagiarism is and is not. You may not present someone else's work as your own without proper citation. You may not copy someone else's work. You may not simply reword text from another source without giving credit. Please cite others' work where relevant, and use your own writing. If you are not sure about the definition of plagiarism, or whether something constitutes plagiarism, please consult with me or with someone at Bard's Learning Commons. Students caught plagiarizing will be reported to the Academic Judiciary Board, will get no credit for the assignment, and may fail the course.

I operate from the standpoint that you are interested in learning this material, and are doing your best to operate with integrity.

3.6 Cell phones and laptops

Before class, you should silence your cell phone, and you should not be on your phone during class unless you are asked to be (e.g., to respond to a poll). I do not recommend taking notes on your phone as a rule. I recommend taking notes on paper wherever possible. If you text or access materials unrelated to class during our class time, you are mentally absent from class.

When using a laptop, I encourage you to turn off notifications / turn on Do Not Disturb whenever possible. Browsing unrelated materials is distracting to you and also to your classmates. If attending class remotely, I recommend turning on Do Not Disturb and putting the (Zoom) class window in full-screen.

3.7 Late Assignments

Most assignments can be turned in **within two days** of their due dates without penalty. For example, if an assignment is due before class on a Tuesday, it may be turned in by Thursday at midnight without penalty.

However, please note that many assignments are intended to develop into conversations; even if you have not turned in a final document to me, you should be prepared to discuss your work in class.

Assignments may still be turned in after their late date. However, such assignments are considered “missing” (see section “Grading” below). If your work is consistently turned in late, this also may impact your grade unless you discuss this lateness with me. All assignments are due by the last day of the semester.

4 Assignments

4.1 Definition Papers

At three points during the semester (see the schedule below), you will write a 1–2-page (single-spaced) definition of trauma. You should use sources from the class or others you identify, cited in APA style. Your second definition paper may reflect back on the first one, but I encourage you to write it without consulting the first paper. Is trauma an immutable concept?

The third paper should be slightly longer (2–3 single-spaced pages) and directly address the original two definitions. (These papers are worth 10, 10, and 20 points.)

Definition Papers will be discussed with a classmate the day they are due; they will be graded based on your final, edited version (due by midnight that day), with points for: having a succinct definition and argument, at least one example, and one potential limitation/critique of the definition. Clarity of writing is encouraged.

4.2 Group papers

At six planned points throughout the semester, you and several classmates will discuss specific topics:

- Critiques of diagnosis of PTSD
- Treatment plan for case study
- Study design
- Intervention design
- Development of case study
- Intervention design and testing

Each group will create a single document incorporating all group members’ work and answering the questions for that topic. You will be graded based on your completing all components of the assignment. You do *not* need to include a breakdown of who did what, but all of your names *should* be on the paper. (I recommend using reverse alphabetical order for listing—authorship order is irrelevant in these day projects.) Group papers are due one week following the class in which they are assigned.

At the end of the semester, you will work **individually** to convert one of these group papers into a longer project (a “**polished project**”). Such projects can be an academic paper (\approx 5 pages), a short podcast (\approx 3–5 minutes), a website, a creative project, or any alternative that extends and adapts the projects into a larger form. These polished projects will be graded on their ability to inform the audience about the topic and their connection to the concept of trauma.

4.3 Self-assessment

Towards the end of March (see the schedule), you will be asked to submit a 1–2 page self-assessment in which you reflect on the following: what you have learned in this class, your performance in the class, your understanding of terms and concepts, your completion of reading and assignments, your methods of dealing with the potential vicarious trauma of the work of this class, and your plans for the remainder of the semester.

5 Grades

Assignment	Points
Definition papers	40
Group papers	60
Polished project	30
Self-Assessment	20
Total	150

Your grades in this course will come from the assignments described above: three **definition papers**, six **group papers**, one **polished project**, and one **self-assessment**. Two definitions, three group papers, and the self-assessment are due before midterm.

Completing the reading and thoughtfully participating in the class is an important component of your learning. You may miss (i.e., not attend in-person or remotely) *one* group paper without penalty. If you must miss a *second*, you should plan to complete the work individually, and contact me to receive the assignment.

As discussed above, all assignments may be turned in up to two days late without penalty. Assignments turned in later than that will not receive full points—at maximum a point off for each day late.

Grade	Range
A-range	135-150
B-range	120-134
C-range	105-119
D-range	90-104
F	below 90

6 Schedule

The schedule may change over the course of the semester. Changes to assignment dates will be announced via email and also changed on the course website. You are responsible for keeping up with the readings, showing up to class prepared, and turning in assignments on-time.

Readings are listed by author last name; PDFs can be found on Brightspace.

Day	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Tuesday	Feb 2	Defining Trauma	Syllabus	
Friday	Feb 5	[Re]defining Trauma	Friedman et al., 2014	First definition paper
Tuesday	Feb 9	Class visit from Angelica Lamorto-Corse, Ph.D.; Diagnosis of PTSD	American Psychiatric Association, 2013	
Friday	Feb 12	(class exercise)		
Tuesday	Feb 16	Intro to Treatments of PTSD	Resick et al., 2014	
Friday	Feb 19	(class exercise)		First group paper
Tuesday	Feb 23	Trauma physiology	van der Kolk, 2015, pp. 51–104	
Friday	Feb 26	Neuropsych of trauma	Yehuda and Bierer, 2009	Second group paper
Tuesday	Mar 2	Intimate partner violence	Kaplan-Levenson et al., 2020	
Friday	Mar 5	[Re]defining Trauma	Cisneros, 1984; Keret, 2007; So, 2020	
Tuesday	Mar 9	(class exercise)		Second definition
Friday	Mar 12	Class visit from Maria Galano, Ph.D.	Galano et al., 2020	Third group paper
Tuesday	Mar 16	Respite Day	no class	
Friday	Mar 19	Respite Day	no class	
Tuesday	Mar 23	Race-based trauma	Comas-Diaz et al., 2019; Sibrava et al., 2019	Self-assessment
Friday	Mar 26	Race-based trauma	Hartmann et al., 2019	

(continued)

Day	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Tuesday	Mar 30	(class exercise)		
Friday	Apr 2	Minority stress, triggers	Nadal et al., 2019	
Tuesday	Apr 6	Class visit from Mary Armitstead, J.D.	Gold, 2018	Fourth group paper
Friday	Apr 9	Refugee mental health	Bartlett et al., 2020; Li, 2018	
Tuesday	Apr 13	Chronic traumatic stress	Fondacaro and Mazzulla, 2017	
Friday	Apr 16	(class exercise)		
Tuesday	Apr 20	Psychoanalytic conceptualization	Lingiardi and McWilliams, 2017	
Friday	Apr 23	Dissociation	Davies and Frawley, 1992	Fifth group paper
Tuesday	Apr 27	Transgenerational trauma	Heijmans et al., 2008	
Friday	Apr 30	Resilience	Herman, 2015, pp. 133–174, Harvey, 2007	
Tuesday	May 4	Advising Day	no class	
Friday	May 7	(class exercise)		
Tuesday	May 11	[Re]defining Trauma	Alishan, 2006; Bridgland et al., 2021; Brockes, 2019; Vuong, 2019	
Friday	May 14	Board Week	no class	Sixth group paper
Tuesday	May 18	Board Week	no class	Final definition
Friday	May 21	Completion Week		
Tuesday	May 25	Completion Week		Polished project

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