

PSYCH 222A: The Psychology of Intimate Relationships -- Winter, 2013

Meeting Time: Wednesday, 2:00-5:00pm

Meeting Location: Franz Hall 5461

Professor: Dr. Benjamin R. Karney
E-mail: karney@psych.ucla.edu

Office: Franz Hall 4560
Office Hours: By appointment

Syllabus

- Week 1: Jan 9 - Introduction: Definitions, History, Big Theories
- Week 2: Jan 16 - NO CLASS (*SPSP Conference*)
- Week 4: Jan 23 - Beginnings: Attraction and Mate Selection
- Week 3: Jan 30 - Gender and Sexual Orientation
- Week 5: Feb 6 - Individual Characteristics: Personality/Similarity
- Week 6: Feb 13 - Adaptive Processes I: Support and Sexuality
- Week 7: Feb 20 - Adaptive Processes II: Conflict & Violence
- Week 8: Feb 27 - Adaptive Processes III: Beliefs, Expectations, & Motivated Reasoning
- Week 9: Mar 6 - External Circumstances: Stress
- Week 10: Mar 13 - Integration
- Week 11: **FINAL PAPER, due Monday, Mar 18th by 10:00am.**

Required reading

There are two types of required readings for this course. First, there is a textbook on Intimate Relationships that I wrote with Tom Bradbury. It is called:

Intimate Relationships, by Thomas Bradbury and Benjamin Karney, published by W.W. Norton, 2010

That textbook should be available at the UCLA Bookstore.

Second, there are empirical articles, some selected by me and most selected by fellow classmates. Students may download these from online data bases.

Course Requirements

1. Do the reading. Each week, I have assigned a chapter or two from our textbook. Please read these every week. There will also be recent empirical articles, some selected by me and some by your fellow students. Please read these also. When we meet on Wednesdays, I will start by lecturing informally for about an hour, providing some background on the topic. Then, we will spend the rest of each meeting discussing the articles for that week in detail.
2. Participate in class discussions. Participation is not graded, but it is expected. The whole point of this course is to work out the complexities of this topic through discussions inspired by the readings.
3. Weekly Thought Papers. Beginning January 23rd, a two-page, typed, double-spaced thought paper **should be emailed to me** by the beginning of class every time we meet. The paper should contain a single thought about some aspect of the readings for the week. Late papers will not be accepted. You may not skip a paper. If you are sick or will be absent, you can still e-mail it to me before class. Let's save trees!

What should you talk about in your thought papers? The thought papers should be a specific comment on the readings or a general comment on this area of research. It can be an idea for further research, a new way of applying one of the articles, a criticism, or an integration or comparison between two or more articles. Do not summarize. I have read the articles already. Do make it a complete thought, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Do not write more than three pages, double-spaced, unless what you are writing is unbelievably brilliant.

These papers will be emailed back to you with comments from me a few days after our class meets. The papers will be graded for clarity, logic, originality, and thoughtfulness on a five point scale. Loosely speaking, the scale is:

- 1 = You turned in something that bears no relation to the reading. (Rare)
- 2 = You demonstrated some understanding of the reading.
- 3 = You understood the reading, and made an original comment. (This is the most common grade).

4 = You understood the reading, and contributed an idea that extends the existing theory in some way (Rare)

5 = You contributed an outstanding, original, complete new idea. (Unbelievably rare).

Collectively, your scores on these papers (there will be 8 of them) will be worth 40 points.

4. In-class presentation. In the first week, I will assign each member of the class responsibility for part of each of the subsequent weekly discussions. The exact arrangement will depend on how many people are enrolled. When it is your week, you will be expected to lead part of the discussion that week.

What are you supposed to do when you lead the discussion? Several things:

- a. *You are to find one article related to the topic for that week and assign it to the class.* Yes, you will be shaping the reading list, and how cool is that? The article you choose must have been published in the year 2010 or later (I am looking for recent contributions to the literature). Otherwise, you can choose anything you like, but choose wisely, because I will have to read these too, and I will grade you on your choices. Review articles, major statements, provocative empirical papers appearing in leading outlets – all of these would work. Your assignment for us must be sent to me a week before your discussion is scheduled, so that I can tell the class and we can all do the reading.
- b. *You will guide the class through a discussion of the issues raised by the articles for the week, including your articles.* This is a chance for you to be creative. Explaining the articles is a good start, with an emphasis on the controversies or issues involved. In-class demonstrations are excellent. Posing difficult questions to the class is also a good idea, as long as you have thought about the answers to these questions yourself. By the end of a successful discussion, we should be able to express how far our understanding has developed from the beginning of the discussion.

You will be graded on your presentation. The presentation is worth 20 points. Here is how those points are divided up:

The quality/appropriateness of your selected article:	5 points.
How well you presented the articles to the class:	10 points.
<u>Quality of the discussion:</u>	<u>5 points.</u>
TOTAL=	20 points

5. Final Paper or Final Exam. On **Monday, March 18th**, your final paper for this class (double-spaced and in APA format) should be **sent to me via e-mail by 10:00am**. The paper is an opportunity to show how you have integrated the themes of the course in a substantial way and expanded upon them to address some topic of interest to you. To expand upon the themes of this course, you would probably have to do some research and read some articles that are not on the reading list. The paper could take many different forms: a research proposal, a literature review, a critical analysis of some debate in the field. I would be happy

to meet with anyone who wanted some guidance in choosing a topic. This part of the course will be worth 60 points.

6. Summary. Your total grade will be computed like this:

Sum of all the weekly papers	= 40 pts.
Presentation	= 20 pts.
<u>Final Paper</u>	<u>= 60 pts.</u>
GRADE = Total =	= 120 pts.

Letter grades may or may not be decided on a curve, depending on the final distribution of total scores.

Reading List

Week 1: Jan 9 - Introduction: Definitions, History, Big Theories

[The readings for the first week are strongly recommended, but you do not have to write a thought paper about these articles. These papers introduce some of the broad themes and perspectives of the course and suggest the importance of this topic. Researchers within each perspective have suggested that their own perspective is all you need to understand relationships and how they function. Do you agree? What can we learn from the comparison/contrast between different perspectives?]

Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R. (2010). *Chapter 1: Introduction and Chapter 3: Theories*. From Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R., Intimate Relationships. New York: W. W. Norton.

Berscheid, E. (1999). The greening of relationship science. *American Psychologist*, 54(4), 260-266.

Kelley, H. H., Berscheid, E., Christensen, A., Harvey, J. H., Huston, T. L., Levinger, G., et al. (1983). Analyzing close relationships. In H. H. Kelley, E. Berscheid, A. Christensen, J. H. Harvey, T. L. Huston, G. Levinger, E. McClintock, L. A. Peplau & D. R. Peterson (Eds.), *Close relationships* (pp. 20-67). New York: W. H. Freeman and Company.

Week 2: Jan 16 - NO CLASS (SPSP Conference)

Week 3: Jan 23 - Beginnings: Attraction and Mate Selection

[The first thought paper should be about these readings. All of this week's readings question conventional wisdom about why we are attracted to the people we are attracted to. In some ways, understanding attraction is obvious – we like people who reward us – but in other ways it remains mysterious. Why do we ever pursue someone who does not like or want us? How well do we know what we are attracted to in a potential partner?]

Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R. (2010). *Chapter 5: Attraction and Mate Selection*. From Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R., Intimate Relationships. New York: W. W. Norton.

Eastwick, P. W., & Finkel, E. J. (2008). Sex differences in mate preferences revisited: Do people know what they initially desire in a romantic partner? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 94(2), 245-264.

Week 4: Jan 30 - Gender and Sexual Orientation

[How much does biology account for what goes on in relationships? Have men and women evolved different ways of behaving in relationships? How can we account for similarities and

differences between them? Does all of this work apply to same-sex relationships as well? What are the similarities and differences between same-sex and heterosexual relationships?]

Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R. (2010). *Chapter 4: Gender and Sexual Orientation*. From Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R., Intimate Relationships. New York: W. W. Norton.

Diamond, L. M. (2003). [What does sexual orientation orient? A biobehavioral model distinguishing romantic love and sexual desire](#). *Psychological Review*, 110, 173-192.

Week 5: Feb 6 - Individual Characteristics: Personality/Similarity

[Clearly, relationships are affected by the enduring characteristics of the partners. But what characteristics matter most, and how do these characteristics affect the relationship?]

Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R. (2010). *Chapter 6: Individual Differences*. From Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R., Intimate Relationships. New York: W. W. Norton.

Week 6: Feb 13 - Adaptive Processes I: Support and Sexuality

[Most people who give advice about relationships give advice about how to behave. But what behaviors matter most in a relationship? How can we study these behaviors? Is the important thing how we behave towards our partners or how our partner interprets our behavior?]

Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R. (2010). *Chapter 7: Support and Intimacy*. From Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R., Intimate Relationships. New York: W. W. Norton.

Week 7: Feb 20 - Adaptive Processes II: Conflict & Violence

[When people complain about their relationships, this is what they normally complain about: the way they fight. Clearly, fighting is bad, and being nice to each other is good, right? But where does the ability to be nice to each other come from? Why are some people able to resolve conflict effectively while others are not? How do people come to hurt or threaten those they love the most? Where does relationship violence come from? Is it like other kinds of aggression, or is there something unique about relationship violence? Are abusive men like other violent men, or is there something unique about people who are violent toward their loved ones?]

Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R. (2010). *Chapter 8: Conflict and Violence*. From Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R., Intimate Relationships. New York: W. W. Norton.

Week 8: Feb 27 - Adaptive Processes III: Beliefs, Expectations, & Motivated Reasoning

[What I want out of a relationship may not be the same as what you want. How do our individual beliefs about relationships affect the way we behave in and understand our relationships? Again, we have to ask, where do those beliefs come from, and how might they change over time themselves? How much should we trust the reports of people in close relationships? Are people able to describe the state of their relationships objectively, or are their perceptions of themselves biased? How do people stay optimistic about their relationships, even though some parts of their relationships may not be perfect? What is it that people want to believe about their relationships anyway?]

Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R. (2010). *Chapter 9: Beliefs and Expectations* and *Chapter 10: Cognitive Processes*. From Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R., Intimate Relationships. New York: W. W. Norton.

Week 9: Mar 6 - External Circumstances: Stress

[What about things that happen outside of the relationship? Surely it is easier to enjoy romance if you have a good life, and hard to enjoy it if your life is stressful, isn't it? How does stress affect relationships? When is stress harmful? Can stress ever be helpful?]

Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R. (2010). *Chapter 11: External Circumstances*. From Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R., Intimate Relationships. New York: W. W. Norton.

Week 10: Mar 13 - Integration

[Can we fit everything together in a comprehensive theory that explains everything? How can we use such a theory to help couples? And where do we go from here?]

Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R. (2010). *Chapter 12: Interventions*. From Bradbury, T. N. & Karney, B. R., Intimate Relationships. New York: W. W. Norton.

Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (1995). The longitudinal course of marital quality and stability: A review of theory, method, and research. Psychological Bulletin, 118, 3-34.

Week 11: FINAL PAPER, due in my inbox on Monday, March 18th at 10:00am.