

# THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

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**PSY 424**  
**SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

COURSE OUTLINE WINTER 2016

**Instructors:** Jessica Maxwell Room: Sidney Smith 51A  
Phone: 416-978-3210  
Office Hour: Wed 5-6pm  
Email: [jessica.maxwell@utoronto.ca](mailto:jessica.maxwell@utoronto.ca)  
\*\*Please use PSY 424 in the subject line of all email correspondence.

**Teaching Assistant:** Claire Midgley Room: Sidney Smith 121  
Phone: 416-978-7344  
Office hours: by appointment only  
Email: [claire.midgley@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:claire.midgley@mail.utoronto.ca)  
\*\*Please use PSY 424 in the subject line of all email correspondence.

**Instructor Office Hours:** Professor office hours will be held after lectures on Wednesdays from 5-6pm in room 51A, on the subground floor of Sid Smith. So if you have any questions or concerns, please come and talk to me during these hours. I am here to help!

**Lecture time:** Wednesdays 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm in **Sidney Smith 1072**

**Required Text:** None! This class does not have a textbook. Instead, short empirical research articles have been assigned for each class. These articles can be downloaded in pdf format from Blackboard. Required readings will be tested in depth on the term tests. Suggested readings will only be tested to the extent that they are covered in class.

**Course Overview:** The objective of this course is to review what relationship science can tell us about close relationships, particularly romantic relationships. We will explore questions such as, why do we want to be in relationships? What informs our choice of relationship partners? What predicts satisfaction and stability in relationships? What is the role of sexuality in relationships? And how can we become better romantic partners? These and other questions will be examined from a variety of theoretical perspectives, with an emphasis on where our scientific understanding of these topics currently stands and how it can be improved. Finally, each lecture will conclude with a “Scientist Segment” that will cover broader research-related skills.

**Prerequisite courses:** PSY201H1 (or equivalent); PSY220H1. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have met all prerequisites listed in the Psychology section of the A&S Calendar for this course. If you lack any prerequisites you WILL BE REMOVED. No waivers will be granted.

**Assessment:** There are four modes of assessment for this course—a reflection on attachment in the media (10%), a midterm exam (25%), an advice critique (30%), and a final exam (35%).

- 1. Assignment 1: Attachment in the Media. (10%)** The goal of this assignment is to find and describe an example of a fictional character (from TV, movies, books, or a song) that is high in anxious attachment, and another character who is high in avoidant attachment. In a maximum of 4 (double-spaced) pages, please describe the characters' behaviours that support your assessment of their attachment style, providing citations to support your assessment. Conclude with an argument (linking to the examples and broader research) on which form of insecure attachment you think is more detrimental to healthy relationships and why. *Note.* The two characters chosen do not need to be from the same TV show/movie/book/song.

The assignment is due at 2pm (the beginning of class) on Wed February 10<sup>th</sup>. The assignment is due electronically via the course's Blackboard Portal webpage. See page 3 for submission instructions. **This assignment will be marked by Claire Midgley ([claire.midgley@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:claire.midgley@mail.utoronto.ca)).**

- 2. Midterm Test. (25%).** The midterm exam will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions on Wednesday March 2<sup>nd</sup>. The exam will take place during class hours in Exam Centre room 300. **The midterm test will be marked by Jessica Maxwell ([jessica.maxwell@utoronto.ca](mailto:jessica.maxwell@utoronto.ca)).**

- 3. Assignment 2: Advice Critique. (30%).** The advice critique assignment requires you to apply the relationship concepts you will learn in this class to a real-world relationship problem. First, please choose an advice column in which a reader has requested help with a relationship problem, and the columnist has responded with relationship advice. You can use any relationship advice column found in print or online, with the exception of [www.scienceofrelationships.com](http://www.scienceofrelationships.com) (please do NOT use columns from this website for this assignment). Your paper should be divided into two sections, for a maximum of four double-spaced pages total. In the first section (two pages maximum), please provide an evaluation of the advice columnist's response. Based on the relationships literature, is their response helpful, or is it poor advice? In the second section (two pages maximum), please provide your own response to the reader's relationship question. You will be graded based on your integration of relevant research, the quality of your analysis, and on the accessibility and helpfulness of your response.

The assignment is due at 2pm (the beginning of class) on Wednesday April 6<sup>th</sup>. The assignment is due electronically via the course's Blackboard Portal webpage. See page 3 for submission instructions. **The advice critique assignment will be marked by Claire Midgley ([claire.midgley@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:claire.midgley@mail.utoronto.ca)).**

- 4. Final Exam. (35%).** The final exam will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. **This exam will take place during the final examination period.** This exam is cumulative, with a greater focus on material covered in the second half of the course. **The final exam will be marked primarily by Claire Midgley ([claire.midgley@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:claire.midgley@mail.utoronto.ca)).**

## Instructor Policies

**Policy on missed tests:** If the midterm/final exam is missed, appropriate documentation such as a medical certificate or college registrar's note (as well as a copy of the ROSI Absence Declaration) must be provided to the instructor within one week of the missed exam (See Faculty of Arts and Sciences Calendar). ***There are no make-up exams.*** If satisfactory documentation is provided, the missed test will be accounted for by increasing the value of the other three pieces of assessment; the first assignment will be worth 20%, the second assignment worth 35%, and the remaining test worth 45%.

**Policy on late assignments:** Assignments that are submitted after the due date will still be graded, but a ***5% late penalty*** will be deducted for each late day, including weekends and holidays. The late penalty is calculated based on the 2pm due time (meaning assignments handed in before Thursday at 2pm are deducted 5%, Friday before 2pm are deducted 10%). Late assignments should be submitted via Blackboard Portal as usual.

**Policy on page limits.** Writing succinctly is an important part of our discipline, so we take page limits seriously. Please adhere to the page limits on writing assignments, as writing that goes beyond the page limits ***will not be read or graded.*** Page limits are set based on APA format: double-spaced, one-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman font.

**Policy on discussing tests/assignments.** If you have questions or concerns about the grading for a test or assignment, you must contact the person who marked the assignment/test within ***two weeks*** of it being returned to you.

**Course website on Blackboard:** I have constructed a course website via Blackboard which can be accessed by logging in to <http://portal.utoronto.ca>. Lecture notes will be posted here the night before each class. I will also post the syllabus, announcements, and useful links on the site.

### Assignment Submission Instructions:

- Complete the assignment outside of Blackboard (e.g., Microsoft Word).
- Make sure that your assignment uses proper APA format, including 1-inch margins, Times New Roman 12-point font and double spacing.
- Please include either your name or your student number in the file name.
- From within our Blackboard page, go to the Course Materials page.
- Click on the relevant assignment.
- Attach your assignment by clicking on "Browse my computer" and selecting your document. Double check that the correct document is listed next to "Attached Files."
- Click "Submit." Selecting "Save as Draft" does not submit the assignment, and such saved assignments will not be considered for evaluation after the due date. You should receive a response which indicates that your paper has been submitted to the instructor.

## University of Toronto Policies

**Accessibility Needs:** U of T is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: [disability.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:disability.services@utoronto.ca) or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>.

**Writing:** As a student here at the University of Toronto, you are expected to write well. The university provides its students with a number of resources to help them achieve this. For more information on campus writing centres and writing courses, please visit <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/>.

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:** Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters ([www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm](http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm)) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see [www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html](http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html)).

Week	Date	Lecture Topic	Readings
1	Jan 13 <sup>th</sup>	Course Introduction & The need to belong	None.
2	Jan 20 <sup>th</sup>	Attachment: From the cradle to the grave	<p><u>Required:</u> Zayas et al. (2011). Roots of adult attachment: Maternal caregiving at 18 months predicts adult peer and partner attachment. <i>Social Psychological and Personality Science</i>, 2, 289-297.</p> <p><u>Suggested:</u> Spielmann, S. S., Maxwell, J. A., MacDonald, G., &amp; Baratta, P. L. (2013). Don't Get Your Hopes Up Avoidantly Attached Individuals Perceive Lower Social Reward When There Is Potential for Intimacy. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i>, 39, 219-236.</p>
3	Jan 27 <sup>th</sup>	<b>CLASS CANCELLED</b> (away at conference). Use this time to work on your assignment 😊	
4	Feb 3 <sup>rd</sup>	What makes you swipe right? Romantic attraction	<p><u>Required:</u> Haselton et al. (2011). Can men detect ovulation? <i>Current Directions in Psychological Science</i>, 20, 87-92.</p> <p><u>Suggested:</u> Russell, V. M., McNulty, J. K., Baker, L. R., &amp; Meltzer, A. L. (2014). The association between discontinuing hormonal contraceptives and wives' marital satisfaction depends on husbands' facial attractiveness. <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</i>, 111, 17081-17086.</p>
5	Feb 10 <sup>th</sup>	You Belong with Me: Commitment, monogamy, and non-monogamy  <b>Assignment 1: Attachment in the Media due on Blackboard</b>	<p><u>Required:</u> Lavner et al. (2012). Do cold feet warn of trouble ahead? Premarital uncertainty and four-year marital outcomes. <i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>, 26, 1012-1017.</p> <p><u>Suggested:</u> Moors, A. C., Conley, T. D., Edelstein, R. S., &amp; Chopik, W. J. (2014). Attached to monogamy? Avoidance predicts willingness to engage (but not actual engagement) in consensual non-monogamy. <i>Journal of Social and Personal Relationships</i>, 32, 222-240.</p>

<b>6</b>	Feb 17 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>NO CLASS (Enjoy your reading week!)</u></b>	
<b>7</b>	Feb 24 <sup>th</sup>	When Two Become One: The formation of bonding and closeness	<p><u>Required:</u> Girme et al. (2014). "Date nights" take two: The maintenance function of shared relationship activities. <i>Personal Relationships</i>, 21, 125-149.</p> <p><u>Suggested:</u> O'Leary et al. (2012). Is long-term love more than a rare phenomenon? If so, what are its correlates? <i>Social Psychological and Personality Science</i>, 3, 241-249.</p>
<b>8</b>	<b>March 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b><u>Midterm Test Location: Exam Centre Room 300</u></b>	
<b>9</b>	March 9 <sup>th</sup>	Going to bed angry? Communication and conflict	<p><u>Required:</u> Salvatore et al. (2011). Recovering from conflict in romantic relationships: A developmental perspective. <i>Psychological Science</i>, 22, 376-383.</p> <p><u>Suggested:</u> Przybylski, A. K., &amp; Weinstein, N. (2013). Can you connect with me now? How the presence of mobile communication technology influences face-to-face conversation quality. <i>Journal of Social and Personal Relationships</i>, 30, 237-246.</p>
<b>10</b>	March 16 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Breaking up: Romantic deterioration and dissolution</p> <p><i>Guest Lecture by TA Claire Midgley</i></p>	<p><u>Required:</u> Le et al. (2010). Predicting nonmarital romantic relationship dissolution: A meta-analytic synthesis. <i>Personal Relationships</i>, 17, 377-390.</p> <p><u>Suggested:</u> Sbarra et al. (2012). When leaving your ex, love yourself: observational ratings of self-compassion predict the course of emotional recovery following marital separation. <i>Psychological Science</i>, 23, 261-269.</p>
<b>11</b>	March 23 <sup>rd</sup>	You bring out the best in me: Relationships and personal growth	<p><u>Required:</u> Bohns et al. (2013). Opposites fit: Regulatory focus, complementarity, and relationship well-being. <i>Social Cognition</i>, 31, 1-14.</p>

			<p><u>Suggested:</u> Rusbult et al. (2009). The Michelangelo phenomenon. <i>Current Directions in Psychological Science</i>, 18, 305-309.</p>
12	March 30 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Let's get it on: Sexuality in committed relationships</p>	<p><u>Required:</u> Muise, A., &amp; Impett, E. A. (2015). Good, Giving, and Game The Relationship Benefits of Communal Sexual Motivation. <i>Social Psychological and Personality Science</i>, 6, 164-172.</p> <p><u>Suggested:</u> Day, L. C., Muise, A., Joel, S., &amp; Impett, E. A. (2015). To do it or not to do it? How communally motivated people navigate sexual interdependence dilemmas. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i>, 0146167215580129.</p>
13	April 6 <sup>th</sup>	<p>The dating 'game': From flirting to friends with benefits</p> <p><b>Assignment 2: Advice Critique Due on Blackboard</b></p>	<p><u>Required:</u> Joel, S., Teper, R., &amp; MacDonald, G. (2014). People Overestimate Their Willingness to Reject Potential Romantic Partners by Overlooking Their Concern for Other People. <i>Psychological science</i>, 0956797614552828.</p> <p><u>Suggested:</u> Wentland, J. J., &amp; Reissing, E. D. (2011). Taking casual sex not too casually: Exploring definitions of casual sexual relationships. <i>The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality</i>, 20, 75-91.</p>

**\*\*\*FINAL EXAM HELD DURING EXAM PERIOD\*\*\***