

PSY 352 | Psychology in the post-pandemic era Fall 2026

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Course Description

This course is an exploration of the current mental health trends in the post-pandemic era. We take an in-depth look at the most significant areas of psychological science that apply to real life. Examples of topics include inequality, climate change anxiety and boundaries with social media. We also address stigma surrounding mental health. Students have an opportunity to explore all the above through readings in the popular press but ultimately a scholarly, critical evaluation of the scientific literature serves as the foundation of our learning throughout the course. We learn about psychopathology and new modes of treatment, from mental health apps and tele-health to taking a holistic approach when treating mental health. Major goals of this course is 1. to critically examine psychological theories and processes 2. to apply them to your life and to real world events.

Course Approach

This class serves as a wide-ranging introduction to the field of mental health after the pandemic. It offers an evidence-based, student-centred approach that is filled with ideas and practices for maximising student learning and personal growth. There are lecture-based classes but also field visits around Athens, where students are offered experiential learning.

Lectures on course topics are designed to be as interactive as possible by combining different modes of learning. You will read, analyze and interpret book chapters, journal articles and films/videos. You will work and think with others and you will write. Below we describe our explicit goals for your engagement with each of these types of learning.

Reading: You will read articles from the popular press and scientific articles from published psychology journals.

Analyzing and interpreting: You will watch, analyze and interpret short videos and Ted talks.

Working and thinking with others: You will participate in small group discussions.

Writing and Recording: You will deliver written and audio work throughout the semester.

Presentations: You will present a journal article that relates to one of the topics discussed in the classroom up to that point.

Field Visits: Everyone is expected to attend Field visits.

Learning Objectives

There are three basic objectives in this course

- Develop knowledge about the underlying psychological topics and the basic terms and concepts that come with them.
- Develop critical thinking skills and knowledge of psychological science that will help you become a more cautious and informed consumer of information. There is a great deal of controversy concerning many of the topics we will discuss and it is important that you learn to navigate arguments in ways that allow you to develop a coherent and well-based opinion of your own.
- Apply your psychological knowledge to improve your life and the lives of those around you.

Skills to develop when meeting the Learning Objectives

- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Global Responsibility
- Critical thinking

Course Requirements

Participation: It is expected that students will come to class ready to actively and respectfully contribute to discussions of the topics listed on this syllabus and to abide by CYA academic policies while completing assignments. Students are also encouraged to maintain active and open communication with me regarding any concerns or questions. Participation in field visits is also essential. In other words, this is not a class where you simply show up, pick a seat, and sit and listen passively. Rather, you can expect that on most days of the semester there will be multiple activities, requiring active engagement and participation among you and your fellow classmates. Expect to “learn by doing” in this course, and plan on being an active member of our class community.

Readings: Book chapters, journal articles and websites are assigned in the weekly schedule list below. Some articles & websites might be assigned as we go along in order to keep up with the most recent developments in the field.

Home Assignments: You will be asked to complete three home assignments during the course. Assignment 1. Reflective Writing: Learning and Selfhood in Zoom Education

Write a two-paragraph reflective piece (approximately 250 words total, double-spaced) examining how Zoom-based education has affected your learning experience and your sense of self as a student. This assignment does not require any background in psychology. Instead, it asks you to reflect thoughtfully on your own experiences.

Assignment 2. AI and the future of mental health services

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly being used in mental health training and treatment, for example through chatbots, diagnostic tools, and online therapy platforms. While its use is likely to grow in the coming years, some experts argue that technology is unlikely to replace traditional mental health services provided by human professionals.

Write a 300-word argumentative essay in which you explain whether you agree or disagree with this statement. Clearly state your position and support it with well-reasoned arguments. You may consider issues such as empathy, trust, accessibility, cultural understanding, ethics, effectiveness, or the limitations and benefits of technology.

Assignment 3. Real-life scenario analysis

Choose one real-life scenario related to mental health, well-being, stigma, or help-seeking behavior. The scenario may come from everyday life, education, the workplace, media, or a cross-cultural context. You may use one of the suggested scenarios below or propose your own (subject to instructor approval).

Write a one-page analysis (double-spaced) in which you apply ideas, themes, or concepts from this course to help explain, interpret, or respond to the scenario. This assignment does not require a background in psychology; focus on reasoning, clarity, and connections to course material.

Pair presentation.

Working in pairs, select one academic journal article that examines stigma related to a specific area of mental health (for example: depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, addiction, eating disorders, or mental health in a particular cultural or social context).

Prepare a short oral presentation supported by PowerPoint slides and present it to the class. Your goal is to clearly explain the topic, summarize the article's main ideas, and communicate why stigma is an important issue in this area. No advanced background in psychology is required; focus on clarity and understanding rather than technical detail.

Podcast Assignment. Course topic Exploration

Create a short podcast episode based on one topic covered in the first 13 lectures of the course (as listed on the syllabus or Moodle). The goal of this assignment is to explain a course topic clearly, connect it to key ideas discussed in lectures, and communicate it in an engaging way to a general audience.

There will be no exams for this class.

The mid-term grade will be based on any work you have submitted up until that point plus the presentation, plus participation and attendance in class.

Class Field Work

We will visit organisations and day centres whose work relates to topics that we will discuss in the classroom (e.g. climate change anxiety, addictions, etc.).

Evaluation and Grading

Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:

Percentages (and any breakdowns)

Assignment 1: 10%

Assignment 2: 10%

Assignment 3: 25%

Podcast: 25%

Presentation: 20%

Participation and Attendance: 10%

Evaluation Criteria - Course Assignments

Written assignments:

- Criteria 1: Thesis
- Criteria 2: Structure
- Criteria 3: Evidence
- Criteria 4: Analysis
- Criteria 5: Mechanics

Presentation:

- Criteria 1: Structure
- Criteria 2: Content
- Criteria 3: Communication
- Criteria 4: Use of Media
- Criteria 5: Time management

For further details regarding evaluation criteria kindly check Rubric for presentations and podcasts that are available on Moodle.

CYA Regulations and Accommodations

Attendance Policy

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences. Illness or other such compelling reasons which result in absences should be reported immediately to the Student Affairs Office, via the form available in the Student Portal.

Unexcused Absences & Consequences

Three (3) unexcused absences in this class automatically lowers the final course grade.

Academic Accommodations

If you are a registered (with your home institution) student with a disability and you are entitled to learning accommodation, please inform the Office of Academic Affairs and make sure that your school forwards the necessary documentation.

e Policy on Original Work

Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own original work. Any ideas taken from the work of others must be clearly identified as quotations, paraphrases, summaries, figures etc., and accurate internal citations and/or captions (for visuals) as well as an accompanying bibliography must be.

Please be aware that writing is a critical part of CYA expectations and that students should work diligently toward acquiring and improving their writing skills.

Our educational mission at CYA is to provide an academically rigorous program that enables students to re-turn home both inspired and intellectually engaged. AI is a means, not an end. When students use AI to by-pass the challenges that are essential to the learning process, it undermines the purpose of their courses and the curriculum as a whole.

Students must disclose their AI usage on assignments. Failure to disclose how AI has been used, or submission of AI work as one's own, is a violation of academic integrity [please see relevant section on student handbook].

Use of Laptops

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is permitted if this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if devices are not used for class-related work.

Respect: While in class, please show respect not only to the professor but also to your fellow students—be on time, and turn off cell phones and other devices that may cause distractions. Also, please be sensitive to the opinions of others by refraining from unnecessary side conversations, interruptions, sleeping, or making disrespectful comments. Our classroom is a safe and respectful academic environment for learning and engagement.

Pronouns, Correct Names, and Inclusion: It is your right to be identified by your correct name and pro-nouns. I support people of all gender expressions and gender identities and welcome students to use which-ever pronouns or names that best reflect who they are. In this spirit, I expect all students to also use the correct pronouns and names of classmates. Please inform me if my documentation reflects a name different than what you use and if you have any questions or concerns please contact me after class, by email, or by appointment.

Class Schedule

| Class Day | Day/Date/ Place | Topic / Readings / Assignments Due |
|------------------|------------------------|--|
| 1 | September 7 | Introductions, review syllabus, questions about the course, etc. No reading. |
| 2 | September 9 | The impact of COVID-19 on mental health. Required reading: Al Dhaheri et al. (2021) Impact of COVID-19 on mental health and quality of life: Is there any effect? A cross-sectional study of the MENA region. Podcast topic: The psychological impact of COVID-19 is considered to be more profound in comparison to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in 2003, due to the extensive social media exposure. |
| 3 | September 14 | The zoom fatigue: How remote learning and working has affected the way we perceive ourselves and others. Required reading: A national study of zoom fatigue and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: Implications for Future Remote Work. Assignment 1: Students need to prepare a two paragraphs reflection on how zoom education has affected their student performance and their sense of self. Podcast topic: One 2021 study in the journal NeuroRegulation found that almost 94 percent of undergraduates had “moderate to considerable difficulty with online learning.” Discuss the finding above. |
| 4 | September 16 | Setting the boundaries with social media. What psychological research has showed us so far. Required reading: Ostic et al. (2021) Effects of Social Media Use on Psychological Well-Being: A Mediated Model. No required reading. |
| 6 | September 21 | Climate change anxiety. Is it adaptive or maladaptive? Required reading: Taylor (2020) Anxiety disorders, climate change, and the challenges ahead: Introduction to the special issue. Podcast topic: The lessons learned from COVID-19 might prepare us for better dealing with anxiety disorders during the forthcoming adverse events due to climate change. |
| 6 | September 23 | Field Visit to Navarino park, which is a community initiative that represents action as an answer to climate change. No required reading. |
| 7 | September 28 | Stigma surrounding schizophrenia. Required Reading: Peritogiannis, V.; Papathanasiou, I.V.; Giotakos, O. Community Psychiatry in Rural Greece: The Role of the Mobile Mental Health Units. <i>Psych</i> 2022, 4, 277–280. https://doi.org/10.3390/psych4020024 Podcast topic: Globally, mental health services are increasingly defunded and neglected under austerity, structural adjustment and economic crisis. At the same time, care is delegated to family, friends and civil society with ‘community’ as the idealized location for inclusion, independence and self-determination. |
| 8 | September 30 | Guest lecturer (NGO Orlando) talking about micro-aggressions in the LGBT community in Greece. Required reading: Blume A. (2022) Microaggressions toward minority university students and their mental health symptoms one year later. Podcast topic: College students who belong to minorities experience frequent microaggressions at school. These experiences act as chronic stressors that can negatively impact well-being, even more so than overt forms of racism. |
| 9 | October 5 | You will present in pairs on the topic of stigma and mental health. Find a journal article that relates to the topic and present its content in the classroom. No required reading. |
| 10 | October 12 | Presentations part II. |
| 11 | October 14 | Pain, anxiety and depression. Required Reading: Kim S, Lee J, Boone D. Protective and Risk Factors at the Intersection of Chronic Pain, Depression, Anxiety, and Somatic Amplification: A Latent Profile Approach. <i>J Pain Res.</i> 2022 Apr 15;15:1107-1121. doi: 10.2147/JPR.S340382. PMID: 35450061; PMCID: PMC9018014. |

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| 12 | October 19 | Emotion and Memory. Required Reading: Markowitsch et al. (2022) The importance of a synchrony between emotion and memory-cases with dissociative amnesia. |
| 13 | October 21 | Eating Disorders. Required Reading: Frank et al. (2021) Reward processing across the eating disorders spectrum implicates body mass index and ventral striatal-hypothalamic circuitry. |
| 14 | November 2 | Field Visit to the Acropolis museum where we can explore body image representation in the art world. No required reading, on-site activity. |
| 15 | November 4 | Guest lecturer KMOP. No required reading. |
| 16 | November 9 | Mental health promotion at schools. Can it be trauma informed? |
| 17 | November 16 | Field Trip to Myrtillo café. No required reading, on-site activity. |
| 18 | November 18 | Treatments: Tele-health and mental health apps. Advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) technologies could improve the future of therapy sessions and mental health diagnoses. According to research published in October 2021, AI motion sensors can be used to detect symptoms of anxiety such as, nail biting, knuckle cracking and hand tapping. Another research published again in October 2021 suggests that AI can help train therapists by evaluating their skills, including whether or not they're creating an optimal environment for their clients. Reading: Chandrashekar P. Do mental health mobile apps work: evidence and recommendations for designing high-efficacy mental health mobile apps. Mhealth. 2018 Mar 23;4:6. doi: 10.21037/mhealth.2018.03.02. PMID: 29682510; PMCID: PM-C5897664. A holistic approach when treating mental health. Addictions |
| 19 | November 23 | Walking tour with Sxedia. The Non-Profit Organization "Diogenis NGO" was established in the early 2010 for supporting homeless and socially excluded persons to reintegrate our society. Their main goal is the activation, the strengthening, the empowerment, the training and last the creation of perspectives of jobs for those fellow men of ours who face poverty and social exclusion to an extreme degree. |
| 20 | November 25 | Addictions |
| 21 | November 30 | Addictions Walk |
| 22 | December 2 | Field Trip to Doctors of the World. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank have jointly published the 2023 Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Global Monitoring Report, revealing an alarming stagnation in the progress towards providing people everywhere with quality, affordable, and accessible health care. No reading |
| 23 | December 7 | A holistic approach when treating mental health//yoga session |
| 24 | December 9 | End class |

N.B.: The course schedule, in terms of subjects and readings, may be subject to change to benefit student learning and to keep up to date with current research.

Course Bibliography

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Ostic D, Qalati SA, Barbosa B, Shah SMM, Galvan Vela E, Herzallah AM and Liu F (2021) Effects of Social Me-dia Use on Psychological Well-Being: A Mediated Model. *Front. Psychol.* 12:678766. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.678766

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejczMs6b1Q4>

<https://aiforgood.itu.int/how-can-ai-improve-mental-health-for-100-million-people/>

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/03/06/can-ai-treat-mental-illness>