

CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

This is a psychology seminar on "close relationships," designed specifically for first year university students. In seminars, the participants read on selected topics and share their understandings of the readings within the group. This course assumes no prior work in college level psychology. It is expected that students will participate actively in all phases of the course. Your participation and interaction with the other group members is a major feature of the class. Ms. Tiffany Mills, a senior psychology major, is the assistant leader of the seminar, and she also will be available to help you throughout the term.

Specifically, there are four major objectives of this seminar:

1. To read and discuss a book on close relationships, written from a psychological perspective;
2. To foster your ability to express your ideas in a group setting, and to learn from others in that setting;
3. To sharpen your skills for expressing your ideas in writing;
4. To make this an outstandingly enjoyable experience!

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND READINGS:

Topics for this course will include the development of closeness, theories of closeness and intimacy, friendships, courtships, marriage, and the failures of closeness, such as loneliness and marital dysfunction. The book we will read is entitled *Intimate Relationships (2nd Edition)*, (1991), by Sharon Brehm. There are no examinations for this seminar. Your grade for this course will be based on four types of student activity:

1. *Class participation (20%).*

You are encouraged to make contributions to class discussions based on the readings. (How quickly I learn who you are will be a good indication of how active you are! It is not a good idea to sit quietly most of the time.)

2. *Reaction summaries (30%).*

We will be reading the entire book, 15 assigned readings for this course. You may choose any **five** chapters and write a two or three page reaction summary for each choice. The reaction summaries will always be due on a Thursday. It is OK to use information from in-class discussion of that chapter. These reaction summaries must be typed (printed). I am most interested in your own THINKING as prompted by the reading and discussion. What did you personally get out of it? What ideas did it suggest to you? Where might you go next with your new information? I will assign a letter grade to the papers in terms of how thoughtful they appear, what original reactions they contain, and my judgment of their sincerity. (This means you will be writing a minimum of 10 pages during the entire course.)

(over)

3. Team Class Presentation (25%).

Team class presentations and the team paper, described below, count 50% toward your grade and therefore should be taken seriously. The entire class will be divided into 5 teams, 4 people per team. Each team will be responsible for a specific topic that they will present to the group during one class meeting, according to a prearranged schedule; the schedule and choice of topics will be worked out the first week of classes. Each team member should take responsibility for one-fourth of the presentation. A single grade is assigned to the team and its members!

4. Team Term Paper (25%).

The same teams of 4 people will then be responsible for a written team paper. This is to be a more detailed account of the team's in-class presentation. It should be 10 to 15 pages maximum, including references. I will assist each team in forming an outline for their paper and in finding relevant readings. Note: The paper should go beyond the assigned readings. A single grade is assigned to the team paper; each member gets that grade regardless of their contribution. (Think about it!)

For the first four weeks of the class we will cover the foundations of close relationships by reading reviews of theory and research on the various topics.

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

1. First, note how short winter term is. There are 10 weeks! The team papers are due the last day of class (3/12/92). Any team paper turned in after that date will lose points at the rate of 5 points per day, including weekend days. To succeed you must budget your time and you must start work early on your projects.

2. Ask questions about everything you are not sure of. If you have a question then figure that someone else also does. Ask questions! The only foolish questions in this class are the one's people fail to ask.

3. Get to know your fellow classmates. Find out how they are doing. Show leadership in your team meetings! Do not let petty differences bog you down. The members of a team have a responsibility to one another. If there is a problem with a member, work it out as a team. Remember, your goal is to make an interesting presentation and an interesting paper. Excuses about a team member (e.g., "We didn't do so good because Joe was a jerk most of the time.") are uninteresting to the rest of us.

4. Take advantage of my feedback. I will help you as much as you request. I will give you feedback about your writing. The aim is to help you to improve your communication skills. This seminar provides a special opportunity to develop communication skills.

5. If you are bored or the course is uninteresting check it out with me. Together we should be able to pinpoint the problem and correct it. I doubt that you will be bored; but if you are, then something is wrong and we need to examine what can be done to help. Don't sit through the term with a problem.

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Menu of Possible Term Paper Topic Choices:¹

- Attachment theory (How do we learn to be close?)
- Attractiveness research (Is it only skin deep?)
- Cohabitation and relationship satisfaction (Does it matter?)
- Factors in marital satisfaction (What is it, and what influences it?)
- Friendship research (Development, maintenance, changes in.)
- Gay relationships (Similar or different from straight relationships?)
- Gender differences in emotional communication (Do males and females differ?)
- Loneliness (Normal or abnormal?)
- Love research (Can love be studied scientifically?)
- Social skills research (Is there such a thing as social skill?)
- Social support and health effects (Does having friends facilitate health?)
- Violence in dating relationships (Love gone wrong?)

Library Reference Sources:

The best place to begin looking for additional readings on topics for your paper is the list of references in the Brehm book itself.

If you don't already know how to use the reference system called Psyc-Lit please ask the reference librarian. This is a CD-ROM system that lets you get abstracts of articles on many topics in psychology.

There is also the library's computer catalogue system called JANUS which allows you to enter a topic and it will show what books deal with that topic. But if you put in a general word like "love" you will get thousands of books (including poetry etc.)!

Finally, this is a good book that covers many of the topics relevant to our seminar:

Duck, S. (1988). (Ed.) *Handbook of Personal Relationships: Theory, research and Interventions*, New York: Wiley.

¹ These are suggested topics. The group may wish to generate different topics of greater interest. That is perfectly acceptable. But we will need to form four person groups with an identified topic.

**CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS
A Psychological Perspective**

Syllabus

Week	Date	Topic	Chapter
1	1/7 T 9 H	Organization of seminar Defining the Scope of Close Relationships Methods for studying interpersonal closeness	1, (2)
2	14 T 16 H	Interpersonal Attraction Relationship Development	3 6
3	21 T 23 H	Relationship Development (cont'd) Love and Romance	7 4
4	28 T 30 H	Sexuality Social Power	5 9
5	2/4 T 6 H	Team 1: Presentation Models of marital adjustment	8,10
6	11 T 13 H	Improving Intimate Relationships Team 2: Presentation	14
7	18 T 20 H	Shyness, Loneliness Team 3: Presentation	12
8	25 T 27 H	Concepts of social support Team 3: PresentationTeam 4: Presentation	13
9	3/3 T 5 H	Communication and adjustment Team 4: PresentationTeam 5: Presentation	15
10	10 T 12 H	Team 5: Presentation PAPERS DUE : Group evaluation of seminar	