

Sul Ross State University – Behavioral and Social Science Department PSY 4310 Course Syllabus – Summer 1 2019

Course Title: Psychology in the Movies
Prerequisites: General Psychology (PSY 1302)
Contact Information: Alicia M. Trotman, PhD, alicia.trotman@sulross.edu, 432-837-8147
Office (LH306) Hours: By appointment

“May the Force be with you.” Star Wars

Course Description and Goals

Welcome! The aim of this course is to expose you to psychological theories that manifest themselves in the world of movies – American and International. How do psychological topics portray themselves in movies? Psychology topics can be memory, personality, disorders, learning, therapy, institutionalization, legal defenses, obedience and authority, labeling and stigmatization. The primary goal is to use your sensory abilities to discern how concepts act themselves out among sentient beings and objects. The secondary goal is to utilize critical thinking and intuition to determine the validity of these film portrayals, and how they may lead to knowledge or misconceptions in the real world. Our readings and class discussion will focus on the prevalence and accuracy of these topics as illustrated in the movies, and the impact of such illustrations on understanding the discipline of psychology. We will read background material on each topic from various textbooks and scholarly articles, write critical thinking reaction papers to each film, and will be responsible for creating a sensory board on an area of psychology, chosen from a provided list of topics. All required films will be viewed during regular class time.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Identify and describe how psychological topics may manifest through behaviors (verbal and non-verbal) in pictures.
Method of Assessment: Reading Exercises and Response Posts
2. Critique the representation of these behaviors and roles examining their currency with present society.
Method of Assessment: Reading Exercises and Response Posts
3. Learn and apply the complexities of psychological theories in such ways to distinguish the subjectivities of those that are diagnosed, those that perform the diagnosis, and those that become enmeshed with the diagnosis (e.g. caregivers).
Method of Assessment: Reading Exercises and Response Posts

Text

Readings will be provided for this course. However, you are welcome to rent or purchase movies at your own expense.

Course Requirements

1. Respect for students and lecturer must be maintained at all times when we meet. Respect is a basic human characteristic that entitles each person to their own right and identity. It also helps to nurture a

healthy learning environment. If you recognize that respecting others may be a problem, please be courteous and alert me or more suitable personnel (e.g. Sul Ross State University psychologists, family members, lecturers, close friends) and or refer to the Student Conduct and Discipline section of the [SRSU Student Handbook](#).

2. During the course of this class, you may have strong emotional/psychological reactions to the course material and/or discussions. If you feel that you are having difficulty with the learning environment, please discuss this with me immediately before continuing the course. Counseling and Accessibility Services (<http://www.sulross.edu/section/2408/counseling-accessibility-services>) can provide brief, short-term individual and group counseling or refer you to off-campus providers. You have already paid for these services through your Student Service Fee, whether you use them or not.

“In this life time, you don’t have to prove nothing to nobody, except yourself. And after what you’ve gone through, if you haven’t done that by now, it ain’t gonna never happen.” ~ Fortune, from Rudy

AMERICANS with DISABILITIES ACT STATEMENT:

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. **In order to receive accommodations on exams or assignments, you must first provide proper documentation to the Office of Counseling and Accessibility Services.** Please contact Mary Schwartze, Counselor, Accessibility Services Coordinator (Office: 112 Ferguson Hall) to set up an accommodations meeting, call (432) 837-8203 or mail to P.O. Box C-171 Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832. Students must then present this documentation to the instructor as soon as possible so that accommodations may be arranged.

Honoring Academic Integrity

Any instance of academic misconduct such as (1) turning in an identical written assignment for another course without approval, (2) copying from any source without proper citation, (3) crossing the boundary of what is allowed in a group project, (4) lying in connection with your academic work, (5) cheating, (6) plagiarism, (7) misrepresenting facts and/or collusion are contrary to the purpose of any educational institution and will be dealt with **most severely** to the extent of the university’s disciplinary policy and/or through legal action if indicated. You will be held responsible for your actions. Particular attention will be directed to the appropriate use of materials available through the Internet. Whether intentional or not, improper use of materials is a violation of academic honesty and integrity. If you are unsure as to what is permissible, please speak with me. An instructor who determines that a student has been dishonest academically can at a minimum issue no credit for the assignment/exam, and/or pursue more severe penalties, including but not limited to failing the course. Before the penalty is imposed, the student has the right to appeal to the division chairperson or Assistant Provost for the Academic Affairs. Further information about *Academic Honesty* can be read in the [SRSU Student Handbook](#) and procedures for dealing with these acts are outlined in the [Scholastic Dishonesty Policy](#).

Observing Class Guidelines

Class Attendance and Participation

This is a course that requires in class discussion and online experiences. **Class attendance IS REQUIRED and participation is important.** Class participation and attendance will be worth 15% of the final grade, and includes *prompt and regular attendance, active listening, writing, participating via an online poll or quiz,*

engaging in discussions, volunteering or doodling. Early departure or late arrival for class (more than 15 minutes) on a weekly basis will lower your participation grade. If you repeatedly leave early or are late to class (**more than twice**), this will be counted as one absence and may result in a failing grade for the course. At your earliest convenience, arrange to make up any missing work as far in advance of your absence as possible. If you are unable to attend a class session for other circumstances, please discuss the reason with me BEFORE class that day. You will still be required to view the movie and write the paper, on your own time, before class the following week. *Excessive unexcused absences (more than 6 missed class sessions) WILL result in a failing grade for the course.* Excused absences due to established religious observance, or emergency, university-authorized, legal or medical issues and events will not count toward the absence limit but do require written documentation.

Besides attendance, all other forms of participation judged subjectively by me that showcases active involvement will increase your participation grade.

Late Assignments/Projects

You are expected to meet assignment deadlines. An **individual single reaction paper** less than three pages will automatically be considered the same as if you did not turn in a paper at all and will cause you to Fail the course. You must also turn in every paper on time (that's before 6:00 pm the following week on **Monday**, uploaded to the appropriate link on Blackboard). A **group reaction paper** less than four pages will automatically be considered the same as if you did not turn in a paper at all and will cause you and your partner to Fail the course. You must also turn in every paper on time (that's before 6:00 pm the following week on **Tuesday**, uploaded to the appropriate link on Blackboard). For excused absences (university-authorized, legal or medical issues), speak with me **before the absence** so arrangements can be made.

Cell Phone and Computer Use

During the entire class period, you should be fully engaged in the day's activity. Laptop computers or tablets are welcomed at every class meeting for the academic purposes of note taking or following along with the instructor's lesson. Inappropriate computer usage (e.g. checking your e-mail, using instant messaging, accessing Facebook, etc) or off-topic activity (e.g., reading the newspaper, cell phone use) is highly discouraged and very disrespectful to the instructor and your peers. Please be advised that computer or cell phone use not pertaining to the class activity or discussion will be noted and result in being marked "absent" for the day.

Discussing Evaluation

Students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter and understanding of class material and discussions in the following ways:

Reaction Papers (Individual)

1. Written Pages: Every week, you will watch two films. You will write a reaction paper for **one film** shown that week. Papers must be typed, with 1-inch margins, 12-point font, double spaced. These papers must be at least **three FULL pages** in length (not 2 pages and a single line on a 3rd page).
2. Cover Page: You will have a cover page for each reaction paper that has your name and the name of the film.

What should be in the reaction paper?

The reaction paper should focus most on the portrayal of the topic in that day's movie, and whether the movie presented this aspect of psychology in a realistic way. You can address...

- ✚ What was realistic (possibly good) about the way this topic was portrayed in the movie?
- ✚ What is incorrect/misleading (possibly bad) about the way this topic was portrayed in the movie?

- ✦ When people unaware of psychological principles view this movie, what effect or impact do you think it has on their perceptions of both this particular topic and on psychology or psychologists in general? If psychologists appear as characters, was this portrayal positive, negative, accurate, etc.?
- ✦ If you were going to create a re-make/prequel/sequel of this movie, how would you change the characters' lives or the situation to make the portrayal more realistic, or include things that were left out of the movie? (If listing another movie, there should be an academic reason for the additional movie.)
- ✦ You may also discuss other things you think are relevant to the impact this movie has on general society, from a psychological perspective - *History* (e.g. where did it start? What is the source? Etiology?); *Media Portrayals*; *Research Study*; *Character's Life* (e.g. illustrate the person's life in the film); *Daily Lives of People* (e.g. illustrate a case study in current society).

What should NOT be in the reaction paper?

- ❖ Simply summarize the movie. There should be zero paragraphs which summarize the film without reference to any aspect of psychology (a symptom, concept etc.).
- ❖ Simply list/discuss aspects of the disorder WITHOUT reference to the movie at all.

In order to answer these questions, you should rely heavily on the topic presentation that precedes the film and the scoring rubric. However, you are welcome to add information for your papers from other classes or reputable websites you have learned at the university that are relevant to the topic of the day. If you do this, be sure to properly cite your sources on a separate page (references do not count toward your three page minimum). **If you plagiarize, you will automatically Fail the ENTIRE course.** Each weekend, you will get your previous paper back with a grade of "Check Plus," "Check," or "Check Minus." As long as you get "Checks" and "Check Pluses," you'll be fine. If you receive more than five grades of "Check Minus," you will fail the course.

Reaction Papers (Group)

1. Written Pages: We will watch at least ten films for the entire semester. You and your partner will conduct a peer assessment of each other's reaction paper for each of **two films** shown for the entire semester. You will use the same rubric that assessed the individual reaction papers. These papers follow the same format as your individual reaction papers, but the movies selected for your group reaction papers **are not the same movies** that you selected for your individual reaction papers.

Screenplay

During the semester, each student will write a screenplay that will be shown/demonstrated on the final day of class. You have two options:

1. **Original Story.** The highest potential grade for this script is an A. You will create an original story, remembering to use the elements of narrative we will review in class (setting, character development, cause and effect, climax, resolution, etc).
2. **Adaptation of a Movie.** The highest potential grade for this script is a B. You will create a screenplay as an adaptation of one of the films shown in class. The screenplay that you write must stand outside of the original movie. In other words, it must be a completely new narrative or story. I reserve the right to reward exceptional adaptations a higher grade, but this is less than likely because adaptations require less creativity than originals. If this option is chosen, you must cite the original work in accurate APA format.

It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to discuss with the class your ideas about your screenplay so you need to take this responsibility seriously.

Your screenplay can be physical or digital. Your final product will include the following three aspects:

1. Create a synopsis—write a summary of your story including the beginning, climax, and resolution.

2. Create a basic outline—using the format we will discuss for basic outlines, write what will happen in Act I, Act II, and Act III of your screenplay. Act I and Act III will have one or two scenes including plot points and Act II will have one to three scenes including plot points. Act I and Act III each should be around 25% of your story, while Act II is 50% of your story.
3. Write/Direct a screenplay—following the guidelines we will discuss proper format in class. If written, the screenplay is 7-15 pages double-spaced. If directed, the movie should be 7 – 12 minutes long.
4. At the end of the semester, YOUR PRESENTATION WILL BE BETWEEN 10-20 MINUTES. Your presentation entails reading your synopsis and reading/showing your screenplay. If it is shorter or longer, you will Fail the course.

Grading

Students are expected to complete reading assignments prior to class sessions and to engage in thoughtful discussions in light of these assignments. In addition, students will write reaction papers, as they compose their sensory board.

Grading:	1000 points total	Percentage
Reaction Papers (6)	700 points total	70%
Check Plus	100 points (4 individual) 150 points (2 group)	
Check	80 points (4 individual) 120 points (2 group)	
Check Minus	60 points (4 individual) 90 points (2 group)	
Movie Script	200 points	20%
Participation	100 points	10%

“You can’t handle the truth!” A Few Good Men

Day	Content
May 29th	Introduction
Homework	Read syllabus...
May 30th & 31st	Movie 1
Homework	Review
June 3rd & 4th	Movie 2
Homework	Individual Reaction Paper 1
June 5th	Readings and Discussion
Homework	{Screenplay}
June 6th & 7th	Movie 3
Homework	Review
June 10th & 11th	Movie 4
Homework	Individual Reaction Paper 2 (and Group Reaction Paper 1)
June 12th	Readings and Discussion
Homework	{Screenplay}
June 13th & 14th	Movie 5
Homework	Review
June 17th & 18th	Movie 6

Homework	Individual Reaction Paper 3 (and Group Reaction Paper 2)
June 19th	Readings and Discussion
Homework	{Screenplay}
June 20 th & 21 st	Movie 7
Homework	Review
June 24 th & 25 th	Movie 8
Homework	Individual Reaction Paper 4
June 26th	Readings and Discussion
Homework	{Screenplay}
June 27 th & 28 th	Movies 9 & 10
Homework	Review
July 1st & 2nd	Readings & Discussion
Homework	{Screenplay}
July 3rd	Screenplay Presentations
Homework	{Screenplay}
July 5th	Screenplay Presentations

YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY PASS THE COURSE IF YOU:

1. PARTICIPATE IN EVERY CLASS.
2. TURN IN ALL OF YOUR PAPERS ON TIME.
3. COMPOSE & SUBMIT YOUR SCREENPLAY ON TIME.
4. TURN IN ANY PAPERS THAT ARE 3 FULL PAGES LONG OR LONGER FOR INDIVIDUAL & GROUP REACTION PAPERS.
5. ASSESS YOU PARTNER'S REACTION PAPER FAIRLY USING THE RUBRIC.
6. RECEIVE MORE THAN FIVE GRADES OF "CHECK" OR "CHECK PLUS" ON THE PAPERS.

Bibliography

Westerville City School District. (n.d.). *Screenplay assignment* [DOC file]. Retrieved from

<http://www.wcsoh.org/userfiles/3879/Classes/7879/Screenplay%20Assignment.doc>

Young, S. D. (2012). *Psychology at the movies*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.