

# PSCH 3303: Positive Psychology

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[Version 2.0 – Subject to Minor Revision]

## **I. Essential Course Information**

### A. The Course Description

Positive psychology is the scientific study of human mental strengths and character virtues that allow people and communities to thrive. Topics such as optimism, meaning, hope, wisdom, transcendence, and courage are covered. Theoretical concepts including self-efficacy, mindfulness, flow, learned optimism, social capital, and affective forecasting are addressed.

### B. Our Meeting Time and Location

This course is a web course (also known now as an “online asynchronous” course).

### C. Your Instructor

Professor Wesley D Wynne

Email: [wwynne@sulross.edu](mailto:wwynne@sulross.edu)

Office: Uvalde A105

Phone: 830-279-3044

When to contact: Anytime. From your own Sul Ross email account, email me to convey your concerns or to make an appointment. Out of courtesy, provide your name in every email, and state which course you are taking. Fridays from 1 pm to 4 pm are my office hours for advising and student appointments. And for students in my VMR courses, 8:50 pm to 9:30 pm after class is set aside for online time with you each week.

### D. Your Course Materials

#### Required Texts

- *Positive Psychology (4<sup>th</sup> edition)*, by Lopez, Pedrotti, and Snyder. ISBN: 978-1506357355.
- *Siddhartha*, by Hesse. ISBN: 978-0142437186.
- *The Great Divorce*, by Lewis. ISBN: 978-0060652951.
- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, (7<sup>th</sup> edition)*, by APA. ISBN: 978-1433832161.

### E. The Student Learning Objectives for this Course

The objectives of this course are to:

- Identify and discuss the major topic areas in the recently defined area of research known as positive psychology.
- Encounter and apply positive psychology experientially through completing a series of self-reflective exercises.
- Apply the knowledge learned by successfully completing interactive assignments and by actively participating in the course.

## II. Your Assignments

### A. Chapter Exams (30%)

Weekly exams will cover material from the main textbook chapters. Each exam will be posted and available from 12 noon on Monday until at least 11:59 pm on Tuesday every week of the semester, except holidays. Multiple choice, true/false, and short answer exams may have a time limit of one hour or less, but essay or written summary exams will have an extended time limit: Saturdays at 11:59 pm.

Every student enrolled in this course is expected to attempt each exam that is given. However, absences from *any three* weekly exams will be allowed without penalty, no excuses necessary.

☛ Students who miss more than three exams may be dropped from the course with an automatic F for non-participation.

Power outages, Internet disruptions, or other problems that might occur at your home, but these problems will not be accepted as excuses for missing an exam.

### B. Reflection Exercises (20%)

Brief reflection exercises (one to two pages) will be assigned. They will be submitted on Blackboard each week and will be due on Saturdays at 11:59 pm.

### C. Discussion Participation (15%)

Each student should contribute to all online discussions. Discussions will be posted and available from 12 noon on Monday to 11:59 pm on Tuesday each week of the semester, except holidays.

Regular participation in the online discussions is highly recommended and counts for a significant percentage of the course grade.

All postings should be thoughtful and literate. Thoughtful contributions will receive credit; insubstantial contributions will not. Below is an example of a credited versus an un-credited contribution on the topic of “Love and Friendship” in a course on human sexuality:

Example of a Thoughtful Contribution - Credited:

*I really enjoyed this chapter because it made a lot of my own "theories" make sense. One topic that really interested me was people marrying for money instead of love. My sister is the type of person that would marry for money instead of love and that is something that I never understood. She recently moved to California and has totally adopted a typical California attitude. Along with this, she has surprised the entire family. She is a very pretty girl, 20 years old and dating a man who is 32, very rich, but very unattractive. He is controlling and manipulative and is constantly making her change her ways of life. But he takes her to very expensive restaurants*

*and buys her very expensive things and she thinks that makes it all better. She thinks he is so "cool" because he drives a \$70,000 car. She even admits that she is only with him for his money. I have never understood how someone could live so unhappily just because they want to be rich. What upsets me the most is that we weren't brought up that way, and I don't understand where she got it.*

Example of a Poor Contribution – No Credit Awarded:

*I don't know. I don't think I believe in love because people just want to take advantage of you and stuff. I get tired of it.*

#### D. Film Reflection Paper (10%)

An inspirational film, *Chariots of Fire*, will be assigned in this class. A five-page reflection paper connecting this film to other material covered in this course will be written. Students will link aspects of this film with topics covered in the chapters of the main text, and with their own observations and experiences. For this assignment, carefully read and follow the guidelines in the attachments to this syllabus.

#### E. Book Reflection Paper (20%)

Two great classics, *Siddhartha* and *The Great Divorce*, will be read and discussed during the second half of the semester. A ten-page reflection paper connecting these books to other material covered in this course will be written. Students will link aspects of these books with topics covered in the chapters of the main text, and with their own observations and experiences. For this assignment, carefully read and follow the guidelines in the attachments to this syllabus.

Thirty percent of the assignment grade will derive from submitting the weekly chapter reflections on time; the balance will come from the quality of the final paper, as evaluated according to the guidelines found in the attachments to this course syllabus.

#### F. Final Paper (5%)

Students will log onto Blackboard and complete a brief assignment reflecting on what they have learned in this course, what they liked most, what they would tell others about the course, and how they think it could be improved in the future.

### **III. Assignment Calendar, Attendance Policy, and General Assignment Information**

#### **A. The Calendar**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Assignments and Topics</u>
August 28	Introduction; Read Ch.01: Welcome to Positive Psychology
*September 4	<i>Labor Day Holiday – No Sul Ross Classes</i>
September 5	Ch.01 Exam; Read Ch.02: Eastern & Western Perspectives
September 11	Ch.02 Exam; Read Ch.03: Classifications & Measures
September 18	Ch.03 Exam; Read Ch.04: The Role of Culture
September 25	Ch.04 Exam; Read Ch.05: Living Well
October 2	Ch.05 Exam; Read Ch.06: The Principles of Pleasure
October 9	Ch.06 Exam; Read Ch.07: Making the Most
October 16	Ch.07 Exam; Read Ch.08: Seeing Our Futures
October 23	Ch.08 Exam; Read Ch.09: Wisdom & Courage
October 30	Ch.09 Exam; Read Ch.10: Mindfulness, Flow, and Spirituality
November 6	Ch.10 Exam; Read Ch.11: Empathy & Egotism
November 11	<i>Film Reflection Paper is due.</i>
November 13	Ch.11 Exam; Read Ch.12: Attachment, Love...
November 20	Ch.12 Exam; Read Ch.13: Balanced Conceptualizations
*November 17	<i>Last possible day to drop this class with a W</i>
November 27	Ch.13 Exam; Read Ch.14: Preventing Bad, Promoting Good
*November 22-24	<i>Thanksgiving Holidays – No Sul Ross Classes</i>
December 2	<i>Book Reflection Paper is due.</i>
December 4	Ch.14 Exam; Class Summation
December 11	<u>Final Exam</u>
*December 16	<i>Fall Commencement</i>
*December 18	<i>Final Grades Reported</i>

Notice: The schedule of topics above is subject to change for pedagogical reasons at the discretion of the instructor.

#### **B. The Attendance Policy**

Sul Ross State University allows that students may be automatically dropped with an F from courses if they acquire excessive absences, defined as nine hours of absence from a course. (This translates to 3 absences from an evening course, 6 absences from a daytime course, and 3 absences from a summer course). The professor may enforce this policy strictly whenever a pattern of negligent behavior is observed.

In web courses, three hours of absence will be defined as one calendar week of non-participation in a summer or fall course, or four continuous days of non-participation in a summer course, as measured by completion of exams, participation in discussions, and submission of other assignments on Blackboard.

Students who without authorization arrive late or leave class early for any reason without approval may be counted absent for the entire session. Attendance may be taken at any time during a class meeting and more than once during a class meeting. Students who are not present for roll call will be counted absent.

### C. General Assignment Information

Assignments must be submitted through Blackboard unless otherwise authorized. Assignments that are emailed without prior authorization will not be considered submitted.

If you have a problem that prevents you from submitting an assignment on time, contact the professor immediately once you determine that you cannot resolve the problem and submit the assignment as instructed. Waiting until after the deadline to contact the professor may result in forfeiture of the grade for the assignment.

Exam dates will not be changed except in exceptional circumstances. Deadlines for other assignments, such as papers and presentations, may in certain circumstances be postponed to a later date, but not advanced to an earlier date. (In other words, students may in some instances be granted additional time to submit assignments.)

If it is not possible to administer a final exam (for example, due to an internet outage, power outage, emergency school closure, or other extraordinary circumstances), final grades for this course will be calculated solely from the assignments submitted prior to the final exam.

☛ Other than any exceptions described herein, all major assignments in this course *must be completed and submitted to pass this course*, regardless of a student's grades on other assignments. Students who do not submit *all major written assignments* by their deadlines are liable to receive an F as a final grade for this course.

☛ Do not wait to complete and submit major assignments on their due dates. Due dates are deadlines. They are the final opportunities to submit your work; they are not the ideal opportunities to submit your work. So don't wait until the last possible day to submit something important. The reason is simple: things can go wrong. Emergencies arise. Electrical service can be interrupted. Computer equipment can malfunction. You or someone in your family can suddenly get sick. So fight the temptation to procrastinate. Try to submit a good version of each major assignment a day or two before the deadline. You can go back and upload revisions until the last minute if nothing goes wrong. But don't run the risk of a last-minute disaster. If and when late work is accepted in this class, it will be penalized 25 points per calendar day.

### D. Extra Credit Information

Extra credit assignments may be offered in this class. Certain extra credit opportunities might involve an invitation to participate in an event at a physical location or being online at a particular time. If your other responsibilities or your own location make it inconvenient for you to participate in a particular extra credit assignment, don't fret. No

extra credit opportunity will disadvantage students who, for whatever reason, do not participate. Extra credit does not affect the curve at all; it is just added on top of grades already earned. It's just something extra.

## **IV. Grading**

### **A. The Calculation of Grades**

Grades for each assignment, and for the course itself, are calculated as follows: A: 90% or above; B: 80%-89%; C: 70%-79%; D: 60%-69%; F: 0%-59%.

On assignments with curved grades, the top score(s) will be converted to a 100. All other grades on the assignment will be expressed as a percentage of the top scores. For example, if the top score on an exam is a 20 out of 25 items, the 20 will be converted to a 100. If you answer 15 of the 25 questions correctly, your grade will be a 15/20, which is equal to a 75 (in other words, a C).

The times and dates when assignments are due and when evaluations are given will not be altered to fit a student's schedule. All students will be expected to alter their schedules to fit class responsibilities.

In the interest of more thorough coverage of certain topics, the professor may decide to omit some of the assigned material from coverage on an exam. Each student is responsible for learning about any announced omissions.

### **B. The Basis of Final Grades**

Grades in this course are based on performance alone. They will not be rounded upwards. Grading is not based on how hard someone has worked to earn a particular grade, or whether someone needs this course to graduate, or on personal & family needs, or on personal conceptions of fairness or justice. All grades, including the final course grade, will be based on a student's academic performance in this course, according to the criteria described in this syllabus.

### **C. The Reporting of Final Grades**

For non-graduating students, final course grades will be posted at noon on the Monday after commencement (and for graduating seniors, at noon on the Friday before commencement). Final exam week is a hectic time for students and the faculty alike, so please respect the privacy of all your professors during and after this period. Please do not inquire concerning grades between the start of the final exams period and when grades are reported. If the professor needs information from you during this time, he will be the one to initiate contact.

Unsolicited voicemails and emails from any non-graduating student during the final exams period might have to go unanswered. Please understand that any issues of grading that truly must be resolved may still be resolved *after* final grades are reported.

Access to assignment grades and other course content will also be available to you on Blackboard until the week after commencement.

## **V. Upholding Academic Integrity**

### **A. The Honor Code**

As members of an academic community, no student should tolerate cheating. According to the traditional academic honor code, it is the responsibility of every student to report obvious cheating or any suspicious behavior that may compromise the integrity of the grading process. The confidentiality and anonymity of students who report such incidents will be respected.

### **B. Policies on Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty and the penalties pertaining to it are described in the SRSU student handbook. The penalties for serious academic dishonesty are severe: a student who submits a plagiarized paper or cheats on an exam may receive an F for the assignment, and in cases of repeated or flagrant violations, for the entire course.

A plagiarized written assignment may be awarded a zero on academic grounds alone, yet the offending student may face additional disciplinary penalties for academic dishonesty. Plagiarism, as every college student should know, involves taking the work of others and claiming it as your own. It will not be tolerated in this class. If you are unsure about what plagiarism is, find out online at [www.plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org). You and you alone are responsible for understanding and avoiding academic dishonesty in all your assignments.

Students may not print, photograph, copy, or in any other way reproduce material from any exam, and no student may share, receive, or knowingly read such material.

Students may not use books, notes, cell phones or any other informational materials or electronic devices during testing, unless authorized by the professor. While taking an exam, students should not use any electronic device other than the device on which an exam is being taken.

Students may not share books, notes, make phone calls, send texts, or engage in any other form of communication with each other during exams. Nor may students communicate about material included on an exam with a classmate or in the presence of a classmate who has not yet completed that exam.

In a testing classroom or lab, students should not sit next to other students who are taking the same test unless no other seats are available. Students should not talk while exams are being administered. During Blackboard exams, students should not open, view, or interact with any website other than the Blackboard website.

☛ The consequence of violating any of these directives can be severe. Doing so may result in the forfeiture of an assignment grade and other penalties, up to and including dismissal from the course with a grade of F.

## **VI. Courtesy and Good Conduct in Class**

Out of courtesy to others, always remember to follow the conventional classroom rules, such as: do not distract others from learning; always show up to class on time; do not leave class early. (If you must leave early or show up late in special circumstances, please notify the professor ahead of time.) And absolutely do not get up to get food, take calls, or for other trivial reasons. Breaks are always provided, so wait until a break.

Students in VMR classes (that is, classes which meet online using applications such as Teams, Zoom, Lifesize, et cetera) must be able to log in with a working camera and a working microphone on their device. The camera must be turned on and the student must appear in the frame at almost all times, with few exceptions. Anyone whose camera is turned off or whose face is not in frame may be removed from VMR class meetings and not allowed back in for the remainder of the meeting. Visual and auditory disruptions and distractions must be kept to a minimum for the benefit of everyone. For this reason, no eating or drinking on camera is allowed except during breaks. No one may be logged into VMR class meetings from an automobile, whether stationary or in transit, whether driving or as a passenger. This is a matter of public safety.

Sul Ross has a policy on appropriate attire. The policy refers to “the responsibility to dress in a manner which will not detract from the academic atmosphere of the library, classrooms, and other facilities.” Even when logging into a class from home, students should always present themselves in a socially appropriate and dignified manner. Any student whose attire or behavior detracts from the academic atmosphere to an extent that it becomes seriously or repeatedly distracting or disruptive will be notified by the professor and expected to resolve the problem.

## **VII. Cultivating a Vibrant Academic Environment**

### **A. Tolerance, Open Expression, and Academic Freedom**

Psychology is a field of inquiry that touches upon many controversial issues, including sexuality, evolution, gender, race, ethnicity, individual differences, parenting, divorce, crime and public policy, drug use, religion, and multicultural issues, among others. Professors and students often have strong opinions and make forceful arguments concerning these phenomena. It is often educationally productive to address and debate these matters in the context of classroom instruction and course assignments. Social taboos discouraging open discussion are inappropriate in this context and must be laid aside in the interest of intellectual inquiry.



Your grade will not be influenced in any way by expressing points of view that disagree with the professor's, either in what you say or in what you write in assignments. In class, when time permits, students are encouraged to express their opinions and arguments when they are relevant to the subject material. The professor is free to do likewise.

Students who experience excessive anxiety or discomfort during the discussion of a sensitive topic (e.g., domestic abuse) may leave the classroom if the need arises, and they should never feel embarrassed for doing so. This can be an adaptive response to an emotionally difficult situation.

In contrast, some individuals in our society seem to be offended in principle by the mere exposure to concepts, opinions, and arguments with which they disagree. The response of such individuals is sometimes to try and shut down discussion, to claim they feel "unsafe," or to become hostile or vindictive toward others. Such persons are not encouraged to take psychology courses at Rio Grande College until they have resolved the issues preventing them from engaging in serious intellectual discourse.

#### B. Dr. Wynne's Teaching Philosophy

A college degree signifies accomplishment; it will increase a person's prestige and can help its holder acquire a job. However, once the job is taken, success depends on what has been learned—a college degree by itself is merely a sheet of paper. If a student takes full advantage of the opportunity of education, the sheet of paper signifies skills and knowledge that will improve one's value as a worker and as a member of the community. If not, the student might find himself or herself with a sheet of paper only, without additional skills, useful knowledge, or value to employers. RGC psychology courses are designed to provide students with knowledge and skills that will help them in their careers, in their relationships, and in their capacity to be responsible members of a community.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American writer Albert Jay Nock had this to say about his college experience:

We were made to understand that the burden of education was on us and no one else, least of all our instructors; they were not there to help us carry it or to praise our efforts, but to see that we shouldered it in proper style and got on with it.

I believe that through encouragement and deserved praise, college professors can and should ease the burden of education for their students. Yet students who enroll at Sul Ross must remember they are expected to perform upper-division college-level work. No course in the psychology curriculum is remedial. As Albert Jay Nock understood, a professor's responsibility is to lead students to knowledge; it is, however, each student's responsibility to learn.

The typical American psychology undergraduate curriculum and textbook are designed to prepare students to become psychological researchers or practitioners. Yet few

students here who major in psychology plan to become psychologists. Instead, many intend to become counselors, and many others expect that their major in psychology will help them in a variety of ways. I believe that while exposure to research methods and technical esoterica does have a rightful place in the undergraduate program, most of my students are much better served by a phenomenological educational orientation that places real-life applications of psychological theories and discoveries above a focus on technical training. Therefore, I strongly encourage students to relate and apply what is taught in my psychology classes to their own emotional lives, family lives, workplaces, and communities.

## **VIII. Ensuring Accessibility for Everyone**

### **A. Special Accommodations**

Our institution complies with state and federal laws concerning people with disabilities. If a student needs accessibility services, it is the student's responsibility to initiate a request. This may be done by contacting Mary Schwartz Grisham or Ronnie Harris at SRSU's office of Counseling and Accessibility Services. The phone number there is 432-837-8203 and the email address is [counseling@sulross.edu](mailto:counseling@sulross.edu).

Our school is contracting with an organization called TimelyCare. This organization provides counseling services. All students will have access to nine free counseling sessions this fall. For more information, visit <https://timelycare.com/srsu/> Sul Ross also offers counseling directly at the Alpine campus in Ferguson Hall Room 112, and through telehealth zoom sessions for RGC and remote students.

### **B. Distance Education**

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, library resources, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should submit online assignments through Blackboard or SRSU email, which require secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. [If the course requires students to take proctored exams or to purchase additional software or equipment, those requirements are described herein above.] The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students enrolled in online courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.

### **C. Purchasing Course Materials**

By law, this university is required to inform you of the following in accordance with Section 51.9705 of the Texas Education Code: "A student of this institution is not under any obligation to purchase a textbook from a university-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online

retailer." In fact, bargains on textbooks are often found on the websites of many Internet booksellers. Major online vendors typically accept major credit cards, checks, and money orders.

It is the student's responsibility to acquire course materials in time for their use in class. Many weeks before the start of each semester, textbooks are made available for browsing and purchase at the website for the Sul Ross Bookstore ([www.sulross.edu/bookstore](http://www.sulross.edu/bookstore)). It is important that students have their course materials by the start of each semester. This is especially important for the summer semester, when classes proceed more rapidly than in the fall or spring.

## **IX. Our Psychology Program's Learning Objectives and Skills**

### **A. Student Learning Objectives for the Psychology Program**

This course is an element of the Sul Ross psychology program. It is expected that the graduating student in this program will demonstrate the capacity to:

1. Recognize the central concepts in the department's main areas of focus: abnormal psychology; social & personality psychology, and developmental psychology.
2. Recognize and apply basic psychological research methods.
3. Communicate effectively in written assignments and oral presentations concerning psychological subject matter.

### **B. Marketable Skills for the Psychology Program**

1. Students will demonstrate competency in public speaking and communicating scientific information to diverse audiences (speaking effectively).
2. Students will demonstrate empathic or active listening and conversational skills, and/or write clearly about their affective stance, respectfully attuned to the needs of their audiences (describing feelings).
3. Students will demonstrate the aptitude to locate, organize and evaluate the credibility of information from multiple sources (identifying resources).
4. Students will demonstrate the ability to examine the underlying issues of scientific problems, attending to the pertinent details and creating action plans, recognizing ambiguity and complexity as essential components (analyzing).

## **X. Syllabus Updates and Substantive Changes**

This syllabus was constructed to be as accurate and clear as possible. However, there is always a chance that errors or ambiguities might require the publication of updates after the semester begins. It is also possible that unforeseen circumstances might necessitate substantive changes to this syllabus. If substantive changes are made, they will be implemented in the interest of fairness for all students and in a way to minimize any inconvenience or difficulty for everyone.

**Attachment 1: General Guidelines for Written Assignments in Psychology**

Follow these specifications, unless you are instructed otherwise:

1. Refer to pp. 61-67 of your *APA Publication Manual (7<sup>th</sup> Ed.)* to format your paper.
2. Double space everything and use 12-point Times New Roman. That is exactly what you are reading here, and it is very easy to read on a screen or on paper.
3. Use one-inch margins all around on every page.
4. Number all your pages in the upper right-hand corner.
5. Always include a cover page. The cover page should be centered and it should include (listed on separate lines): your paper's title; your name; your program and school (Psychology Program, Sul Ross State University); the name of your course; your professor's name, and the due date for the assignment.
6. Create a title that is original and descriptive, not something bland and uncreative like "Psychology Reflection Paper" or "Journal Assignment 1."
7. Do not include an abstract in your paper. Abstracts are for scientific journals.
8. Include a references page; make sure that all your references should be formatted correctly in APA style (not in MLA style or some other style).
9. Grammar-check and spell-check your paper before submitting it.
10. Keep a back-up of your paper on your own computer.
11. Remember that your cover page and your references page do not count toward the page count of the paper. For example, a five-page reflection paper should have a title page, five *full* pages of text, and a references page.
12. Do not plagiarize at all. Plagiarizing (copying someone else's work and passing it off without credit as your own) will not be tolerated. You will fail for it.

## **Attachment 2: Summaries, Reflection Papers, and Journals**

A **summary** of something is essentially a retelling of key points. A summary paper should be clear, concise, hierarchical and as comprehensive as possible, given the length limitations of the assignment. Let's examine each of these terms. "Clear" means easy to read and understand. We attain clarity by being specific in what we say, using the simplest language possible to convey the right meaning, and obeying the rules of grammar, usage, and style that we depend on for effective communication. "Concise" means saying as much as possible in as few words as possible. "Hierarchical" in this context means focusing on what's most important and leaving out what is less important. "Comprehensive" means covering all the major elements of something. For example, a comprehensive summary of a book that has twenty chapters will summarize the main aspects of all twenty chapters, not merely ten or fifteen of them. A comprehensive summary of a textbook chapter with seven major topic headings will cover all seven of those major topics, and pull out the main points for each topic, leaving out minor points. Writing summaries of complex material such as chapters can be a useful aid in learning. complete the main points of a book or the plot of a film.

**Reflections papers** are, first of all, not summaries. A summary is descriptive, but it doesn't reveal much at all about you, the author, other than how effective you are at writing a summary. A reflection paper is an assignment where you write about your own reflections in response to something you are assigned to watch, listen to, read, or experience. (That something is frequently a film or book, but it could also be a short

story, a magazine article, a poem, a musical performance, a YouTube video, or many other things.)

So what are reflections? Reflections are your own thoughts, questions, insights, interpretations, and speculations about the psychological aspects of whatever you have been assigned to watch, listen to, read, or experience. Primarily, your reflections should relate to or connect with specific concepts and theories you have learned in this class (and in other psychology classes). To a lesser extent, you may include insights related to your own personal observations and experiences in your own life. However, the focus in every paragraph of a reflection paper should either be or closely relate to the assigned material, so only discuss things from your own life experience to demonstrate a connection with the assigned material.

One critical thing to remember about reflection papers is that you are not supposed to use them to summarize whatever you have been assigned. Here is an example of summarization in a paper that was supposed to be a reflection paper related to a film:

*The film "As Good as It Gets" involves a main character by the name of Melvin Udall, who is first depicted as a smart aleck with a lot of obsessive-compulsive tendencies a bad temper, and a selfish outlook toward others. Melvin is a writer who lives alone. He is next-door neighbors with a craftsman named Simon, who gets robbed and beaten. Melvin hesitantly helps Simon out by watching his dog while Simon recovers in a hospital and he eventually lets Simon move in with him. The other main character is Carol. Carol is a waitress at a coffee shop where Melvin goes for breakfast*

*each day. For Melvin, having breakfast at the coffee shop and having Carol wait on him is an important part of his daily routine. So one day, when Carol takes off work to deal with her sick child, Melvin becomes extremely restless because his routine is disrupted.*

That description is okay, but it's rather boring if you've already seen the movie. And honestly, if you wanted a summary of any film, you could find a much better one on the Internet. Although summaries can be very useful in the proper context, such as when you are trying to organize the essential points of a complex textbook chapter, they do not work in a reflection paper.

Once again, in contrast to summarizations of material, reflections are your own personal thoughts, questions, insights, interpretations, and speculations that relate to various psychological aspects of whatever you have been assigned (film, video, book, article, poem, et cetera). There are a million ways to write about your reflections, but here is one good example referring to the same film as above:

*Melvin was the character I'd hoped he would be, artistically speaking. He puts up a mental wall blocking out the people around him. I believe he was thinking that his emotions were a vulnerability that might expose weaknesses within him. I've seen that before in other people. Growing up, I was always told by an uncle to be careful with whom I share personal information because it can back-fire. Perhaps because of that strategy of dealing with people, my uncle's judgment of character has not been the best because he's always at arms-length with everyone he comes across, trying not to "let them in." So that similarity between my uncle and Melvin caught*

*my attention. Also, there is a stereotype that all artists must be a little crazy.*

*Like Melvin, my uncle is an artist. And he's a little crazy himself.*

Isn't that more interesting? It shows that the author here has seriously thought about what he saw in the film. He is analyzing one of the film's characters and he makes a perceptive comparison with a person from real life. The author's reflections here are psychologically sophisticated, original, and unique to his own thoughts and experiences.

So this is what you should aim for in a reflection paper. It might involve more effort than simply writing a summary, but it makes you think. And it is an effective way to learn more deeply about the ideas you are studying.

Once again, an essential point to understand about reflection papers is that whatever you write in a reflection paper should *connect in clear and significant ways* with whatever work you are reflecting on—the book, chapter, article, film, podcast, et cetera. Unless what you are writing is both psychological in focus and closely related to the work you were assigned to reflect on, then instead of writing a reflection paper, all you might be doing is writing a **journal**.

A few students submit reflection papers in which they only briefly mention the work they were assigned to reflect on, and then never say anything else about that work. Often these papers are interesting, and even quite touching, because the authors tell important stories about their lives. But unless such stories are closely intertwined with discussion of aspects of the book, film, etc. that has been assigned, such papers are only journals instead of reflection papers. Journals have their purposes; unfortunately, as journals, they do not meet the expectations of reflection papers.



### Attachment 3: Avoiding Plagiarism

Students often have uncertainties about plagiarism and the proper citing of sources. I hope this little guide provides some clarity. – Dr. Wynne

In Chapter 5 of Straub (2019), we find the following passage:

Another important external factor in how we cope with threatening events is the degree of social support that we receive. Social ties and relationships with other people powerfully influence us, in both positive and negative ways. In stressful situations, people who perceive a high level of social support may experience less stress and may cope more effectively. (p. 145)

*Question 1: Is the statement below plagiarism?*

Another important external factor in how we cope with threatening events is the degree of social support that we receive.

*Answer: Yes, it is obviously plagiarism. You cannot simply copy what someone else has written and use their words as your own. You have to give them credit.*

*Question 2: Is the statement below plagiarism?*

An important factor in how we cope with threats is the degree of social support that we get from others.

*Answer: Yes, it is plagiarism. All I've done here is rewrite someone else's statement. I've just changed a few words, but the sentence in this example is simply a re-write of Dr. Straub's copyrighted work to make it look like it's my own work. But it is not my own work; it's merely a re-write. You simply cannot do this. Ever. This is definitely plagiarism.*

*Question 3: Is the statement below plagiarism?*

An important factor in how we cope with threats is the degree of social support that we get from others. (Straub, 2019).

*Answer: Yes, this is plagiarism, too. I've referenced Dr. Straub's textbook but I still rewrote his statement, using a modified version of his sentence.*

*Question 4: Is the statement below plagiarism?*

Another important external factor in how we cope with threatening events is the degree of social support that we receive. (Straub, 2019).

*Answer: Yes, this would still be considered plagiarism. Even though I've used Dr. Straub's original sentence here and included a citation here, a reader would not know that I am quoting his words because I don't even use quotation marks. Whenever you quote someone, you have to make it completely clear that you are quoting them. Typically, this done by using quotations marks. Without those quotation marks, any reader would assume the words are your own and not Dr. Straub's words, and that cannot be allowed to happen.*

*Question 5: Is the statement below plagiarism?*

“Another important external factor in how we cope with threatening events is the degree of social support that we receive.” (Straub, 2019).

*Answer: This is not exactly plagiarism. After all, quotation marks are provided and a citation is made. However, there is still a major problem. When you quote someone, you need to tell the reader exactly where you found the quote, so that the reader can go and verify the quote. But (Straub, 2019) refers to a five-hundred-page textbook. You can't expect anyone to search through an entire book to find a quote. What you do is include the page number where the quote appears.*

*Question 6: So how do I properly quote and cite something that I want to quote?*

*Answer: You can do it like this. This is a right way:*

“Another important external factor in how we cope with threatening events is the degree of social support that we receive.” (Straub, 2019, p. 145).

*Question 7: So should I always use quotation marks when I quote something?*

*Answer: There is an exception to using quotation marks: your APA Publication Manual explains on page 272 that if you quote something that is forty words or longer, you should not use quotation marks but should instead indicate you are quoting by using what is called a “block quotation.” My indented quote near the top of this handout is an example of a block quotation. I reproduce it here:*

In Chapter 5 of Straub (2019), we find the following passage:

Another important external factor in how we cope with threatening events is the degree of social support that we receive. Social ties and relationships with other people powerfully influence us, in both positive and negative ways. In stressful situations, people who perceive a high level of social support may experience less stress and may cope more effectively. (p. 145)

Look again at that block-quoted passage above. Do you want to make sure you understand it but won't plagiarize it when you try to summarize it in your own words? Do this: read the segment (or chapter section or subsection) two or three times to make sure you understand the main concepts. Then close the book. And then with the book closed, *rely on your memory* to reconstruct the main points. You can do this for whatever section or subsection of a chapter you are trying to summarize. Just remember to *close the book* before you start writing. Below is my own summary of the essential information in that block quote from page 145:

Social support – the care and concern we receive from our friends, family, and others – is also a major factor in stress and handling stress. Generally, individuals who feel like they have a healthy amount of social support feel like they can cope with stress better than people who do not. They might even sense events as less stressful thanks to the social support they enjoy.

See what I've done? I've restated the core concepts of that quote from p. 145 *in my own words*. It doesn't contain every idea in the quoted segment. It's not supposed to – it's just

a summary, after all, and summaries are intended to summarize – to boil down the essence of something without including all the details. But it is all *in my own words*. And because these weekly exams are explicitly identified as summaries of chapters from the Straub text, and because you are citing the Straub text as the reference for your exam, you couldn't reasonably be accused of plagiarizing the text if you wrote something like this in your own exam.

However, it is important to point out that in other kinds of writing (not our chapter summaries but in works such as research papers, magazine articles, and books), many scholars would insist that you still need to cite and reference the Straub text in my example summary statement above, since that's where the information was found. When it comes to avoiding plagiarism, it is wise to err on the side of caution.

A final point: understand that I could have summarized the quoted segment from page 145 *much more concisely* just by just saying this: "Social support helps people handle stress better." After all, that is the key point that you want to remember from the quoted segment.

Please examine pages 269-278 of your APA publication manual for more information on how to quote sources in APA style.

#### **Reference**

Straub, R.O. (2019). *Health psychology* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Worth Publishers.

### Attachment 4: General Assessment Rubrics for Assignments in Psychology

Assessment rubrics are helpful to plan and evaluate professional writing and oral presentations. Students should refer to these rubrics at appropriate times during the development of their oral and written assignments.

<b>RUBRIC FOR ORAL PRESENTATIONS</b>					
<b>DIMENSION OF ANALYSIS</b>	<b>Fail 0</b>	<b>Poor 1</b>	<b>Average 2</b>	<b>Good 3</b>	<b>Top 4</b>
<b>Topic and Focus</b> follow the instructions provided for the assignment.					
<b>Structure</b> is logical in its organization & fully developed, with a distinct introduction & conclusion.					
<b>Audio-Visual Aids</b> are effectively utilized and appropriate for professional presentations.					
<b>Verbal Communication</b> is clear, fluent, well-paced, properly intoned, and not over-reliant on notes or slides.					
<b>Non-verbal Communication</b> clarifies and enhances the message with appropriate eye contact, gestures, and posture.					
<b>Grammar, Spelling, &amp; Punctuation</b> meet levels expected for formal professional presentations.					
<b>Documentation</b> fully conforms to accepted professional standards.					

<b>RUBRIC FOR PROFESSIONAL WRITING</b>					
<b>DIMENSION OF ANALYSIS</b>	<b>Fail 0</b>	<b>Poor 1</b>	<b>Average 2</b>	<b>Good 3</b>	<b>Top 4</b>
<b>Psychological Analysis</b> of the subject matter is relevant, accurate, and thoroughly utilizes assigned sources.					
<b>Clarity of Expression</b> is appropriate for professional-level communication.					
<b>Grammar, Spelling, &amp; Punctuation</b> meet levels expected for formal professional writing.					
<b>Documentation</b> fully conforms to accepted professional standards.					

**Attachment 5: *The Great Divorce* / *Siddhartha* Assignment**

*The Great Divorce* (TGD) and *Siddhartha* (Sidd) are classic short works of contemplative fiction. Together they offer a comparison & contrast on two perspectives of the meaning of life.

We will read through these books in five weeks, according to the schedule below. Each week, you will write at least two full pages of reflections covering the assigned segments for the week. Carefully read and follow all the guidelines and instructions in syllabus attachments 1 through 4 for these and all written assignments for this course.

At the end of the five weeks, you will have written at least ten pages of reflections. You will then have a week to assemble the work you wrote over the prior five weeks and submit a completed paper of ten full pages.

For the overall assignment, 30% of the grade will come from merely submitting the five two-page weekly papers on time and in good general order. The remaining 70% will come from your completed paper that will cover the entire book.

- **Week 1 (TGD Chs. 1-8; pp. 1-63)** Due on Sat., Oct. 28 at 11:59 pm.
- **Week 2 (TGD Chs. 9-14; pp. 65-146)** Due on Sat., Nov. 4 at 11:59 pm.
- **Week 3 (Sidd pp. 1-39)** Due on Sat., Nov. 11 at 11:59 pm.
- **Week 4 (Sidd pp. 43-88)** Due on Sat., Nov. 18 at 11:59 pm.
- **Week 5 (Sidd pp. 89-132)** Due on Sat., Nov. 25\* at 11:59 pm.
- **Complete Paper** Due on Sat., Dec. 2 at 11:59 pm.

\* Note that Nov. 25 is the Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend. Although Nov. 25 is the deadline for submitting the Week 7 paper, I recommend that the paper be submitted on Nov. 21 or before, so that it doesn't interfere with your holiday.