

Graduate Seminar: Psychology and Interdisciplinarity

Instructor:

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Course Overview:

“Interdisciplinarity” is emerging as an important topic of study in education, cognitive science, philosophy of science, and related fields. The emergence accompanies increased recognition that complex problem solving requires concepts, methods, and models that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. It also accompanies emphasis on development of flexible, adaptive problem solving skills to meet unforeseeable challenges arising with rapid societal and technological change. This course is offered with conviction that psychology’s long range impact will be maximized through creative collaborations that target global human challenges and facilitate new strategies to address sustainability. However, much remains to be understood concerning the grounds of possibility of genuine and effective collaboration. Moreover, the framework for understanding what a psychological contribution to interdisciplinary problem solving might entail has yet to be detailed.

This course, then, is intended to facilitate collaborative exploration of the possibilities for psychology’s involvement in interdisciplinary collaboration, as well as conceptual problems posed by the overall project.

Course objectives

- To articulate arguments for and against disciplinary specialization and interdisciplinary collaboration
- To demonstrate in depth exploration of the “boundary land” of psychology and another discipline.
- To develop a model by which psychology might offer specific contributions to a broad and complex human problem, either by building on current strategies or through the proposal of new strategies.
- To explore experientially the benefits and drawbacks of interdisciplinary engagement as a scholarly pursuit and way of life.

Format: Seminar

Given the exploratory and collaborative nature of this course, regular attendance, completion of assigned reading and active, respectful, informed participation in classroom discussion is expected at all times. You will provide regular updates on your progress on projects throughout the semester and will be expected to share ideas with and provide feedback to others. You are encouraged to recommend resources to the class additional to those assigned that you believe will enhance discussion.

*Please bring 3 to 5 questions from assigned readings to each class. You should be prepared to engage class discussion around these questions and submit them to the instructor for review.

Assignments and Grading

In addition to regular and engaged participation in all discussions, there will be two main assignments.

1. Disciplinary Boundaries Case Study

You will each select an academic discipline and make a study of it, with the aim of articulating the “boundary land” between psychology and your chosen discipline (“Discipline X”). You should select a discipline represented at UWG in order for you to collect relevant data. At a minimum, your study should involve classroom observation, faculty interview, text analysis.

You will provide regular updates in class, sharing your experiences and insights and soliciting feedback for new lines of investigation and analysis. You will use thematic analysis as a basis for analyzing the three principal questions:

1. In what ways do psychological concepts infiltrate and influence disciplinary concepts , methods, models, metaphors, analytic themes, etc. in Discipline X? How is the psychological influence you identify historically situated?
2. In what ways do concepts, methods, models, and frameworks from discipline X influence psychology? How is the disciplinary influence you identify historically situated?
3. What is important to the disciplinary identity to discipline X? To what extent would disciplinary collaboration threaten this identity? Describe to your best ability the normative framework that structures practices judged to be worthy and effective in this discipline as well as any local norms (e.g., UWG specific) that seem to guide judgements.

Final Paper: The final paper will describe your procedural steps and provide analysis along three dimensions (i.e., your paper should address the following questions):

2. *Vision for Engagement in Interdisciplinary Problem Solving*

You are to select a problem, preferably of broad scale and global impact, for which you believe interdisciplinary collaboration and revolutionary strategies to be required (“Problem X,” e.g., climate change, terrorism, information warfare, pollution, poverty, education disparity, healthcare access, nuclear threat). In addition to researching Problem x, you should identify ways psychology is already offering a contribution to problem solving efforts underway, but also imagine new possibilities for involvement. This needs only to be a statement of possibility but it should be grounded in genuine resources available to psychologists (questions, concepts, models, theories, methods). Your description of psychology’s potential contribution should be both idealistic and pragmatic, large in vision but focused on actionable contributions. Description of an idea for a specific research or community project designed to address Problem X on a small and manageable scale is especially welcome. You will be expected to present your developed ideas in class at the end of our session, in conference format open to the department at large. The only requirement for this project is a well-structured presentation. Related products (a paper, a website) are welcome but not required.

Grading Formula:

Project 1: 35%

Project 2: 35%

Seminar Participation: 30%

Schedule of Reading and Assignments:

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNED READING

Topic	Reading Assignment
JANUARY	
8 Introduction to course	James
10 Foundational issues in interdisciplinary research	Derry, Gernsbacher, Schunn, (Intro + pt. 1) Kuhn Osbeck & Nersessian, 2017

15	NO CLASS – MLK Holiday	
17	Psychology and Pluralism	Koch Kirschner Chronbach Henriques Ruphy, Introduction+ chap.1
22	Psychology, Science, and Technology	Osbeck & Nersessian, 2011 Wertheimer O’Doherty & Hawkins
24	Psychology and Mathematics	Poincaré Hadamard Herbart
29, 31	Psychology and Other Social Sciences	Good Valisner, pt 1 (pp. 3-70) Ksiazkiewicz, et. al

FEBRUARY

5, 7	Psychology, Business, and Economics	Munsterberg
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Mackillop
Sent
Pozharliev, et. al

12, 14 Psychology and the Humanities

Teo
Glăveanu & Yamamoto
Gergen
Byford & Tilega
Knobe & Nichols

19, 21 Psychology and the Art(s)

Hammond, 1-30
Lindhauer
Tierney & Kraus

26, 28

Presentation of Vision Papers (Open to Public)

MARCH 2

DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES PAPERS DUE