

Liberation Psychology

PSYC 4085 05 | Spring 2019 | 1 credit
Tuesdays 2-2:50PM | Anthropology Building 7

Professor: Dr. Nisha Gupta

Contact: ngupta@westga.edu

Office: Melson Hall Office 205

Office Hours: 1-5PM Mondays & Wednesdays, by appointment only

Course Description:

This course provides an overview of liberation psychology, a subfield of psychology that seeks to develop understandings and practices for psychologists living in oppressive sociopolitical systems to help create a more just and peaceful society. Liberation psychology was first articulated in the 1970s by Ignacio Martín-Baró, a Spanish-born Jesuit social psychologist working in El Salvador. Martín-Baró envisioned a psychology that would acknowledge the psychological wounding caused by war, racism, poverty, and structural violence; a psychology that would support historical memory and critical reflection; and a psychology that could inspire social action in the political sphere. Martín-Baró critiqued mainstream psychology for theorizing psychological problems as primarily individual. Instead, liberation psychology illuminates the links between an individual's psychological suffering and well-being and the social, economic, political, and ecological contexts in which they live.

This course will explore the basic tenets of liberation psychology. We will first seek to understand the ways that sociopolitical oppression affects psychological well-being at the individual and community levels, and then we will explore practices for emancipation and social change via psychotherapy, the arts, research, dialogue-building, and social movements. While liberation psychology was established in Latin America, the question this course will return to again and again is: what does it mean to it practice liberation psychology in our local sociopolitical context of the United States, at this present time in history? To that end, students will be encouraged to apply the principles learned in class to issues of sociopolitical oppression and community wounding that most concern them.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Articulate the historical, theoretical and contemporary framework of liberation psychology
- Describe the role of the psychologist in times of sociopolitical oppression
- Identify different kinds of sociopolitical oppression
- Discuss how sociopolitical oppression can impact psychological functioning
- Articulate emancipatory practices pursued by liberation psychologists in the domains of clinical work, research, and the arts
- Apply emancipatory practices from international contexts to local issues in the United States

Required Readings:

All assigned readings are accessible as pdfs on Courseden.

The course goals will be met and evaluated on the basis of the class assignments below.

Evaluation and Grading:

20% Class participation about readings: Every student will be expected to come to each class prepared to contribute 1-2 insights from the reading material assigned for that day. Sharing your insights from the readings will help us kick off dialogue about the topics that we are exploring together. You are also expected to bring the pdf readings to class.

80% short essays (3-4 double spaced pages each):

- **Short Essay 1 (due 1/29):** Reflect upon what you think “the role of the psychologist” should be in response to sociopolitical oppression in the United States. In what ways should psychologists intervene in the political sphere? In what ways should they not? What current sociopolitical issues most concern you, and how could psychologists address these issues?
- **Short Essay 2 (due 2/26):** Select a current sociopolitical event in the news, either nationally or internationally. Describe the event, and analyze the potential psychological impact/consequences of this event on individuals and communities (i.e. victims, perpetrators, bystanders).
- **Short Essay 3 (due 3/26):** Select a piece of emancipatory art that bears witness to some form of sociopolitical oppression (i.e. painting, film, photo, song, theater performance, etc.) Alternatively, you can make a piece of emancipatory art yourself. Describe the artwork, and analyze its meanings and messages to society.
- **Short Essay 3 (due 5/7):** Select a particular social movement that interests you, either nationally or internationally. Analyze the strategies that this social movement used to garner participation and effect social change. Describe the political and psychological impact that you think this social movement has had on individuals, communities, and society as a whole.

Grading Information and Policy:

There are a total of 100 points possible in the course. These 100 points will be used to calculate a percentage grade according to the standard percentage point divisions (see table below):

Grading structure and point scale

90-100 points	90% - 100%	A
80 points - 89 points	80% - 89%	B
70 points - 79 points	70% - 79%	C
60 points - 69 points	60% - 69%	D
< 60 points	< 60%	F

Attendance Policy:

Formal attendance will be taken throughout the semester. Since this is a small, seminar-based class and we only meet once a week, more than three unexcused absences (without appropriate documentation) throughout the semester will result in a failure in the class.

Syllabus

As this document corresponds with a dynamic entity (a class), this syllabus is subject to change.

Semester Schedule:

Date	Topic	Reading due	Assignment due
T 1/8	Introduction and syllabus		
T 1/15	The theory and application of liberation psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - O’Conner “Liberation Psychology” - Nadal: “On Becoming a Psychologist-Activist” <p><i>Suggested reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Martin Baro: “The Role of the Psychologist” 	
T 1/22	Understanding oppression	- Adams et al: “Readings for Diversity and Social Justice” selections	
T 1/29	Cultures of silence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cohen: “Silencing Objections” - Lorde: “The transformation of silence into language and action” <p><i>Suggested reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liem: “Silencing Historical Trauma” 	Short essay 1 due
T 2/5	Sociopolitical trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Braveheart: “Carrying the Historical Trauma” - Lowe: “Racism, Trauma and Coping” 	
T 2/12	Internalized oppression and dominance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tappan: “Reframing Internalized Oppression and Internalized Dominance” <p><i>Suggested reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Berila: “Unlearning Internalized Oppression” 	
T 2/19	Liberation, empowerment, and critical consciousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Habbo: “Cycle of Liberation” - Christens: “Empowerment and Critical Consciousness” <p><i>Suggested reading:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phillips: “Beyond adaptation” 	

T 2/26	Liberation psychotherapy	- Russell: "Liberation Psychotherapy with LGBT clients" - Baines: "Bridging the practice-activism divide"	Short Essay 2 due
T 3/5	Emancipatory arts	- Levine: "When Art is the Weapon" <i>Suggested reading:</i> - Hocoy: "Art therapy and social action"	
T 3/12	Participatory Action Research	- Parker: "Action Research" - Montero: "Don't let our dreams die"	
T 3/19	<i>Spring break</i>		
T 3/26	Homeplaces and safe spaces	- hooks "Homeplace" - Roestone "Safe space"	Short Essay 3 due
T 4/2	Reconciliatory dialogue	- Watkins & Shulman: "Dialogue" - Bar-On "Storytelling as a Way to Work through Intractable Conflicts"	
T 4/9	Social movements	- Bretherton: "How social movements can transform societies" - Grabe: "The evolution of a woman's social movement in Nicaragua"	
T 4/16	Political emotions	- hooks: "Love as the practice of freedom" - hooks: "Killing rage: Militant resistance" - Cherry: "love, anger, and racial justice" <i>Suggested reading:</i> <i>Viray: "Social justice meets social compassion"</i>	
T 4/23	Solidarity	Laitinen: "Solidarity: Theory and practice" Browse "The Solidarity Texts: https://jacket2.org/feature/solidarity-texts	
T 5/7	Reflections and future directions	N/A	Short Essay 4 due

At the University of West Georgia, we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the honor code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing.

The University of West Georgia maintains and monitors a confidential Academic Dishonesty Tracking System. This database collects and reports patterns of repeated student violations across all the Colleges, the Ingram Library, and the School of Nursing. Each incidence of academic dishonesty is subject to review and consideration by the instructor, and is subject to a range of academic penalties including, but not limited to, failing the assignment and/or failing the course. Student conduct sanctions range from verbal warning to suspension or expulsion depending on the magnitude of the offense and/or number of offenses. The incident becomes part of the student's conduct record at UWG.

Additionally, the student is responsible for safeguarding his/her computer account. The student's account and network connection are for his/her individual use. A computer account is to be used only by the person to whom it has been issued. The student is responsible for all actions originating through his/her account or network connection. Students must not impersonate others or misrepresent or conceal their identities in electronic messages and actions. For more information on the University of West Georgia Honor Code, please see the **Student Handbook**.

Email Policy

University of West Georgia students are provided a MyUWG e-mail account. The University considers this account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. The purpose of the official use of the student e-mail account is to provide an effective means of communicating important university related information to UWG students in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to check his or her email.

Accessibility Services

Accessibility Services: Students with a documented disability may work with UWG Accessibility Services to receive essential services specific to their disability. All entitlements to accommodations are based on documentation and USG Board of Regents standards. If a student needs course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if he/she needs to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, the student should notify his/her instructor in writing and provide a copy of his/her Student Accommodations Report (SAR), which is available only from Accessibility Services. Faculty cannot offer accommodations without timely receipt of the SAR; further, no retroactive accommodations will be given. For more information, please contact **Accessibility Services**.

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement: If you are a student who is disabled as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act and require assistance or support services, please seek assistance through the Office for Accessibility Services. UWG also provides Accessibility Statements for Technology that you may be required to use for this course.

For more information on the Americans with Disabilities Act, UWG Email, Credit Hour, and UWG Honor Code policies as well as information on Academic Tutoring, Student Services, and Technical Requirements, Privacy Policy, and Accessibility Statements, please see the [Common Language for Syllabus](#) document.

Academic Support

The [Center for Academic Success](#) provides services, programs, and opportunities to help all undergraduate students succeed academically. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6280 or cas@westga.edu

The [University Writing Center](#) assists students with all areas of the writing process. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6513 or writing@westga.edu

[Smarthinking](#) offers online tutoring services and resources (including the Writing Center) for UWG students/instructors in all courses. A link to Smarthinking is available in CourseDen under Resources in the navigation bar.

Here is a great resource of [Student Services](#) for all students at UWG, whether or not they are taking online courses. This link provides students with most of the information they need. If a student is experiencing distress and needs some help, check out [UWG Cares](#).

Additional Support Information

Technical Support: Technical support for CourseDen, as well as the technological requirements, accessibility statements, privacy statements, tutorials, and other information can be found at [Technology Requirements](#).