

# Liberation Psychology

## PSYC-7810A

Spring 2020 Section 01 2 Credits 01/04/2020 to 05/05/2020 Modified 01/13/2020

*"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." – Lilla Watson*

In this course we will explore the foundational texts and tenets of liberation psychology, a theory and praxis of psychology that attempts to illuminate the impact of systemic sociopolitical oppression on the psychological health of individuals, communities, and societies. Liberation psychology is not solely a theoretical endeavor but a practical one in the service of developing and implementing interventions that can actively transform oppressive systems, such that our work as psychologists can become "a force for transformation rather than for conformity to status quo cultural arrangements that contribute to injustice, poverty, violence, and war" (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 24).

Through Paulo Freire we will first enter liberation psychology in its original Latin American context, and study the theoretical development of critical consciousness (*conscientização*), as well as the core model of dialoguing for *conscientização* that Freire posits is fundamental to the process of liberation among oppressed and oppressors alike. Through Ignacio Martín-Baró we will apply these principles specifically to the domain of psychology, understanding what it means to enact the role of the psychologist in contexts of systemic sociopolitical oppression, state violence, and community trauma. Through Mary Watkins and Helene Shulman, we will explore practices through which liberation psychologists can develop and implement interventions that work towards fostering critical consciousness, healing collective traumas, building community, reconciling divisive differences, transforming oppressive social conditions, and imagining utopic possibilities to co-create more just, humane and loving societies.

At the end of the semester, students will submit a proposal for an original psychosocial intervention which seeks to facilitate healing and transformation regarding a form of sociopolitical oppression/community trauma that concerns them. The proposal should be grounded in theories and practices of liberation psychology learned throughout the semester.

## Description

Students meet in small groups with instructor to discuss a research topic. Subject matter varies each semester. Variable credit up to 4 hours.

### Requisites

Prerequisites:

Corequisites:

## Contact Information

Professor: Dr. Nisha Gupta

Contact: [ngupta@westga.edu](mailto:ngupta@westga.edu)

Office: Melson Hall Office 205

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, by appointment only

## Meeting Times

Tuesdays 3:30-5:10PM

Melson Hall 104

## Materials

---

Freire, P. (1968). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Martín-Baró, I. (1994). *Writings for a liberation psychology*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Watkins, M. and Shulman, H. (2008). *Towards Psychologies of Liberation (Critical Theory and Practice in Psychology and the Human Sciences)*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

-  
All PDFs of suggested readings are available on Courseden.

## Outcomes

---

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
- Design a proposal for an original psychosocial intervention based on liberation psychology theory and praxis, which includes a literature review

## Evaluation

---

**30% Participating in in-class dialogue:** Every student will be expected to come to each class prepared to contribute insights from the reading material assigned for that day that sparked their interest, curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. Sharing your insights from the readings will help us kick off our process of building dialogue in the service of critical consciousness, reflection, and creativity. You are also expected to bring all assigned readings to class.

**20% Leading facilitation of in-class dialogue:** Dialoguing for critical consciousness requires shared leadership. While all students are expected to participate in class dialogue, each student will select one class/topic to “lead” the facilitation of throughout the semester. When leading a class, you are invited to ground the course reading assigned for that day in your own specific project, inviting us to help you brainstorm how to apply that material to your own evolving sociopolitical intervention idea/proposal.

**50% Final paper on intervention proposal:** By the end of the semester, each student will submit a written proposal (16-20 pages, double spaced) for a liberation psychology intervention that addresses the oppression and emancipation of a particular form of community trauma/sociopolitical oppression that concerns them. You are expected to create your own original idea for an intervention, but should refer to examples of existing interventions that have inspired your idea. For your research proposal, you will be expected to: (1) introduce and describe the sociopolitical/community wound of concern in liberation psychology theoretical terms (cite course literature), (2) provide a brief literature review of the *psychological impact* of that wound on the human beings implicated;

(3) introduce the methodology of your proposed intervention and short-term/long-term objectives, citing relevant literature and similar projects to support your choice (4) describe step-by-step procedures of how you would actually implement your intervention; (5) evaluate/critique your intervention's potential strengths and weaknesses; (6) include a self-reflexivity section of your own cultural positionality as a liberation psychologist and how it has influenced your proposed idea. Liberation psychology literature from this course *must* be incorporated into this paper, but you can use outside sources as well.

## Schedule

---

Date	Topic	Reading due
T 1/7	Introduction and syllabus	
T 1/14	The oppressed, oppressors, and oppression	Freire: Introduction, Preface and Ch. 1  <i>Suggested reading:</i>  Cohen: "Silencing objections: social constructions of indifference"
T 1/21	Education as an instrument of oppression / dialogue as the practice of freedom	Freire, Ch. 2 & 3  <i>Suggested reading:</i>  Spivak: "Can the Subaltern Speak?"
T 1/28	Theories of cultural action	Freire, Ch. 4  <i>Suggested reading:</i>  Lorde, A. "Transforming Silence into Action"
T 2/4	The psychology of politics and the politics of psychology	Martin-Baro: Foreward – pp. 46  <i>Suggested reading:</i>  Patel: "Human rights-based approach to applied psychology"
T 2/11	Psychosocial trauma	Martin Baro: pp. 103-168  <i>Suggested reading:</i>  Burstow "A radical understanding of trauma"

T 2/18	<b>De-ideologizing reality</b>	Martin Baro: 169-220  <i>Suggested reading:</i>  Laing: "The Mystification of Experience"
T 2/25	<b>Psychic wounds of colonialism and globalization</b>	Watkins & Shulman: pp.49-104  <i>Suggested reading:</i>  Tappan: "Reframing Internalized oppression and internalized dominance"
T 3/3	<b>Mourning after community trauma</b>	Watkins & Shulman: pp. 105-130  Butler, J. "Violence, Mourning, Politics"  <i>Suggested reading:</i>  Brave Heart: "Wakiksuyapi: Carrying the Historical Trauma of the Lakota"
T 3/10	<b>Restoring Community</b>	Watkins & Shulman: pp.131-157; pp. 207-231  <i>Suggested reading:</i>  Hooks "homeplace, a site of resistance"
T 3/17	<i>Spring break</i>	
T 3/24	<b>Reconciliatory Dialogue</b>	Watkins & Shulman: pp.176-205  <i>Suggested reading:</i> BarOn:"Storytelling as a Way to Work Through Intractable Conflict"
T 3/31	<b>Liberation Arts</b>	Watkins & Shulman: pp. 232-265  <i>Suggested reading:</i>  Levine: "When Art is a Weapon"

T 4/7	<b>Critical Participatory Action Research</b>	<p>Watkins &amp; Shulman: pp. 266-311</p> <p><i>Suggested reading:</i></p> <p>Montero: "Don't Let Our Dreams Die"</p> <p>Sandwick, Fine, et al; "Promise and Provocation: Humble Reflections on Critical Participatory Action Research and Policy"</p>
T 4/14	<b>Social movements</b>	<p>Bretherton: "How can Social Movements Transform Societies? Developing a Guide for Practice"</p> <p>Karter, Robbins, McInerney: "Student Activism in the Neoliberal University: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis"</p> <p><i>Suggested reading:</i></p> <p>Grabe &amp; Dutt: "Counter Narrative, the Psychology of Liberation, and the Evolution of a Woman's Social Movement in Nicaragua"</p>
T 4/21	<b>Dreams and Reflections</b>	<p>Watkins &amp; Shulman: pp. 313-331</p> <p><i>Suggested reading:</i></p> <p>Nussbaum: "Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice"</p>
T 4/28	<b>Celebration</b>	
T 5/5	<b>Final papers due</b>	

## \* Course Policies and Resources

---

### Attendance Policy:

Since this is a small, seminar-based class that relies heavily on dialogue and we only meet once a week, more than two unexcused absences (without proper documentation) 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.

## Institutional Policies

### Academic Support

**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 \(https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php\)](https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/accessibility-services.php).

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

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

### Online Courses

UWG takes students' privacy concerns seriously: technology-enhanced and partially and fully online courses use sites and entities beyond UWG and students have the right to know the privacy policies of these entities. For more information on privacy and accessibility for the most commonly used sites, as well as technology requirements visit the [UWG Online \(https://uwgonline.westga.edu/\)](https://uwgonline.westga.edu/) site.

Students enrolled in online courses can find answers to many of their questions in the [Online/Off-Campus Student Guide \(http://uwgonline.westga.edu/online-student-guide.php\)](http://uwgonline.westga.edu/online-student-guide.php).

If a student is experiencing distress and needs help, please see the resources available at the [UWG Cares \(http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/\)](http://www.westga.edu/UWGCares/) site. [Online counseling \(https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/index.php\)](https://www.westga.edu/student-services/counseling/index.php) is also available for online students.

### Honor Code

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 \(https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpsa/handbook-code-of-conduct.php\)](https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpsa/handbook-code-of-conduct.php).

### UWG 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.

## Credit Hour Policy

The University of West Georgia grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of one hour (50 minutes) of in-class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week for approximately fifteen weeks. For each course, the course syllabus will document the amount of in-class (or other direct faculty instruction) and out-of-class work required to earn the credit hour(s) assigned to the course. Out-of-class work will include all forms of credit-bearing activity, including but not limited to assignments, readings, observations, and musical practice. Where available, the university grants academic credit for students who verify via competency-based testing, that they have accomplished the learning outcomes associated with a course that would normally meet the requirements outlined above (e.g. AP credit, CLEP, and departmental exams).

## HB 280 (Campus Carry)

UWG follows University System of Georgia (USG) guidance: [http://www.usg.edu/hb280/additional\\_information#](http://www.usg.edu/hb280/additional_information#) ([http://www.usg.edu/hb280/additional\\_information](http://www.usg.edu/hb280/additional_information))

You may also visit our website for help with USG Guidance: <https://www.westga.edu/police/campus-carry.php> (<https://www.westga.edu/police/campus-carry.php>)

## Mental Health Support

If you or another student find that you are experiencing a mental health issue, free confidential services are available on campus in the [Counseling Center](#). Students who have experienced sexual or domestic violence may receive confidential medical and advocacy services with the Patient Advocates in [Health Services](#). To report a concern anonymously, please go to [UWGcares](#).