PSY 5XX: Occupational and Organizational Health

Instructor: Dr. Chris Cunningham  
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Office: 350-A Holt Hall (Psychology)  
Phone: 423-425-4264

Office hours: ** (my office), ** (in the library), or by appointment. Drop-ins are also welcome. For best results, please bring your course materials and questions in writing.

Background on Dr. Cunningham: http://www.utc.edu/Faculty/Chris-Cunningham

Co-/Prerequisites
To get the most out of this course you are required to be a graduate student in good standing in either the M.S. program in I-O or Research Psychology, the Master’s program in Health and Human Performance, or have permission of the instructor.

Course description
This course will introduce students to the field of occupational health psychology (OHP). As a field of scientific research and practical application, OHP emphasizes the promotion of wellness and prevention of negative health-related consequences within organizational settings. Students will be required to engage in a participatory learning environment focused on understanding this broad and rapidly developing interdisciplinary field. Weekly meetings will be led by the instructor, but enhanced by regular student presentations and discussions of recent and relevant primary source literature. At all times the emphasis will be on drawing connections between OHP theory and OHP practice and at the relationship between individual and organizational health and well-being.

Course Objectives
- Gain an understanding of the research base in OHP
- Enhance your ability to evaluate key health and safety issues within organizations
- Challenge you to find ways to effectively translate OHP research into practice
- Improve your critical evaluation skills regarding applied psychological research
- Improve your ability to review and understand primary source readings
- Provide you with additional opportunities to practice public presentations

Please note: Students will vary in their ability to master all of these objectives. Those who succeed the best will be those who follow course guidelines, attend classes, complete all assigned work, and try their hardest to meet course expectations.

Course Details
You will earn your grade in this course by engaging in the process of learning about OHP research and practice. One way I can help you to engage is to distribute my evaluation of your performance over multiple components. The following sections detail how these multiple components fit together. Where applicable, elements contributing to your final grade are also identified.

Attendance: You are expected to attend every class.
**Class notes:** I do not provide copies of my slides or notes to students. Reading the assigned readings before class meetings will give you a general idea of what to expect during class. I will provide an outline of the main topics to be covered in each class. Please visit our course Blackboard site ahead of each class to find this outline. Use this outline to guide your note-taking during class.

**Reading:** All readings for this class will come from the following text and the attached list of weekly readings. The text has been ordered and should be available at the bookstore.


The tentative reading schedule is included on the last page of this syllabus. Most articles can be downloaded through the library’s research databases. I will try to post any of the difficult-to-find readings on our Blackboard site ahead their assigned date. I recommend that you gather all the readings in the first two weeks of classes, before schedules become increasingly hectic. Because each class is heavily based on the weekly readings, you are expected to complete all assigned readings before each class. This is also for your own benefit, as studies have shown that students who read and try to understand the material before attending classes are more likely to (a) learn from the actual lecture and (b) retain that information better when they are eventually tested.

**Discussion points (30 points):** Each set of readings is arranged around a specific topic within OHP. After reading all the readings, you are required to generate four general discussion questions that you bring to class. You are encouraged to also write down any questions pertaining to specific readings so that these may be discussed as well. The four discussion questions should reflect your attempt to integrate each week’s readings and extend them as your creativity dictates. Bring these questions and some recollection of the assigned readings to each lecture (along with your readings and note-taking materials). Use these questions to initiate your participation in our weekly discussions.

**In-Depth Presentations (30 points)**

Each week our class will be supplemented by one or two 20-30 minute “expert” presentations on the topics at hand. Presenters will be required to consult with me well ahead of the scheduled class period to solidify a relevant topic and ensure adequate coverage of material. These presentations will require you to do some additional research beyond the weekly assigned readings. The deliverable is a professional-level presentation to the entire class. Each presentation should summarize relevant research and clearly discuss its implications for continued study and application within organizations.

**Written Paper (40 points)**

You have two options for your major writing assignment in this course. With both papers, you are challenged to identify an OHP-related topic that you find has both research and practice relevant within organizations. The first option is to write a detailed review of the empirical research literature associated with an OHP-related topic of your choosing (and my approval). This review must be as comprehensive as possible and it should follow APA style. The purpose of this review is to review individual studies, highlight major themes that run throughout the existing literature, and offer a critical evaluation and set of future directions based on your review.

Your second option is to write a research proposal based on an OHP-related topic. This proposal also needs to follow APA format, but instead of stopping with a basic review, it should develop a manageable set of hypotheses and a
research plan that would provide you with the necessary data to test these hypotheses. This proposal would therefore be about 80% literature review and 20% description of methods and all its elements.

**Academic Honesty**
All the work you do in this class should be your own. This goes for the discussion questions and your writings and presentations. Cheating, dishonesty, or plagiarism will not be tolerated. Anyone engaging in dishonest activity will receive a failing grade.

**Grading**
Grades are earned, beginning at 0 points. As you complete various components of the graded elements in this course you will earn points toward your final grade. At the end of the semester the total number of points you earned across these multiple components will be summed and your grade will be determined by comparing it against the following (out of a total possible 100 points):

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A</td>
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**Support Services**
If you are a student with a disability (physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) and think you might need special assistance or special accommodations in this class or any other class, call the Office for Students with Disabilities/College Access Program (425-4006) or go by that office at 110 Frist Hall.
TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE & READING LIST

Week 1: Course Overview
- Assignment of weekly presentations
- Discussion of presentation guidelines
- Review of reading strategies and note taking tips

Week 2: Introduction to OHP
- Chapters 1, 2, 3

Week 3: Research Methods Issues
- Chapters 18, 19, 20

Week 4: Occupational Stress
- Chapters 5, 9

Week 5: Role Stressors

Week 6: Stress and Control
• Chapter 10

Week 7: Workload, Work scheduling, and Organizational Constraints
• Chapter 8

Week 8: Incivility, violence
Week 9: A new criterion problem: Health and well-being

- Chapter 4

Week 10: No classes: Spring Break

Week 11: Moderator variables?


Week 12: Safety

- Chapter 6

**Week 13: Work-Nonwork Interface**

- Chapter 7

**Week 14: Interventions**

- Chapters 14, 15, 16, 17

**Week 15: Understudied populations & systemic issues**

- Final topics will depend on remaining time
- Discussion of OHP in Europe
- Presentation of National Occupational Research Agenda and topical foci of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)