COMS 5395 Social Support & Well-Being (3 Credit Hours)

Fall 2017

Class Time & Classroom: Online   **Instructor:** Dr. Cindy (Yixin) Chen

Email: cindychen@shsu.edu   (email is the best way to reach me; please allow for **at least 24 hours** for a response to your email; you would expect to receive comments on your proposal/final paper and grade in **1 to 2 weeks** after it is submitted.)

Phone: (936) 294-3164   **Office:** Dan Rather Com Building 324

Office Hours: Mon & Wed at 1:30 to 2:30pm or by email appointment (Although this is an online class, you are welcome to stop by or call my office during my office hours).

Course website: https://shsu.blackboard.com/

Course Description

This graduate seminar introduces students to the extensive literature on social support and well-being, assists students in mastering some part of this literature and conducting empirical research on social support and well-being.

Social support—the emotional and instrumental assistance people receive from family, friends, and coworkers—can have powerful effects on many aspects of human well-being, including physical health, psychological coping, and relationship satisfaction.

This seminar focuses on identifying and understanding how social support contributes to physical and psychological health. The **1st unit** provides an overview of social support, well-being, and how social relationships influence health. The **2nd unit** addresses three disciplinary perspectives of social support. These include the sociological perspective (i.e., social networks and social integration), the psychological perspective (i.e., the subjective sense of being supported), and the communication perspective (i.e., the characteristics of supportive messages and interactions). The **3rd unit** put research on social support & well-being into applied contexts. In particular, we will examine different types of social support, receiving/providing support, supportive vs. unsupportive relationships. We will also explore some special topics including cancer patients, risky behaviors, and new communication technology.

Course Objectives

- To gain an in-depth understanding of theories and research related to social support in three different perspectives (i.e., sociological, psychological, and communication).
- To gain an in-depth understanding of theories and research related to the role of social support in physical, psychological, and social outcomes.
- To share, effectively and appropriately, one's thinking and research about how social support deals with stress, depression, and other health or relationship problems.
- To develop an original research paper related to social support & well-being.

Textbooks

Required: American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Recommended (not required): Cohen, S., Underwood, L. G. & Gottlieb, B.H. (Eds.) (2000). *Social support measurement and intervention: A guide for health and social scientists.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Required Readings

All readings will be posted on SHSU Blackboard. One of the single most important things you can do as a graduate student is to actually read these materials in a timely manner!

Class Meetings and Attendance

Although this is an online class, attendance is still important if you are to do well and get the most out of the learning process. Students will be required to check in at least once a week for several purposes (see below).

Class Procedure

Students will check in each week in order to respond to discussion board material prompted by at least one student "presentation" outline from the readings. You will also have to respond to a response/comment posted by another student.

There might occasionally be mini-lectures by the instructor (**in written format**) that deal with especially important or complex topics, but the majority of class time will be taken up by presentations and discussions that are **prepared and led by individual students.**

Assignments

There are four kinds of assignments in this course.

1. Outline Presentations (Due Wednesday at 5pm, email it to me)

1.1. The outline presentations of readings (mentioned in the "Class Procedure" section) will be done **twice** by each student during the semester. They each deal with readings of the week covering a body of research on a particular aspect of social support & well-being.

1.2. The outlines need to be a minimum of two to three pages long, and should follow principles of good outlining, with clear organization, consistent use of levels of subdivision (main points, subpoints, sub-subpoints, etc.), clear language and explanations, and the like. Use roman numerals (I, II, III, IV,…) for first-level headings, capital letters (A, B, C, D,…) for second-level headings, numbers (1, 2, 3, 4,…) for third-level headings, and parenthetical numbers (1), (2), (3), (4),…) for fourth-level headings, if needed.

1.3. Prepare an original set of **5 questions** designed to promote class discussion about the readings on the discussion board, and include these at the end of your outline. Ideally, 2 to 3 questions are from one reading, and 2 to 3 questions are from the other reading.

1.4. Use a Word document to write your outline presentation; use Times New Roman, 12 point font, and single space.

1.5. The outlines of both readings and the 5 discussion questions should be in **a single** Word document. Before you email the document to me, please name it:

Week #_Presentation_First Name.

1.6. Please see an example of Outline Presentation (Week 2_Presentation_Cindy.docx) under "Unit I/week 2".

1.7. During a week when there are 2 presenters, each of them needs to **work independently** and do outlines for **both of the 2 readings**.

Presentation schedule:

We have 10 students in this class. The presentation schedule is arranged as follows. **The presenters need to email their presentations to me by Wed at 5pm.** I will comment on the presentations and upload them to Blackboard under the folder of each week. Students should expect to receive the commented presentations from me by email by **Thur at noon.** Upon receiving the commented presentations from me, the presenters need to read those comments and then post the 5 discussion questions on the Discussion Board by **Thur midnight.**

There are no presentations due for Week 1, Week 8, Week 14 and Week 15

Tentative Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Presenters	
week 1	8-21	Course Orientation and Introduction		
week 2	8-28	Social Relationships and Health	Patel, Nilam	
week 3	9-4	An Overview of Well-Being	Holland, Aaron	Hudson, Ashley D.
week 4	9-11	Subjective Well-Being **Group formation due on 9/17 (Sunday) midnight** (2 points)	Patel, Nilam	Holland, Aaron
week 5	9-18	An Overview of Three Disciplinary Perspectives	Irvin, Deshonia M.	Hudson, Ashley D.
week 6	9-25	The Sociological Perspective	Mccormick, Christian A.	Irvin, Deshonia M.
week 7	10-2	The Psychological Perspective	Menn, Connie H.	Mccormick, Christian A.

week 8	10-9	No reading assignment: **Proposal due on 10/15 (Sunday) midnight** (20% of grade)		
week 9	10-16	The Communication Perspective	Oringderff, Caitlin M.	Menn, Connie H.
week 10	10-23	Different Types of Social Support	Coe, Melanie D.	Oringderff, Caitlin M.
week 11	10-30	Receiving Social Support and Providing Social Support	Perez, Mark A.	Coe, Melanie D.
week 12	11-6	Supportive and Unsupportive Relationships	Wilson, Gina Marie M.	Perez, Mark A.
week 13	11-13	Social Support and Cancer Patients		Wilson, Gina Marie M.
week 14	11-20	Optional: Social Support and Risky Behaviors		
week 15	11-27	Optional: Social Support and New Communication Technology **Final Paper due on 12/3 (Sunday) midnight** (40% of grade)		
week 16	12-4	TBA		

2. Discussion Board Posting (Due Friday midnight)

2.1. The **presenter(s)** should post the discussion Qs on the weekly discussion board with each question as one thread **by Thur midnight.**

2.2. Each student must respond **two times.** Your first response should be directed to at least one of the questions posed by the student presenter. Your second response should be to a response posted by another student.
 In other words, you should directly engage at least one of the presenter's questions, and then engage in a dialogue based on how another student has responded to the presenter.
(**The student presenter should not respond directly to his/her own questions. Instead, he/she should respond twice to other students' postings.**)

2.3. Every response must be an absolute minimum of fifty words long.

2.4. Responses should be written carefully with attention paid to correct grammar and spelling.

2.5. Strive to make your responses thoughtful and thought-provoking, directly relevant to the issue at hand (not off-topic), and **(when possible) supported by material you have encountered in the readings.**

2.6. All responses should be ethical and civil, always displaying courtesy and open-mindedness toward others' viewpoints. This is a scholarly forum we will develop together and, as such, it is no place for personalizing responses, "flaming" others, etc.

3. Paper Proposal

For the paper proposal and final paper (to be developed based on your proposal), you are welcome to work on your own, but **I would strongly encourage you to work with 1 or 2 classmates.** We have 10 students in this class, so it would be great if we can form 4 research groups with 2-3 members in each group. As a master's student at UT-El Paso, I worked with 2 fellow students on a conference paper which won a top-paper award from NCA (National Communication Association).

I have created a forum on the Discussion Board focusing on "term paper topic discussion and finding research partners." In the next two weeks, please feel free to use that forum to brainstorm research topics and find 1 or 2 research partners. Please email me by **9/17 (Sunday) midnight** whether you have decided to work on your own or have formed a research group with other students, along with your paper topic. Please **elect a group coordinator** and have him/her email me names of your group members and a general paper topic. Please **copy your group members** in that email.

The paper proposal should be **3 to 5 pages** long (excluding references and title page). You need to briefly summarize an area of your interest related to "social support and any health outcome", identify a significant unaddressed issue, and justify why it deserves empirical study. In your paper, you can examine social support from different perspectives (e.g., Sociological, Psychological, Communication); your outcome variable (i.e., dependent variable) can be depression, health status, well-being, health/risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, alcohol use, smoking, physical activity, cancer screening); you can focus on a specific population (e.g., cancer patients, pregnant women, older adults); you can study your topic in various contexts (e.g., family communication, patient-provider communication, mass communication, computer-mediated communication).

Think about what the IVs (independent variables) are and what the DVs (dependent variables) are in your study. Your proposal needs to have at least one IV and at least one DV. Propose at least one research hypothesis or research question in your proposal. See this website (http://psychology.about.com/od/hindex/g/hypothesis.htm) regarding how to propose a hypothesis. Also see "**Paper proposal example**" under "Research Paper" for examples of research hypotheses and questions.

The proposal should follow the APA style, 6th edition. You can find a PPT document on APA style guide on Blackboard under the folder "Research Paper."

Please submit your proposal by **10/15 (Sunday) midnight** through Blackboard.

4. Final Research Paper

Most significant to this course will be a final research paper that is about **10** pages long (excluding references and title page). You need to write an exhaustive literature review on a "social support and any health outcome" topic, pose a set of hypotheses and/or research questions, and write a Method section. Papers must also be engagingly written, well organized, grammatically and mechanically correct, and follow the APA (6th edition) style.

Specifically, your final paper should accomplish two tasks:

4.1. Revise your proposal incorporating my comments/edits that you deem fit.

Remember, whatever your hypotheses are, you need to discuss in your paper why they are worth testing. This discussion may include: 1) the importance of the issue; 2) existing literature points to the direction of this hypothesis; 3) no study or few studies had tested this hypothesis.

4.2. Write a Method section which describes planned Study Procedure, Sample, and Measures of IVs and DVs. See "**Final Paper Example**" under "Research Paper" for example.

Please combine your Proposal and Method section into a single word document named "**First name/Group name_Final Paper.docx**."   Delete all track changes and all highlighted instruction sentences, double-check APA style, and proofread the paper before submission.

Please submit your final paper by **12/3 (Sunday) midnight** through Blackboard.

Grading:

1. Outline presentations: 14 points (7 points *2 times =14)

2. Discussion board posting: 22 points (2 points *11 weeks=22)

3. Group formation with paper topic: 2 points

4. Course evaluation: 2 points

5. Paper proposal: 20 points

6. Final research paper: 40 points

Total =   100 points

Grading scale: 90+ = A; 80-89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; 59 & Below = F

Note: Late assignments/papers will receive half credit.

General Class Policies

A. Students are expected to assist in maintaining a course environment that is conducive to learning. All students and faculty are to be treated with courtesy and respect. I expect that an attitude that encourages freedom of discussion and intellectual inquiry will prevail. Therefore, behavior in this course that interferes with the potential for students to learn or my ability to adequately conduct the class is simply not acceptable. Students should read and adhere to all policies contained in the SHSU Student Handbook. Please see the link below for Student Guidelines:

http://www.shsu.edu/dept/dean-of-students/documents/2016-2018%20Student%20Guidelines.pdf

B. Be open and receptive to new ideas--you will be exposed to a lot of them this semester. Questioning your assumptions is the basis of learning.

C. If you encounter any personal/family emergency, **please inform me at the earliest opportunity,** and I will try my best to accommodate your needs. Assignment make-ups or late papers will be allowed with no penalty only if the student can present **written evidence of a legitimate reason** for having missed the due date. Absent a legitimate, documented reason, late assignments will either not be accepted or, at the discretion of the instructor, will be accepted with a penalty of **half credit**.

D. Plagiarism will result, at a minimum, in a zero for the assignment involved. Student work will be checked for plagiarism by any means available, including electronic plagiarism-detecting services. If students have ANY questions about what constitutes plagiarism, they should direct those questions to me, not other students.

E. If you have a documented disability that requires assistance, please contact the Chair of the Committee for Continuing Assistance for Disabled Students at 294-1720, provide me a copy of the documentation, and inform me of your special needs.

F.   Your continued enrollment in this course indicates that you have accepted the conditions of this syllabus.

Notice: You will find online a more detailed description of these policies at **http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/**

Recommendation Letters

I write recommendation letters for students who have excellent performance in class. If you would like to request a recommendation letter from me for application for a(n) award/scholarship, internship, Ph.D. program, or employment, you need to contact me at least **3 weeks before** the application deadline and provide the following information:

1. Post/link of the award/scholarship, internship, Ph.D. program, or employment;
2. A copy of your resume;
3. A copy of your cover letter (if the application requires).

<mark>Course Outline</mark> (Generally, there would be 2 readings per week. All readings will be posted on the Blackboard **2 weeks** before the due date of each week's Discussion Board Posting.)

Unit I: Introducing Social Support and Well-Being

Unit I objectives:

Students will be able to define social support and well-being, explain how social relationships influence health, and distinguish/describe different types of well-being.

Week 1   8-21   Course Orientation and Introduction

Review this syllabus, acquaint yourself with the online environment, and post a self-introduction on the discussion board.

Week 2   8-28   Social Relationships and Health

House, J. S., Landis, K. R., & Umberson, D. (1988). Social relationships and health. *Science, 241*(4865), 540-545. doi: 10.1126/science.3399889

Cohen, S., Gottlieb, B. H., & Underwood, L. G. (2000). Social relationships and health. In S. Cohen, L. G. Underwood, & B. H. Gottlieb (Eds*.), Social support measurement and intervention* (pp. 3-25). New York: Oxford University Press.

Week 3   9-4   An Overview of Well-Being

King, L. A., & Napa, C. K. (1998). What makes a life good? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*(1), 156-165. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.75.1.156

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on

hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology, 52,* 141–166. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.141

Week 4   9-11   Subjective Well-Being

Group formation due on 9/17 (Sunday) midnight (2 points)

Diener, E., Sapyta, J. J., & Suh, E. (1998). Subjective well-being is essential to well-being. *Psychological Inquiry, 9,* 33–37. doi:10.1207/s15327965pli0901_3

Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 34-43. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.34

Unit II: Researching Social Support and Well-Being: Three Disciplinary Perspectives

Unit II objectives:

Students will be able to compare and contrast the conceptualization and measurement of social support from three disciplinary perspectives.

Week 5   9-18   An Overview of Three Approaches to the Study of Social Support

Lakey, B., & Cohen, S. (2000). Social support theory and measurement. In S. Cohen, L. G. Underwood, & B. H. Gottlieb (Eds.), Social support measurement and intervention (pp. 29-52). New York: Oxford University Press.

Burleson, B. R., & MacGeorge, E. L. (2002). Supportive communication. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds.), Handbook of interpersonal communication (3rd ed., pp. 374-424). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Read only pp. 374-384.

Week 6   9-25   The Sociological Perspective

House, J. S. (1987). Social support and social structure. *Sociological Forum, 2*(1), 135-146. doi: 10.1007/BF01107897

Brissette, I., Cohen, S., & Seeman, T. E. (2000). Measuring social integration and social networks. In S. Cohen, L. G. Underwood, & B. H. Gottlieb (Eds.), Social support measurement and intervention (pp. 53-85). New York: Oxford University Press.

Week 7   10-2   The Psychological Perspective

Komproe, I. H., Rijken, M., Ros, W. J. G., Winnubst, J. A. M., & Hart, H. t. (1997). Available support and received support: Different effects under stressful circumstances. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 14*(1), 59-77. doi: 10.1177/0265407597141003

Wills, T. A., & Shinar, O. (2000). Measuring perceived and received social support. In S. Cohen, L. G. Underwood, & B. H. Gottlieb (Eds.), Social support measurement and intervention (pp. 86-135). New York: Oxford University Press.

Week 8   10-9   No reading assignment

Term paper proposal due on 10/15 (Sunday) midnight (20% of grade)

Week 9   10-16   The Communication Perspective

Reis, H. T., & Collins, N. (2000). Measuring relationship properties and interactions relevant to social support. In S. Cohen, L. G. Underwood, & B. H. Gottlieb (Eds.), *Social support measurement and intervention* (pp. 136-192). New York: Oxford University Press.

Burleson, B. R., & MacGeorge, E. L. (2002). Supportive communication. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds.), *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication* (3rd ed., pp. 374-424). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. **Read only** pp. 384-424.

Unit III: Social Support in Applied Contexts

Unit III objectives:

Students will be able to relate research findings on social support and well-being to their real life situations, develop a research paper that summarizes an area on this topic, identifies a significant unaddressed issue, and proposes research questions/hypotheses.

Week 10   10-23   Different Types of Social Support

Merz, E.-M., & Huxhold, O. (2010). Wellbeing depends on social relationship characteristics: Comparing different types and providers of support to older adults. *Ageing & Society, 30*(5), 843-857. doi: 10.1017/S0144686X10000061

Chen, Y., & Feeley, T. H. (2012). Enacted support and well-being: A test of the mediating role of perceived control. Communication Studies, 63, 608-625. doi: 10.1080/10510974.2012.674619

Week 11   10-30   Receiving Social Support and Providing Social Support

Brown, S. L., Nesse, R. M., Vinokur, A. D., & Smith, D. M. (2003). Providing social support may be more beneficial than receiving it: Results from a prospective study of mortality. Psychological Science, 14(4), 320–327. doi:10.1111/1467-9280.14461

Thomas, P. A. (2010). Is it better to give or to receive? Social support and the well-being of older adults. The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences, 65B(3), 351– 357. doi:10.1093/geronb/gbp113

Week 12   11-6   Supportive and Unsupportive Relationships

Shiovitz-Ezra, S., & Leitsch, S. A. (2010). The role of social relationships in predicting loneliness: The national social life, health, and aging project. Social Work Research, 34, 157–167.

Chen, Y., & Feeley, T. H. (2014). Social support, social strain, loneliness, and well-being among older adults: An analysis of the Health and Retirement Study. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 31(2), 141-161. doi: 10.1177/0265407513488728

Week 13   11-13   Social Support and Cancer Patients

Kim J., Han, J.Y., Shaw, B., McTavish, F., Gustafson, D. (2010). The roles of social support and coping strategies in predicting breast cancer patients' emotional well-being: Testing mediation and moderation models. *Journal of Health Psychology 15*, 543-552.

Han, J. Y., Hou, J., Kim, E., & Gustafson, D. H. (2014). Lurking as an active participation process: A longitudinal investigation of engagement with an online cancer support group. *Health Communication, 29(9),* 911-923. doi: 10.1080/10410236.2013.816911

Week 14   11-20   Social Support and Risky Behaviors

Optional:

Fagan, P., Eisenberg, M., Stoddard, A. M., Frazier, L., & Sorensen, G. (2001). Social influences, social norms, social support, and smoking behavior among adolescent workers. *American Journal of Health Promotion, 15*(6), 414-421. doi: 10.4278/0890-1171-15.6.414

Carlson, L. E., Goodey, E., Bennett, M. H., Taenzer, P., & Koopmans, J. (2002). The addition of social support to a community-based large-group behavioral smoking cessation intervention: Improved cessation rates and gender differences. *Addictive Behaviors, 27*(4), 547-559. doi: 10.1016/S0306-4603(01)00192-7

week 15   11-27   Social Support and New Communication Technology

Final Paper due on 12/3 (Sunday) midnight (40% of grade)

Optional:

High, A. C., & Solomon, D. H. (2011). Locating computer-mediated social support within online communication environments. In K. B. Wright & L. M. Webb (Eds.), *Computer-mediated communication in personal relationships* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Hampton Press.

Oh, H. J., Ozkaya, E., & LaRose, R. (2014). How does online social networking enhance life satisfaction? The relationships among online supportive interaction, affect, perceived social support, sense of community, and life satisfaction. *Computers in Human Behavior, 30,* 69-78.

Week 16   12-4   TBA