Overview
In this course, we will cover classical approaches in addition to recent empirical research and theoretical development related to stress and coping. We will begin by reviewing definitions and major theoretical orientations. In subsequent weeks we will concentrate on stress, coping, and related topics across a broad range of circumstances. For example, we will examine effects of stress and how stress effects may be mediated behaviorally and physiologically. We will consider ways to define successful and maladaptive coping and we will review a variety of stress-protective factors. During the final sessions of the course, we will address topics of particular interest to students. Students will select a topic, choose a relevant reading assignment for the class in consultation with the instructor, and present their topic in a class session devoted to student presentations.

Format
One to three readings are assigned per class session. Students are expected to read assignments carefully in advance of class and to discuss topics raised by the articles during class meetings. To facilitate thoughtful discussion, students should formulate at least one question or issue in preparation for each class session. A primary objective of the course is for students to learn how to understand and critique readings in a scholarly manner -- by noting their merits, their weaknesses, by drawing comparisons, and by recognizing and perhaps resolving apparent contradictions. Students will demonstrate these skills through the questions that they formulate, through their participation in class discussion, and by identifying "critical issues" from assigned readings. Another objective of the course is to facilitate original thinking about stress and coping and to enable students to design research to test their ideas. Students will achieve this through a course paper.

Course Requirements
1. Students are expected to arrive at class on time and must notify the instructor in advance if they are unable to attend. More than two absences, particularly if unexcused, may result in an unsatisfactory evaluation.

2. Students are expected to complete readings carefully and to participate in class discussions. Participation does not require making "brilliant" comments, nor does it entail constant speaking. It means offering comments when one has a contribution to make that shows thought about the readings or discussion topic.

3. On four occasions, students will identify a "critical issue" relevant to the class topic or readings and bring a description of it to class (approximately two pages; must be typed, double-spaced, and labeled with name and date). For example, you might highlight a discrepancy in the reading, an important point not covered, an idea for research that might resolve a question raised by one of the readings, or an issue to which the reading material could be applied. Students will present their critical issue in class and will submit it to the instructor at the end of the class session.

   FOUR critical issue papers will be required during the semester. A critical issue paper can be submitted on a Tuesday or Thursday -- but not both -- of any week (and only on days when we hold class). **EXCEPTION: Do not submit a critical issue paper prior to September 8 or after November 29.** It is a student's responsibility to monitor the number of critical issue papers submitted. By the end of the course, a
total of four critical issue papers must have been submitted; fewer papers will result in an unsatisfactory evaluation. The instructor suggests that students retain critical issue papers that have been returned to resolve any discrepancy that could arise. In addition, review the document entitled "Improving Your Psychology Manuscripts" that appears on our Blackboard site under the Documents folder. Many of the recommendations contained in it will help you improve your critical issue papers.

4. For every class session other than the four for which they have prepared a critical issue paper (see above), students will formulate a question or issue based on their reading or thinking about stress and coping. The question or issue should be recorded in any format (electronic, paper) for reference during class. The instructor will call on students to present their question or issue.

5. Students will select a topic of particular interest to them which is not covered in class. Examples include: responses to victims; developmental perspectives on coping; specific life events, such as cancer or bereavement or community disasters; specific physical or mental health outcomes of stress; attributional perspectives and blame; coping via social comparison; stress in particular populations (e.g., firefighters, mental health workers, abused children). After selecting a topic, each student will consult with the instructor to select one relevant general reading for their classmates to complete. A topic and reading must be approved by the instructor by October 25th. The final sessions of the course will be devoted to student-selected topics. Students will present their topic in one of these class sessions.

6. A 10 to 25 page paper is required. It is due Friday, December 9th, by 3:30 p.m. Submit both a hard (paper) copy and electronic copy emailed as an attachment to marci.lobel@stonybrook.edu. The paper should be written and referenced in APA style. Ideally, a student's paper and selected class topic will address overlapping issues. Students are encouraged to use the opportunity to develop some testable ideas or hypotheses about stress and coping. For example, the paper might be an integration of prior research or theory (a Psych Bulletin or Psych Review type of paper), or it might include a research proposal or suggested methods and measures to test ideas. It may be a paper that fulfills other requirements for the student (such as the first draft of a dissertation proposal), provided this is approved in advance by the instructor and any other involved parties, such as the student’s advisor or other instructor. Topics must be finalized and approved by the instructor by November 15th. Before beginning your paper, be sure you (re-)review the document entitled "Improving Your Psychology Manuscripts" that appears on our Blackboard site under the Documents folder.

Course grades will be computed according to the following APPROXIMATE algorithm:

Participation, questions, and attendance - 30%
Critical issue papers - 30%
Topic/reading/presentation - 15%
Paper - 25%

Class Schedule and Assigned Readings
NOTE: Most readings are downloadable from the Stony Brook University Library. Readings marked with asterisks (***’) are posted on our Blackboard course site under the Documents folder.

Tuesday August 30  Introduction and course business

I. Conceptualizing Stress

Thursday September 1
Tuesday September 6  SBU CLASSES NOT IN SESSION

Thursday September 8

Tuesday September 13

Thursday September 15

II. The Psychophysiology of Stress

Tuesday September 20


Thursday September 22

Tuesday September 27


III. Effects of Stress

Thursday September 29


Tuesday October 4 – NO CLASS
Thursday October 6


IV. Coping with Stress: Foundational Approaches

Tuesday October 11


Thursday October 13

V. Coping with Stress: Newer Perspectives

Tuesday October 18


VI. Adaptive Coping

Thursday October 20

Tuesday October 25 PRESENTATION TOPIC AND READING SELECTION DUE BY TODAY

Thursday October 27

VII. Coping with Stress: Applications

Tuesday November 1
Thursday November 3

Tuesday November 8


VIII. Stress Protective Factors

Thursday November 10

Tuesday November 15  PAPER TOPICS DUE BY TODAY

Thursday November 17


Tuesday November 22


Thursday November 24   Thanksgiving Holiday - No Class

Tuesday November 29


Thursday December 1 Student-selected topics

Tuesday December 6 Student-selected topics

Thursday December 8 Student-selected topics

Paper is due Friday December 9th by 3:30 p.m.
Related Reading:


Mingzhu Guo, Yiqun Gan and Jing Tong (2013). The role of meaning-focused coping in significant loss. Anxiety, Stress, & Coping, 26 (1), 87-102.


