

Trauma (PSY 217)

Fall 2022 Syllabus

Justin Dainer-Best

Fall 2022

Course Number	Time	Location	Office Hours
PSY 217	M/W, 15:30-16:50	Olin 303	Th, 12-13:30

[Make an appointment to come to my office hours.](#)

Pre-requisites: Introduction to Psychological Science or its equivalent in Sociology, Human Rights, or Anthropology.

This course fulfills the psychology major's Cluster A requirement.

Wherever possible, I hope to work to make this course accessible and approachable for all students. For more information on accessibility for this course, please view [the section on that subject](#) below.

Overview

This course explores what it means to experience, deal with, and overcome trauma. It investigates the psychological factors that contribute to trauma; symptoms relating to trauma; the evolution of our understanding of the term itself; and the etiology (origin), diagnosis, consequence, and treatment of trauma-related disorders including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Topics will also include intimate partner violence, the psychophysiological impacts of trauma, transgenerational trauma, and race-based trauma. We will explore divergent theories of trauma. Readings will include fiction and nonfiction accounts, empirical and review articles, and clinical case studies.

The course is discussion-based; you will be reading research on these topics with the expectation that you will be using that research to form opinions. The course will include discussions of treatment and case studies as well as possible debates. There will rarely be a class primarily

focused on my lecture; you should come to class having read the reading for that day and prepared to ask questions and interrogate it.

Based in part on the subject, this course will inevitably discuss topics that are sensitive or personal for many students. If something discussed in class leaves you feeling upset, please speak to a trusted person about your experience. Further, if you find that you are struggling to cope with some of the topics discussed in class, you may contact [Bard Counseling Services](#), and [make an appointment](#); you may also email counselingservice@bard.edu or call 845-758-7433.

In the spirit of truth and equity, it is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that this class will take place on the sacred homelands of the Munsee and Muhheaconneok people, who are the original stewards of this land. Today, due to forced removal, the community resides in Northeast Wisconsin and is known as the [Stockbridge-Munsee Community](#). We honor and pay respect to their ancestors past and present, as well as to future generations and we recognize their continuing presence in their homelands. We understand that our acknowledgment requires those of us who are settlers to recognize our own place in and responsibilities towards addressing inequity, and that this ongoing and challenging work requires that we commit to real engagement with the Munsee and Mohican communities to build an inclusive and equitable space for all.

Objectives

By the end of the semester you should. . .

- understand the many facets of our modern conceptualization of trauma,
- understand how context matters in the experience of traumatic experiences, and how chronic/complex traumas may impact individuals differently across culture and experience,
- be able to discuss methods of treating posttraumatic stress disorder and other experiences of trauma,
- know about designing clinical treatment studies, and
- understand how resilience impacts our ability to respond to traumas.

Instructor

The instructor for this course is Assistant Professor of Psychology Justin Dainer-Best (he/him).

Materials

Optional books

This course does not use a textbook. Readings will be assigned through PDFs posted to the Brightspace page. (Note that although there are citations below, this website *does not* include the PDFs.) Some readings will be assigned from the following books; students who prefer to read from a physical text may choose to purchase copies. Again: readings will be assigned from these books, but you **do not need to purchase them** unless you choose to.

- American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed., text rev.). Washington, DC: Author. ISBN 9780890425787. ([Electronic version available](#). Hard copy available at the Reference Desk in Stevenson Library.)
- Herman, J. L. (2015). *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror*. Basic Books. ISBN 978-0-465-06171-6.
- Foo, S. (2022). *What my bones know: A memoir of healing from complex trauma*. Ballantine Books. ISBN 9780593238103
- Friedman, M. J., Keane, T. M., & Resick, P. A. (Eds.). (2007). *Handbook of PTSD: Science and practice*. Guilford Press. ISBN 978-1-4625-1617-9.
- Van der Kolk, B. A. (2015). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. Penguin Books. ISBN 978-0-14-312774-1.

All readings uploaded to Brightspace should work with a screen reader; if you find a reading that is not processed correctly, please let me know and I will convert it or work with you to find an alternative. You should complete each reading *in preparation for class*, as listed below on the [schedule](#).

Class Policies

Attendance

We will move at a rapid pace; material that is missed due to absence will not be repeated in class or office hours. Our classes are designed as interactive, and your absence will impact both your own understanding and the class or your group. Missing multiple days of group work may impact your grade.

However, this is a college class and you are an adult; your attendance is your decision. Late arrivals can be disruptive to the class. Consistent patterns of lateness are unfair to other students. Please be on time.

If you are not feeling well, please do not come to class.

Masks

For the first week of class, I ask that we all come to class masked and remain masked throughout the class. We will discuss masking as a class and come to an agreement on whether we will continue masked as a class throughout the semester, with the understanding that the safety of the community requires all of us to prioritize one another, and disabled individuals may need others to mask for their safety.

If you have recently been ill, please wear a mask when you attend; masks are effective at reducing spread of many respiratory illnesses. Each of us shares responsibility for the health and safety of all in the classroom.

Accommodations & Accessibility

Bard College is committed to providing equal access to all students. If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please contact me so that we can arrange to discuss. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. Together we can plan how best to support your learning and coordinate your accommodations. Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations through disability services should share their accommodation letter with me and make arrangements to meet as soon as possible.

If you have a learning difference or disability that may relate to your ability to fully participate in this class, but have not yet met with the Disability Support Coordinator at Bard, you can contact their office through <https://www.bard.edu/accessibility/students/>; the Coordinator will confidentially discuss the process to establish reasonable accommodations. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and thus you should begin this process as soon as possible if you believe you will need them.

Additionally, as my office in Preston Hall may be physically difficult to access, you may always request to meet with me in another location. I am available for meetings online as well as those in person.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

It is important to me that this course provides an open and supportive learning environment for all students. I invite you to speak with me if you have concerns or questions regarding issues of belonging, safety, or equity in the classroom. I want our discussions to be respectful of all students. If I am not helping the classroom to feel like an inclusive environment, I invite you to provide me with [anonymous] feedback. Trauma and clinical experiences are topics about which many people have ideas or beliefs—all forms of knowledge are valuable. While we will primarily engage with the topic of trauma from an observational perspective, respect for all viewpoints is extremely important.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

I expect you to be familiar with what plagiarism is and is not. You may not present someone else's work as your own without proper citation. You may not copy someone else's work. You may not simply reword text from another source without giving credit. Please cite others' work where relevant, and use your own writing. If you are not sure about the definition of plagiarism, or whether something constitutes plagiarism, please consult with me or with someone at Bard's [Learning Commons](#). Students caught plagiarizing will be reported to the Academic Judiciary Board, will get no credit for the assignment, and may fail the course.

I operate from the standpoint that you are interested in learning this material, and are doing your best to operate with integrity.

Cell phones and laptops

Before class, you should silence your cell phone, and you should not be on your phone during class unless you are asked to be (e.g., to respond to a poll). I do not recommend taking notes on your phone as a rule. I recommend taking notes on paper wherever possible. If you text or access materials unrelated to class during our class time, you are mentally absent from class.

When using a laptop, I encourage you to turn off notifications / turn on Do Not Disturb whenever possible. Browsing unrelated materials is distracting to you and also to your classmates.

Late Assignments

Most assignments can be turned in **within two days** of their due dates without penalty. For example, if an assignment is due before class on a Monday, it may be turned in by Wednesday at midnight without penalty. However, please note that many assignments are intended to develop into conversations; even if you have not turned in a final document to me, you should be prepared to discuss your work in class.

Assignments may still be turned in after their late date. However, such assignments are considered "missing" (see section "Grading" below). If your work is consistently turned in late, this also may impact your grade unless you discuss this lateness with me. All assignments are due by the last day of the semester.

Assignments

Definition Papers

At three time-points during the semester (see the [schedule](#) below), you will write a 1–2-page (single-spaced) definition of trauma. You should use sources from the class or others you identify, cited in APA style. Your second definition paper may reflect back on the first one, but I encourage you to write it without consulting the first paper. Is trauma an immutable concept?

The third paper should be slightly longer (2–3 single-spaced pages) and directly address the original two definitions. (These papers are worth 5, 5, and 10 points.) You may answer questions such as “How has your definition changed, and why?”

Definition Papers will be discussed with a classmate the day they are due; they will be [graded](#) based on your final, edited version (due by midnight that day), with points for: having a succinct definition and argument, at least one example, and one potential limitation/critique of the definition. Clarity of writing is encouraged.

Group brainstorm papers

At five planned points throughout the semester, you and several classmates will discuss specific topics:

- Critiques of diagnosis of PTSD
- Study design
- Intervention/research design
- Development of case study
- Resilience intervention design and testing

Each group will create a single brain-stormed document incorporating all group members’ work and answering the questions for that topic. You will be [graded](#) based on your providing brainstormed ideas for all components of the assignment. You do *not* need to include a breakdown of who did what, but all of your names *should* be on the paper. (I recommend using reverse alphabetical order for listing—authorship order is irrelevant in these day projects.) Group brainstorms are due the class following that in which they are assigned. (You should be able to complete them in the class period.)

Before fall break, you must *individually* “complete” one of the papers you have brainstormed with your classmates. You will include a reflection which addresses your group work, grades yourself on a rubric, and gives me the opportunity to use that same rubric to adjust your grade. See info on the [expansion paper](#) below.

At the end of the semester, you will work *individually* to convert one of these group papers into a longer project (a “polished project”). The final paper can be a creative work or a traditional paper, but must extend and adapt one of the group papers. See info on the [polished project](#) below.

Missed work due to absences

Students who miss a group work day (e.g., due to illness) should plan to turn in a shorter version of the same assignment (approximately half of the designed length) that they complete alone. Such assignments will be available on Brightspace. If the absence is due to illness, students may without penalty request an extension for these assignments; they should suggest alternative due dates.

Self-assessment

Before fall break (see the [schedule](#)), you will be asked to submit a 1–2 page self-assessment in which you reflect on the following: what you have learned in this class, your performance in the class, your understanding of terms and concepts, your completion of reading and assignments, your methods of dealing with the potential vicarious trauma of the work of this class, and your plans for the remainder of the semester. This assignment will not be graded, but will receive 5 points if completed.

Expansion

As described in the [group papers](#), you will *individually* complete one of those group papers you have brain-stormed with your classmates. (Please acknowledge all members of your group at the bottom, but you should write this paper alone.) That final paper should:

1. Be \approx 3 pages long, single-spaced
2. Accommodate the ideas described in the group-written paper—including references and using your own words
3. Begin with an additional one-page reflection which:
 - a. Addresses the group work: how did it go?
 - b. Includes a rubric by which you can score your expansion paper, with different categories summing to 20 points. The rubric should directly address the topic as described in that group paper’s assignment
 - c. Scores the rubric for your own paper

For example, if you wrote on the first group paper, you would write approximately three pages describing a critique of the PTSD diagnosis. You would then write a cover letter (the reflection) which addresses how your group work went, and reflects on pros and cons of your specific group. You could also comment on how you adapted the group’s brainstorm into your final paper. You would then create a rubric which includes points for the following categories, summing to 20: use of appropriate sources, evidence for argument, final conclusion, and quality of writing. I will use your rubric *and the scores you give yourself* to determine your grade.

Polished project

For the final project, you will work individually to convert one of your [group papers](#) into a longer project. Such projects can be an academic paper (≈ 5 pages), a short podcast (≈ 3–5 minutes), a website, a creative project, or any alternative that extends and adapts the projects into a larger form. I would prefer to get creative projects!

These polished projects will be graded on their ability to inform the audience about the topic and their connection to the concept of trauma; if you do a creative project that doesn’t have a written component that otherwise shows the connection, please write a brief (1–2 page) statement that connects it to your original paper. You may submit the project on Brightspace unless it’s not appropriate for that format, in which case you’re welcome to share it with me in-person or via email / Google Drive.

Grades

Assignment	Points
Definition papers	20
Group papers	30
Expansion	20
Polished project	25
Self-Assessment	5
Total	100

Grade	Range
A-range	90-100
B-range	80-89
C-range	70-79
D-range	60-69
F	below 60

Your grades in this course will come from the assignments described above: three [definition papers](#), five [group brainstorm papers](#), one [expansion paper](#), one [polished project](#), and

one [self-assessment](#). Two definitions, two group brainstorm papers, the expansion paper, and the self-assessment are due before midterm.

Completing the reading and thoughtfully participating in the class is an important component of your learning. You may miss (i.e., not attend class) *one* group brainstorm paper without penalty. If you must miss a *second*, you should plan to complete the work individually.

As [discussed above](#), all assignments may be turned in **up to two days late without penalty**. Assignments turned in later than that will not receive full points—at maximum a point off for each day late. “Missing” assignments are those which are not turned in by the late deadline, and which you have not contacted me about.

Schedule

The schedule may change over the course of the semester. Changes to assignment dates will be announced via email and also changed on the course website and Brightspace. You are responsible for keeping up with the readings, showing up to class prepared, and turning in assignments on-time.

Readings are listed by author last name; **PDFs can be found on Brightspace**.

Day	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Mon	Aug 29	Defining trauma		
Wed	Aug 31	[Re]defining trauma	Friedman et al. (2014)	
Mon	Sep 5	Diagnosis of PTSD	DSM-5: American Psychiatric Association (2013)	First definition paper
Wed	Sep 7	(class exercise: critiques of diagnosis)		
Mon	Sep 12	Intro to treatments for PTSD	Resick et al. (2014)	First group paper
Wed	Sep 14	Writing Exposure Therapy & visit from Dr. Jafar Ahmadi	Ahmadi et al. (2022)	
Mon	Sep 19	Trauma physiology	van der Kolk (2015), pp. 51-104	
Wed	Sep 21	Neuropsych of trauma	Yehuda & Bierer (2009)	
Mon	Sep 26	Intimate partner violence	Galano et al. (2020)	

Day	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Wed	Sep 28	(class exercise: study for IPV)		
Mon	Oct 3	[Re]defining trauma	Keret (2007); So (2020); Cisneros (1984); Li (2018)	Second group paper ; Self-assessment
Wed	Oct 5	Writing: Feedback & discussion		Expansion
Mon	Oct 10	Fall break		
Wed	Oct 12	Race-based trauma	Comas-Díaz et al. (2019); Sibrava et al. (2019)	Second definition
Mon	Oct 17	Race-based trauma	Hartmann et al. (2019)	
Wed	Oct 19	Refugee mental health	Bartlett et al. (2020)	
Mon	Oct 24	Chronic traumatic stress	Fondacaro & Mazzulla (2017)	
Wed	Oct 26	Class visit from Mary Armistead, J.D.	Gold (2018)	
Th	Oct 27	Colloquium: 4pm, Dr. Maria Galano		
Mon	Oct 31	(class exercise: refugee mental health care)		
Wed	Nov 2	Minority stress, triggers	Nadal et al. (2019)	Third group paper
Mon	Nov 7	Psychoanalytic conceptualization	Lingiardi & McWilliams (2017)	
Wed	Nov 9	Dissociation and complex PTSD	Davies & Frawley (1992); excerpts from Foo (2022)	
Mon	Nov 14	(class exercise: psychoanalytic case study)		
Wed	Nov 16	Transgenerational trauma	Heijmans et al. (2008)	Fourth group paper
Mon	Nov 21	No class		
Wed	Nov 23	Thanksgiving break		
Mon	Nov 28	Resilience; (class exercise: resilience interventions)	Herman (2015), pp. 133-174; <i>Optional</i> : Harvey (2007)	

Day	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Wed	Nov 30	[Re]defining trauma	Bridgland et al. (2021); Vuong (2019); Brockes (2019); Alishan (2006)	Fifth group paper
Mon	Dec 5	Wrap-up / Polished project planning		
Wed	Dec 7	Advising day		Final definition
Mon	Dec 12	Completion week		
Wed	Dec 14	Completion week		
Fri	Dec 16			Polished project

- Ahmadi, S. J., Musavi, Z., Samim, N., Sadeqi, M., & Jobson, L. (2022). Investigating the feasibility, acceptability and efficacy of using modified- written exposure therapy in the aftermath of a terrorist attack on symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder among Afghan adolescent girls. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, *13*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2022.826633>
- Alishan, L. (2006). The black city. In J. Thomas & R. Shapard (Eds.), *Flash fiction forward: 80 very short stories* (pp. 121–123). W. W. Norton Company.
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed., pp. 265–290). Author.
- Bartlett, R., Sarnyai, Z., Momartin, S., Ooi, L., Schwab, S. G., & Matosin, N. (2020). Biological mental health research in refugees: Current status and future directions. *Preprint*. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/cfp4h>
- Bridgland, V. M. E., Moeck, E. K., Green, D. M., Swain, T. L., Nayda, D. M., Matson, L. A., Hutchison, N. P., & Takarangi, M. K. T. (2021). Why the COVID-19 pandemic is a traumatic stressor. *PLOS ONE*, *16*(1), e0240146. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0240146>
- Brockes, E. (2019). Ocean Vuong: “As a child I would ask: What’s napalm?” *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jun/09/ocean-vuong-on-earth-we-are-briefly-gorgeous-interview>
- Cisneros, S. (1984). *The house on Mango Street* (pp. 28–34). Vintage Books.
- Comas-Díaz, L., Hall, G. N., & Neville, H. A. (2019). Racial trauma: Theory, research, and healing: Introduction to the special issue. *American Psychologist*, *74*(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000442>
- Davies, J. M., & Frawley, M. G. (1992). Dissociative processes and transference-countertransference paradigms in the psychoanalytically oriented treatment of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, *2*(1), 5–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10481889209538920>
- Fondacaro, K., & Mazzulla, E. (2017). The chronic traumatic stress framework: A conceptual model to guide empirical investigation and mental health treatment for refugees and survivors

- of torture. *Torture*, 27(3), 58–69.
- Foo, S. (2022). *What my bones know: A memoir of healing from complex trauma* (excerpts). Ballantine Books.
- Friedman, M. J., Keane, T. M., & Resick, P. A. (2014). PTSD from DSM-III to DSM-5: Progress and challenges. In M. J. Friedman, T. M. Keane, & P. A. Resick (Eds.), *Handbook of PTSD: Science and practice* (pp. 3–20). Guilford Press.
- Galano, M. M., Grogan-Kaylor, A. C., Stein, S. F., Clark, H. M., & Graham-Bermann, S. A. (2020). Dyadic profiles of posttraumatic stress symptoms in mothers and children experiencing intimate partner violence. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, 51(6), 943–955. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-020-00973-y>
- Gold, S. E. (2018). Trauma: What lurks beneath the surface. *Clinical Law Review*, 24(2), 201–246.
- Hartmann, W. E., Wendt, D. C., Burrage, R. L., Pomerville, A., & Gone, J. P. (2019). American Indian historical trauma: Anticolonial prescriptions for healing, resilience, and survivance. *American Psychologist*, 74(1), 6–19. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000326>
- Harvey, M. R. (2007). Towards an ecological understanding of resilience in trauma survivors. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 14(1-2), 9–32. https://doi.org/10.1300/j146v14n01_02
- Heijmans, B. T., Tobi, E. W., Stein, A. D., Putter, H., Blauw, G. J., Susser, E. S., Slagboom, P. E., & Lumey, L. H. (2008). Persistent epigenetic differences associated with prenatal exposure to famine in humans. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 105(44), 17046–17049. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0806560105>
- Herman, J. L. (2015). *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence—from domestic abuse to political terror* (pp. 133–174). Basic Books.
- Keret, E. (2007). *The nimrod flipout* (pp. 7–22). Farrar, Straus; Giroux.
- Li, Y. (2018). When we were happy we had other names. *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/01/when-we-were-happy-we-had-other-names>
- Lingiardi, V., & McWilliams, N. (Eds.). (2017). *Psychodynamic diagnostic manual: PDM-2* (pp. 177–206). Guilford Publications.
- Nadal, K. L., Erazo, T., & King, R. (2019). Challenging definitions of psychological trauma: Connecting racial microaggressions and traumatic stress. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling & Psychology*, 11(2), 2–16. <https://doi.org/10.33043/JSACP.11.2.2-16>
- Resick, P. A., Monson, C. M., Gutner, C. A., & Maslej, M. M. (2014). Psychosocial treatments for adults with PTSD. In M. J. Friedman, T. M. Keane, & P. A. Resick (Eds.), *Handbook of PTSD: Science and practice* (pp. 419–436). Guilford Press.
- Sibrava, N. J., Bjornsson, A. S., Pérez Benítez, A. C. I., Moitra, E., Weisberg, R. B., & Keller, M. B. (2019). Posttraumatic stress disorder in African American and Latinx adults: Clinical course and the role of racial and ethnic discrimination. *American Psychologist*, 74(1), 101–116. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000339>
- So, A. V. (2020). Three women of Chuck’s Donuts. *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/02/10/three-women-of-chucks-donuts>
- van der Kolk, B. A. (2015). Part two: This is your brain on trauma. In *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma* (pp. 51–104). Penguin Books.

- Vuong, O. (2019). *On Earth we're briefly gorgeous: A novel* (pp. 3–14). Penguin.
- Yehuda, R., & Bierer, L. M. (2009). The relevance of epigenetics to PTSD: Implications for the DSM-5. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 22*(5), 427–434. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.20448>