PSYC 461: Psychology of COVID-19 (3 credits)

Spring 2021

**Instructor:** Dr. Erin Quinlivan Murdoch

**Email:** [emurdoch@gmu.edu](mailto:emurdoch@gmu.edu)

**Office Hours:** Virtually, by appointment

# **Course Description:**

# Welcome! The purpose of this course is to consider the application of psychological principles to issues occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic, including public health risk communication, social impact, psychological responses, and work and family life. This is an asynchronous online course. All content is provided online via the course webpage on Blackboard.

Materials for the course have been developed by faculty members from the GMU Department of Psychology. Each faculty contributor has developed a module within their area of expertise. The course instructor (Dr. Murdoch) will guide you through the course, engage in course discussions, and evaluate your performance throughout the course.

# **Learning Outcomes:**

1. Articulate how psychological principles apply to social issues, pressing social needs, and public policy during COVID-19.
2. Describe how societal disparities (connected to race, class, gender, or ethnicity) influence risks, reactions, and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Identify/Explain factors that contribute to psychological health during COVID-19.
4. Examine appropriate practices for improving psychological functioning during COVID-19.

# **Course Schedule:**

\*Modules will open on Tuesdays at 12:00am, with assignments due the following Monday by 11:59pm\*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date Available** | **Module** | **Topic** | **Faculty Contributor** |
| Jan 26 | Module 1 | Overview of COVID-19 | Erin Murdoch |
| **Public Health and Risk Communication** | | |  |
| Feb 2 | Module 2 | Sources of Information and Technology Use | Yi-Ching Lee |
| Module 3 | Separating Fact from Fiction | Justin Ramsdell |
| Feb 9 | Module 4 | Racial/Ethnic Disparities | Lauren Cattaneo |
| Feb 16 | Module 5 | Improving Risk Communication | Leah Adams |
| Module 6 | Face Masks: Symbols and Safety | Erin Murdoch |
| **Social Impact** | | |  |
| Feb 23 | Module 7 | Effects of Social Isolation | Jennifer Brielmaier |
| Mar 2 | Module 8 | Social Network Aspects | Olga Kornienko |
| Module 9 | Family Relationships | Keith Renshaw |
| **Psychological Responses** | | |  |
| Mar 9 | Module 10 | Uncertainty and Stress | Jerome Short |
| Module 11 | Stress and Immune Function | Linda Chrosniak |
| Mar 16 | Module 12 | Mental Health | Robyn Mehlenbeck |
| Mar 23 | Module 13 | Coping and Hope | Jerome Short |
| Module 14 | Quarantine, Isolation, and Quarantine Fatigue | Erin Murdoch |
| **Education and Development** | | |  |
| Mar 30 | Module 15 | Online Learning and the Digital Divide | Tim Curby |
| Apr 6 | Module 16 | Schooling at Home and Parenting | Thalia Goldstein |
| **Work and Leisure** | | |  |
| Apr 13 | Module 17 | Telework/Remote work | Steve Zaccaro |
| Module 18 | Gender Issues | Erin Murdoch |
| Apr 20 | Module 19 | Unemployment | Lauren Kuykendall |
| Apr 27 | Module 20 | Leisure during a Pandemic | Lauren Kuykendall |
| Module 21 | Sense of Time | Martin Weiner |
| May 4 | Module 22 | Final Thoughts | Erin Murdoch |

# **Criteria for evaluation:**

Grades in this course will be based on the following components:

1. MODULE ASSESSMENTS (20 points for each module except Module 22; total of 420 points)

Modules will include written assignments, discussions, and/or quizzes related to the module topic. The total for each module’s assessment(s) will be 20 points. Modules open on Tuesdays at 12:00am and assignments are due by the following Monday at 11:59pm.

1. INFOGRAPHIC (30 points)

As a final project, you will create an infographic about one of the issues that we have covered. Infographics are visual presentations that provide an overview of a topic. A detailed assignment sheet, including suggested websites where you can create infographics, will be provided.

You can calculate your final grade by taking your total number of points divided by 450 and then multiplying that number by 100.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade Breakdown:** |  |  |
| A+ 99-100% | A 93-98% | A- 90-92% |
| B+ 87-89% | B 83-86% | B- 80-82% |
| C+ 77-79% | C 73-76% | C- 70-72% |
| D 60-69% |  |  |
| F below 60% |  |  |

# **Course Policies**

**Late Assignments:** All assignments should be turned in by the due date. Due dates are at 11:59pm on the Monday after a module becomes available. A late penalty of 5% per day will be applied to assignments submitted after the due date, unless you have contacted me and arranged approval for late submission.

**Instructor-Student Communication:** Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions or concerns about the course material and assignments. I will respond to your emails as soon as I can, typically within 24 hours on weekdays.

**Classroom needs**: If you have any specific needs (e.g., related to vision, hearing, learning, or medical conditions) or any religious or cultural practices, please let me know by the second week of class so that I can make the appropriate arrangements. Disabilitiesmust be documented by Disability Services (703-993-2474, ods@gmu.edu) for reasonable accommodations to be provided.

**Blackboard Login Instructions**: Online materials for this class can be accessed through Blackboard. You must check our course webpage frequently for course content, assignments, and discussions. Access to [MyMason](http://mymason.gmu.edu) and GMU email are required to participate successfully in this course. Check [the IT Support Center](http://itservices.gmu.edu/) website. Navigate to [the Student Support page](https://its.gmu.edu/article-categories/teaching-learning/blackboard/tl-s/) for help and information about Blackboard. In the menu bar to the left you will find all the tools you need to become familiar with for this course. Take time to learn each. Make sure you run a system check a few days before class. Become familiar with the attributes of Blackboard and online learning.

# **University Policies and Resources**

1. **Honor Code**: George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee. The Code can be found [here](https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/full-honor-code-document/). It is your responsibility to see me if you have questions about these policies.
2. **Academic Integrity**: Academic integrity refers to honest and ethical behavior in all aspects of academic activity. This includes: not cheating on homework assignments (e.g., copying the work of others), not passing off someone else's ideas as your own (plagiarism), not engaging in dishonesty of any kind with regard to your class participation and assignments.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor, another person's ideas, another person's words, or another person's assistance. Unless otherwise stated in class, all work done for class is expected to be the individual effort of the student presenting the work. Any assistance must be reported to the instructor. If the work has entailed consulting other resources -- journals, books, or other media -- these resources must be cited in a manner appropriate to the course. Everything used from other sources -- suggestions for organization of ideas, ideas themselves, or actual language -- must be cited. Failure to cite borrowed material constitutes plagiarism. Undocumented use of materials from the internet is plagiarism. If you are caught plagiarizing or cheating, you will fail the assignment, and, depending upon the severity of the violation, you may fail the class.

1. **Official Communications via GMU E-mail**: Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account and are required to activate that account and check it regularly. In the event that Mason cancels classes, I will notify you via email regarding any changes to scheduled assignments.
2. **Enrollment:** Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes (available from the Registrar's Website: registrar.gmu.edu.). After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

The deadlines for dropping classes are as follows:

* February 12: Last day to drop classes with no tuition liability
* February 16: Drop period with 50% tuition liability
* February 17 – March 1: Unrestricted Withdrawal Period (100% tuition liability)
* March 2 – April 1: Selective Withdrawal Period (100% tuition liability)

1. Students must follow the university policy for [**Responsible Use of Computing**](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/)
2. As a faculty member and designated “Responsible Employee,” I am required to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s [Title IX Coordinator](https://diversity.gmu.edu/sexual-misconduct) per [university policy 1412](https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/reporting-of-clery-act-crimes-andor-prohibited-sexual-conduct/). If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact the [Student Support and Advocacy Center](http://ssac.gmu.edu/) (703-380-1434) or [Counseling and Psychological Services](https://caps.gmu.edu/) (703-993-2380). You may also seek assistance from [Mason’s Title IX Coordinator](https://diversity.gmu.edu/sexual-misconduct) (703-993-8730; titleix@gmu.edu).
3. **Student services**: The University provides a range of services to help you succeed academically and you should make use of these if you think they could benefit you. I also invite you to speak to me (the earlier the better).
   * [The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)](http://caps.gmu.edu/) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students’ personal experience and academic performance. Counseling is available at no cost to student. Counseling Center: Student Union I, Room 364, 703-993-2380. Website [here](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/csdc/).
   * Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: [ods@gmu.edu](mailto:ods@gmu.edu) | Phone: (703) 993-2474.
   * [The George Mason University Writing Center](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/) staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. University Writing Center: Robinson Hall Room A114, 703-993-1200. The writing center includes assistance for students for whom English is a second language.
   * [Diversity](http://ctfe.gmu.edu/professional-development/mason-diversity-statement/): George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.
   * Student Privacy: All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private to this class; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.