

Faculty of Health
Department of Psychology
PSYC 4590 3.0 PSYCHOLOGY OF TRAUMA
Tuesdays/ 11:30-2:20 / Calumet College 208
Fall 2024-25

All classes will be in person. Classes will not be recorded. You need to attend class, and there is an expectation of active and informed participation.

First Day of Class

September 10, 2024

Instructor

Dr. Robert T. Muller (rmuller@yorku.ca)

Course Prerequisite(s): Course prerequisites are strictly enforced

- HH/PSYC 1010 6.00 (Introduction to Psychology)
- HH/PSYC 2021 3.00 (Statistical Methods I) or HH/PSYC 2020 6.00 (Statistical Methods I and II)
- HH/PSYC 2030 3.00 (Introduction to Research Methods) or substitutes
- HH/PSYC 2130 3.00 (Personality)
- HH/PSYC 3140 3.00 (Abnormal Psychology)
- Students must be in an Honours program in Psychology and have completed at least 84 credits

Course Credit Exclusions

Please refer to [York Courses Website](#) for a listing of any course credit exclusions.

Course Description

Purpose: This course will introduce students to important topic areas in the treatment of trauma, particularly interpersonal trauma. Given the profound effects of traumatic stress exposure across the lifespan, the course will focus on both adults and children. Attachment theory will be emphasized as an organizing framework for theory, research, and practice.

Intervention approaches will include trauma-informed models, with particular emphasis on the therapeutic relationship.

Format: The course will be run using a mixture of group discussion, group analysis of relevant issues, small group discussion, individual student presentations, and lecture format.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate in-depth knowledge regarding the field of psychological trauma.
2. Critically evaluate, synthesize and resolve conflicting information regarding psychological trauma
3. Articulate trends in psychology trauma research.
4. Locate research articles and show critical thinking about research findings in psychological trauma.
5. Express knowledge of psychological trauma in written form.
6. Engage in evidence-based dialogue with course director and peers.
7. Demonstrate an ability to work with others.

Required Texts

- Herman, J. L. (1992). *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence –from domestic abuse to political terror*. New York: Basic Books.
- Muller, R. T. (2010). *Trauma and the avoidant client: Attachment-based strategies for healing*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Muller, R. T. (2018). *Trauma and the struggle to open up: From avoidance to recovery and growth*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Sapphire (Ramona Lofton) (1996). *Push*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Westover, Tara. (2018). *Educated*. New York: Random House.

Books have been ordered for this course through the York University Bookstore.

Course Requirements and Assessment:

Assessment	Date of Evaluation (if known)	Weighting
Group presentation	During class, Oct. 29, Nov. 5	25%
Final term paper	End of Term	25%
Journal entries	Ongoing	25%
Class attendance & participation	Ongoing	25%
Total		100%

Description of Assignments

The group presentations will take place during class, Oct. 29 and Nov. 5. Three presentations will occur on each of the presentation dates.

Students will work together, in groups of 5, to put together a 30-40 minute presentation on a trauma-related topic to be agreed-upon between the group and the professor. I will assign a grade right after your presentations.

The final term paper will be a 10-15 page essay on a trauma-related topic to be agreed-upon between the student and the professor. The paper will need to be on material drawn directly from the readings, from lecture material that I've presented, from class discussions (from questions and ideas that students have voiced in class), from your own journal entries that you've sent me throughout the term, and from videos presented in class.

Journals consist of reflections that students will work on, on an ongoing basis. Students should make about two to three journal entries a week, and I ask that students email their journal entries to me once a week.

Class participation requires that students both attend each and every class, and actively participate. Participation should reflect that students have actually done the readings *before class*, and have engaged actively with the material. When readings are assigned for a particular class, please make sure that you do the readings for that class. If you show up to class not having done the readings, that will become clear very quickly. One quarter of the grade is class participation; so in order to do well in this course (and in order to learn), you will absolutely need to do the weekly readings prior to class.

Class Format, Attendance Policy, and Missed Classes or Deadlines

Students are expected to attend all classes at the time of the class. No recordings will take place. Attendance will be taken at each class. We will speak to each other in real-life format, in order to engage actively together in class discussion.

If you need to miss class for any reason, or if you need to miss any course deadline, please contact the professor by email. If you end up missing any deadline, please contact the professor by email within 24 hours.

Grading as per Senate Policy

The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments and tests* will bear either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 89, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.)

For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar – [Grading Scheme for 2024-2025](#)

Add and Drop Deadline Information

For a list of all important dates please refer to [Undergraduate Fall/Winter 2024-2025 Important Dates](#)

	Fall (Term F)	Year (Term Y)	Winter (Term W)
Last date to add a course without permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Sept 18	Sept 18	Jan 20
Last date to add a course with permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Oct 2	Oct 16	Jan 31
Drop deadline: Last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (also see Financial Deadlines)	Nov 8	Feb 7	Mar 14
Course Withdrawal Period (withdraw from a course and receive a grade of “W” on transcript – see note below)	Nov 9 – Dec 3	Feb 8-Apr 4	Mar 15-Apr 4

There are deadlines for adding and dropping courses, both academic and financial. Since, for the most part, the dates are **different**, be sure to read the information carefully so that you understand the differences between the sessional dates and the Refund Tables.

You are strongly advised to pay close attention to the "Last date to enrol without permission of course instructor" deadlines. These deadlines represent the last date students have unrestricted access to the registration and enrolment system.

After that date, you must contact the professor/department offering the course to arrange permission.

You can drop courses using the registration and enrolment system up until the last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (drop deadline).

You may withdraw from a course using the registration and enrolment system after the drop deadline until the last day of class for the term associated with the course. When you withdraw from a course, the course remains on your transcript without a grade and is notated as 'W'. The withdrawal will not affect your grade point average or count towards the credits required for your degree.

Issues Regarding Using Cellphones, Social Media, & Doing Other Work During Class

Texting, email, Facebook, twitter, and all other social media are not allowed during class. They are *highly* distracting to you and to others. Research on “multi-tasking” has been showing for years that it greatly *reduces* performance, both for people using their devices,

and for those alongside them. If you'd like to use social media, then please excuse yourself. Finally, students are not allowed to engage in tasks that are not class related. Naturally, this is for the same reason as using social media.

Academic Integrity for Students

York University takes academic integrity very seriously; please familiarize yourself with [Information about the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#).

It is recommended that you review Academic Integrity by completing the [Academic Integrity Tutorial](#) and [Academic Honesty Quiz](#)

Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

While all individuals are expected to satisfy the requirements of their program of study and to aspire to do so at a level of excellence, the university recognizes that persons with disabilities may require reasonable accommodation to enable them to do so. The university encourages students with disabilities to register with ***Student Accessibility Services (SAS)*** to discuss their accommodation needs as early as possible in the term to establish the recommended academic accommodations that will be communicated to Course Directors as necessary. **Please let me know as early as possible in the term if you anticipate requiring academic accommodation so that we can discuss how to consider your accommodation needs within the context of this course.**

<https://accessibility.students.yorku.ca/>

Excerpt from Senate Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

1. Pursuant to its commitment to sustaining an inclusive, equitable community in which all members are treated with respect and dignity, and consistent with applicable accessibility legislation, York University shall make reasonable and appropriate accommodations in order to promote the ability of students with disabilities to fulfill the academic requirements of their programs. This policy aims to eliminate systemic barriers to participation in academic activities by students with disabilities.

All students are expected to satisfy the essential learning outcomes of courses. Accommodations shall be consistent with, support and preserve the academic integrity of the curriculum and the academic standards of courses and programs. For further information please refer to: [York University Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Policy](#).

Course Materials Copyright Information

Class Schedule

1. Topic: *Introduction to Trauma*
Date: Sep 10
Video: *To a Safer Place*

2. Topic: *Living with, and Recovering from Childhood Trauma*
Date: Sep 17
Readings: Sapphire (whole book)

*N.B. The novel *Push*, by Sapphire, has some graphic scenes, making it unsettling for some readers. Please be mindful of this.

3. Topic: *Living with, and Recovering from Childhood Trauma, continued: Trauma Recovery in Children*
Date: Sep 24
Readings: Herman (first half of book)
Audio: *Today Explained: "The Joshua Generation."*

4. Topic: *Living with, and Recovering from Childhood Trauma, continued: Trauma Recovery in Adults*
Date: Oct 1
Readings: Herman (second half of book)
Video: *Boys & Men Healing from Child Sexual Abuse*

5. Topic: *The Trauma Therapy Relationship: Transference & Countertransference*
Date: Oct 8
Readings: Muller, **2010** (chapters 5 & 6)

--Reading Week, October 15, no class--

6. Topic: *How Therapists Navigate the Trauma Therapy Relationship in Treatment*
Date: Oct 22
Readings: Muller, **2018** (intro, & chapters 1, 4, 5, & 8)

7. In-Class Group Presentations
Date: Oct 29

8. In-Class Group Presentations
Date: Nov 5

9. Topic: *What is the Role of Education in Trauma Recovery?*
Date: Nov 12
Readings: Westover (whole book)

10. Topic: *How Forgiveness is a Doubled-Edged Sword in Trauma Recovery*
Date: Nov 19
Readings: Muller, **2018** (chapter 6)

11. Topic: *Political Terror and Traumatic Loss*
Date: Nov 26
Video: *Forty Years of Silence*

12. Topic: *Trauma and Avoidance: A Challenge in Treatment*
Date: Dec 3 (Final Class)
Readings: Muller, **2010** (remainder of the book)