Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Prague
Course Code / Title: PR/PSYC 360 Health Psychology Across Cultures: A Czech-US Perspective
Contact Hours: 45
Recommended Credits: 3
Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Psychology / Public Health, Cultural Studies
Language of Instruction: English
Prerequisites / Requirements: Introductory Psychology course recommended

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Description

This course introduces students to the scientific study of how psychological, behavioral, and social factors influence health, illness, and healthcare outcomes. It examines key topics including stress and coping, health behaviors, chronic illness management, patient–provider interactions, and health disparities. Students engage with empirical research and theoretical models to understand the mechanisms linking mind and body, while also exploring evidence-based interventions that promote health and well-being across the lifespan. Emphasis is placed on critical evaluation of research, application of theory to real-world health challenges with an emphasis on the cross-cultural comparison and realities of the Czech Republic/Central Europe and the United States, and practical strategies for real world change.

Objectives

Through their participation in this course, students will:

- Explain major theories and models in health psychology, including biopsychosocial, and behavior change frameworks.
- Analyze the psychological and behavioral factors that contribute to health, illness, and healthcare outcomes.
- Evaluate empirical research in health psychology using critical thinking and scientific reasoning skills.
- Apply evidence-based strategies to promote health behavior change in individuals and populations.
- Describe the role of stress, coping, and emotion regulation in physical health and disease processes.
- Examine social, cultural, and systemic influences on health, including health disparities and access to care.
- Demonstrate effective communication principles relevant to patient–provider interactions and health interventions.

Requirements

Active participation is essential in this course. Students are expected to attend each class and field study course component, as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy. Students are expected to read

all assigned materials before the relevant class session (approximately two hours per week) and come prepared to participate thoughtfully in class discussions.

Graded assignments include:

- **Participation:** Students are expected to actively contribute to classroom discussions and group activities. Full participation grade entails a student is constructively engaged in the discussions on the themes and readings assigned. Linking the readings and lecture materials is expected.

- **Reading presentation**: Working individually or in pairs, students give a 10 minute presentation on a scholarly article on the topic of health psychology cross-culturally.

- **Midterm exam:** Consists of short essay questions covering the first half of the material that has been covered in the term.

- **Quizzes:** 2 short quizzes, one of which is given before the midterm exam and one prior to the end of the course. Focus is on the reading and material covered in class lectures.

- **Topic presentation:** 10-15 minute individual presentation or 15-20 minutes for groups of two. This informative presentation is on a student-selected topic that has either not been covered in the class or readings, or goes deeper into a topic that has been covered at a more basic level.

- **Final paper:** 8-page literature review paper on a pre-approved topic related to health psychology. The subject can be the same as the topic presentation.

Grading
The final grade is determined as follows:

Participation	10%
Reading presentation	10%
Midterm exam	15%
Quizzes (2 at 10%)	20%
Topic presentation	20%
Final paper	25%

Readings / Resources
Beauchamp, M. R., et al.,. (2018). Group-based physical activity for older adult (GOAL) randomized controlled trial: Exercise adherence outcomes. *Health Psychology*, 37(5), 425–434.

Berk, J.et al., (2019). Depression and multimorbidity: Considering temporal characteristics of the associations between depression and multiple chronic diseases. *Health Psychology*, 38*(9), 785–793.

Blidaru, T. C., Rafila, A., Nastasă, D., Sinclair, D., Smejkal, P., Maor, Y., Kuchar, E., Votta, M., Vâlcea, L., & Gheorghiță, V. (2026). Trust, Access, and the Division of Responsibility for Vaccine Confidence in Central and Eastern Europe: Paired Own-Country and Regional Ratings from a Multi-Stakeholder Professional Panel. *Vaccines*, *14*(9), 819. https://doi.org/10.3390/vaccines14090819

Bower, J. E., et al. (2018). Fatigue after breast cancer treatment: Biobehavioral predictors of fatigue trajectories. *Health Psychology*, 37(10), 1–11.

Frankova, I., Macia, K. S., Ecker, K. K., Watters, K. N., Danson, L., Fňašková, M., Jackson, D., Leshchuk, I., Maslahati, T., Ntlantsana, V., Sanfilippo, J., & Shalev, A. Y. (2026). Effects of continuous traumatic stress and coping efficacy on mental health outcomes during an ongoing war in Ukraine. *Journal of traumatic stress*, 10.1002/jts.70115. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.70115

Moravec, V., Gavurova, B., Rigelsky, M., & Miovsky, M. (2026). Perceived Disinformation, Anxiety, and Depressive Symptoms in the Czech Population: Age-Specific Associations. *Depression and anxiety*, *2026*, 3938343. https://doi.org/10.1155/da/3938343

Ogden, J. (2012). *Health Psychology*. Open University Press.

Weissenberger, S., Ptacek, R., Klicperova-Baker, M., Erman, A., Schonova, K., Raboch, J., & Goetz, M. (2017). ADHD, Lifestyles and Comorbidities: A Call for an Holistic Perspective - from Medical to Societal Intervening Factors. *Frontiers in psychology*, *8*, 454. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00454

Weissenberger, S., Děchtěrenko, F., Klicperova-Baker, M., Vňuková, M., Zimbardo, P., Raboch, J., Anders, M., Braaten, E., & Ptáček, R. (2020). ADHD Symptoms in Adults and Time Perspectives - Findings From a Czech National Sample. *Frontiers in psychology*, *11*, 950. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00950

Weissenberger, S., Ptacek, R., Vnukova, M., Raboch, J., Klicperova-Baker, M., Domkarova, L., & Goetz, M. (2018). ADHD and lifestyle habits in Czech adults, a national sample. *Neuropsychiatric disease and treatment*, *14*, 293–299. https://doi.org/10.2147/NDT.S148921

Content

Topic 1 – Introduction to health psychology and the biopsychospiritual model

- Understanding health psychology as a field
- Compare biomedical and biopsychosocial perspectives

- Introduce core concepts of health, illness, and wellness
- Explore how psychological factors shape physical health outcomes

Topic 2 – Health beliefs and perceptions of illness, the medical model in the US vs Czechia

- Examine how people interpret symptoms
- Discuss beliefs about causes, severity, and controllability of illness
- Introduce common illness belief models
- Consider how beliefs influence help-seeking and self-care
- Agency and health outcomes

Topic 3 – Illness cognitions and how people understand symptoms and diagnosis

- Explore cognitive representations of illness
- Analyze emotional responses to diagnosis
- Discuss coping expectations and perceived consequences
- Review how illness perceptions affect adjustment

Topic 4 – Medical Psychology and Health Provider Communication to Patients

- Describe features of effective clinical communication
- Examine trust, empathy, and shared decision-making
- Identify barriers to clear communication in healthcare
- Consider how communication affects adherence and outcomes

Topic 5 – Health behavior and behavior change, including diet, exercise, smoking, and alcohol use

- Identify major health behaviors linked to disease prevention
- Review theories of motivation and behavior change
- Explore the realities of health behaviors in Czechia and the US
- Discuss barriers to adopting healthier habits
- Evaluate intervention strategies for sustained change
- Explore stress reduction techniques from psychology – cognitive re-appraisals

Topic 6 – Stress, coping, and the links between psychological states and physical health

- Define stress and distinguish acute from chronic stress
- Examine cognitive appraisal and coping strategies
- Discuss physiological pathways linking stress to health
- Review evidence on resilience and stress management

Topic 7 – Chronic illness, adaptation, and adherence to treatment

- Explore psychological adjustment to long-term illness
- Discuss treatment adherence and common obstacles
- Examine the role of family, support, and self-management
- Consider quality of life and long-term coping

- Analyze the differences in patient care and impacts on health psychology with the central European model and the American model

Topic 8 – Pain perception and management
- Explain pain as a sensory and psychological experience
- Discuss factors that shape pain perception
- Review psychological approaches to pain management
- Assess the current realities of pain management cross-culturally
- Examine the impact of pain on functioning and well-being

Topic 9 – Obesity, eating behavior, and weight-related health outcomes
- Analyze biological, psychological, and social contributors to eating behavior
- Discuss body image, dieting, and weight stigma and the cultural norms in the US and Czech Republic
- Review theories of appetite, restraint, and overeating
- Evaluate approaches to healthy weight management

Topic 10 – Screening, prevention, and health promotion strategies
- Describe the purpose of screening and early detection
- Examine preventive health behavior across the lifespan
- Examine public health strategies that have worked and those that failed in the US and Central European context
- Discuss public education and health promotion campaigns
- Evaluate ethical and practical issues in prevention programs

Topic 11 – Public health, health inequalities, and social determinants of health
- Identify social, cultural, and economic influences on health
- Discuss access to care and disparities in outcomes
- Examine the impact of environment and policy on health and cultural realities of the Czech Republic and the United States
- Consider population-level approaches to improving health

Topic 12 – Critical evaluation of research methods, theory, and evidence in health psychology
- Introduce key research designs and measures
- Evaluate strengths and limitations of empirical studies
- Discuss how theory guides research and intervention
- Develop skills in reading and interpreting health psychology literature

Field study and experiential learning components may include:
- Guided visit to a psychiatric clinic and/or setting where health psychology is applied
- Guest lecturer who is an expert in the field

Syllabus of Record is subject to minor changes in Term-specific Syllabus at faculty's discretion.