

Employee Stress, Well-Being, & Safety (LER 590 EW)

School of Labor & Employment Relations
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Fall 2020

Thursday in LER 35 from 11:00am-1:50pm

Instructor	Office Phone	Office	E-mail	Office Hours
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Course Description and Objectives

Organizations and businesses cannot be successful without ensuring health and safety of their workforce. As employees' health and safety is interlinked with many factors in their work and nonwork environment, there are various approaches in studying and addressing employee stress, well-being, and safety issues (e.g., human factors, public health, counseling, law, etc.). This course will mainly use the "organizational psychology" approach focusing on important psychosocial factors in the workplace that affect employee stress, well-being, and safety. This focus is also intended to help students see the importance of good people management. The class will include lectures, in-class learning activities (e.g., small-group discussions, video clips, case exercise, instant writing, etc.), and group project.

By fulfilling the course requirements successfully, students obtain fundamental principles and up-to-date knowledge of how organizations can prevent and manage work stress, as well as enhance health and safety of their workforce. Students will also have a greater understanding of possible prevention and intervention strategies managers and HR professionals can use to minimize the impact of stressors and ensure healthy and safe work environments.

Course Requirements

In-class assignments (20 points)

The primary purpose of in-class assignments is to reinforce student learning and make classes more interactive. Throughout the semester, I will be giving you a total of 5 in-class assignments on random days. These assignments can include pop quizzes on readings, learning exercises based on your reading, instant reaction writing, and etc. **The four best scores** will count towards your grade, so you can miss *one without penalty* (4 assignments x 5 pts = 20 pts). For example, if you get a zero score due to your absence, you can drop the lowest score. Thus, NO makeup in-class assignment for points will be given unless students have a valid excuse (e.g., jury duty, hospitalization). Your in-class assignments will be returned to you after I post grades on Compass. You are responsible for keeping the returned assignments to prepare for your exams.

Discussions on workplace intervention articles (50 points)

The purpose is to have students learn organizational intervention programs and program assessments in depth, as well as to encourage critical thinking concerning the focal interventions. Throughout the semester, students will read a total of 5 articles on specific organizational interventions and, accordingly, we will have 5 formal discussion sessions. As student discussions are important components of this course, you are expected to read the assigned articles in order to knowledgeably discuss the focal intervention in class. Thus, all students should provide reflections on the intervention in writing (no more than 2 pages, 12 font size, double-spaced, left alignment, 1 inch margin, no cover page) prior to Thursday class (no later than

11:00pm Wednesday). Students should also actively participate in discussion during class. Your reflection paper will be worth 10 pts for each discussion session (5 discussion sessions x 10pts = 50pts). Note that these papers will be checked based on a “pass” or “fail” basis. Although you turn in your paper on time through Compass, if you miss a discussion session during class, you will lose part of your class participation points (missing a discussion session = -5 pts).

Overall class participation (30 points)

Your successful learning depends on your active participation in class (e.g., active discussions, asking and answering questions, sharing thoughts, ideas, and opinions, etc.). Contributions to in-class discussions are critical and come from both quantity and quality. Class decorum is also a fundamental basis for class discussion (*please see the section for student conduct*). Your class participation and decorum count 30 points.

Exams (100 points)

The first purpose is to ensure students’ full review of the learning content and mastery of important concepts, principles, and theories in this course. The second purpose is to assess students’ critical thinking on the topics covered in this course and application of their knowledge to case scenarios. **Two examinations** will be given during the semester (100pts = 2 exams x 50pts). The exams will consist of TWO parts: (1) short answer essays and (2) long answer essays. Remember that essay questions are based on all aspects of the course: the reading assignments, in-class activities, lectures, discussions, and video clips.

Make-up exam policy. If you must miss an exam due to a documented excuse, contact me as soon as possible to schedule a make-up date in advance. If you know you are going to miss an exam, you must notify me before the exam date. If I am not notified, no make-up exam will be given. However, for extraordinary circumstances, I reserve the right to make my own decision on any student who couldn’t take the exam during the regular testing time period.

Final project (100 points)

The main purpose of this group assignment is to provide you with the opportunity to apply what you learned in this course to a specific occupation or job. Your group representative is required to email me the list of team member names and choice of an occupation no later than **March 5th, 2020** (yapark15@illinois.edu).

You will (1) describe the general characteristics of an occupation/job, (2) based on both public data sources (e.g., government reports, published empirical research) and interviews with at least three employees in that occupation, identify common and/or serious threats to health and well-being in that occupation, and (3) based on your group’s reading and critical thinking about promoting a healthy and/or safe workplace, suggest organizational interventions that would address those health or safety threats. Your group will then make a 18-20 minute presentation on your project work. Additional 2-5 minutes will be assigned to Q&A with your audience.

Examples of jobs: Customer service employees, Salespeople, Engineers, Insurance loss assessors, Retail workers, Oil rig workers, Sports referees, Researchers in R&D function, HR managers, factory workers, etc.

To complete this assignment, the following steps are required:

(1) Describe the occupation

Your goal is to provide a general overview of the nature of the work performed in the job and the number of people who work in this job. This should be a relatively brief portion of your project/presentation. Two useful sources for this information are the Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov) and O*NET (<http://online.onetcenter.org>). If you can find them, it is always nice to supplement the statistical portrait with other media, such as pictures of people performing the job.

(2) Identify common and/or serious threats or stressors to health and well-being

Your goal is to identify health and/or safety risks in the job and threats to well-being. You should use the following sources for this information:

- (a) Government documents that provide health and safety risks for occupations. Perhaps the best source for these data is reports from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh>).
- (b) Published empirical research. For common jobs, you are likely to find many studies focusing on occupational health issues. These sources may include business, psychology, or public health journals devoted to health-related research or where they are available, journals devoted to a specific occupation. I do not expect you to conduct a complete review of the published literature on your occupation, but would encourage you to review this literature in some detail, as you are likely to find it quite helpful.
- (c) Interviews with members of your occupation. I would like your group members to locate and interview at least three people who either currently work in your chosen occupation or who have done so in the past. Your goal will be to conduct a brief interview with each person (that you will design). The interview should focus on their perceptions of health and safety threats, positive aspects of their job, and their thoughts about interventions that would increase their occupational health. Along the way, I would encourage you to keep track of particularly meaningful quotes that illustrate significant concerns or rewarding aspects of the work.

(3) Suggest interventions

Based on your work in step 2, you will recommend a few interventions that address serious and/or common occupational health concerns in your occupation of choice. You can draw on the same sources you used in step 2, as well as the list of intervention-related readings in this course. I am less interested in whether you make the “right” recommendations and more interested in making sure that whatever you recommend is drawn from the data you gather for the project and thoughtful discussion and literature review by your group.

Deliverables and Grading:

You will make a group presentation on your occupation of interest. I will leave the exact structure of that presentation for you to decide, but it should be delivered in Power Point and should basically summarize the stages of your work above. The presentation should be 15 minutes in length and should mostly focus on the identified stress and health risks, reports from the interviews you conducted, and suggested interventions. Another 5 minutes will be used for Q&A with your audience.

Team points are 50 and these will be based on the overall quality of the presentation as delivered in class. Each group member will receive the same grade regarding team points. I will also have you rate each of your team member’s contribution to the group project after presentations, and this individual point is 50 based on the rating scores you receive from your team members. The rating format will be introduced later in class. Thus, you can earn up to 100 points through this group project (50 for team performance, 50 for individual contribution).

Course Grades and Grading Scale

Grades will be determined by 4 areas of your performance:

1. In-class assignments: 20 Points
2. Reaction papers for intervention discussions: 50 Points
3. Overall class participation & class decorum: 30 Points
4. Exams: 100 Points (each 50 pts x 2 exams)
5. Team Project: 100 Points

A total of 300 points

A (96-100%), A- (92-95.9%), B+ (88-91.9%), B (84-87.9%), B- (80-83.9%)
 C+ (77-79.9%), C (73-76.9%), C- (70-72.9%), D+(67-69.9%), D(63-66.9%)
 D- (60-62.9%), F (Below 60%)

Classroom Formats & Student Conduct

1. Class is held once per week. Please be courteous to others by being to class on time. Students are expected to prepare for class ahead of time (i.e., read the assigned materials prior to class) and be an active learner in all components of classes. Reading materials will be uploaded on Compass weekly.
2. Disruptive behaviors will not be tolerated.
 - **Mobile phones:** Please silence them and do not use them during class time. If you need to have your cell phone on for emergency reasons, please put them on the vibrant mode and you may sit near the door to step outside the classroom. No text-messaging and emailing is allowed in classroom. If you have emergency, you may exit the classroom to use your phone.
 - **Laptops:** Students' laptop use in class is strictly limited to note taking and class purposes. Personal emails, instant messaging, accessing social media, Internet surfing, or any other use unrelated to class are prohibited. If such a case is caught, you will lose your participation points (Each violation will result in -5 points from your participation points).
 - **Eating:** You can have your lunch or snack during a break as I typically give a 15 min break. Please do not have your food delivered to classroom during class time.
3. **We are each responsible for creating a friendly learning environment in this course. Be courteous and inclusive to your peers regardless of their backgrounds and different opinions, especially regarding your team project work.**
4. Communication:
 - a. If you have to miss more than 2 classes in a row due to long-term constraints or you will have to miss an exam, please do let me know. You should ask for the missed materials for in-class activities—please talk to me in person shortly before or after the class.
 - b. Throughout the semester, you're more than welcome to set up an appointment with me to talk about how to improve your performance in this course. Please note that the grading scale is clearly provided in this syllabus. *Grades will not be adjusted via email communication on the last minute. Therefore, if you have concerns or questions, please come talk to me early on.*
 - c. The syllabus contains important information that you will be responsible for knowing throughout the semester (e.g., policies & rules, course evaluation elements, course schedule, etc.). Therefore, if you have a question about the course, please consult the syllabus before you contact me. I will gladly respond to emails if you need clarification about what is covered in the syllabus; however, I will not respond to emails about questions that can be easily answered by reading the syllabus.

Extra Credit

During the semester, there may be opportunities for you to earn extra credits through participating in research experiments or helping recruit research participants. This will be a voluntary opportunity. If you do not want to participate but still wish to earn extra credit, alternative assignments will be given for equal opportunities. Available points and further instructions will be given if there are any opportunities at my discretion.

Other Important Policies

Students with Disabilities: UIUC provides, upon request, appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, please refer to the following website and contact the University's disability services office.

<http://www.disability.illinois.edu/>

Academic Integrity Policy: As with any other University course, plagiarism, cheating or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in any way. *Cases of academic integrity infractions will be pursued to the fullest extent allowed by University regulations* (see http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part4_1-402.html for details). *Ignorance of a rule is never a defense. Therefore, it is students' responsibility to educate themselves about the risk of academic integrity infractions and to avoid it. Just don't do it!!*

Sexual Misconduct Policy and Reporting: The University of Illinois is committed to combating sexual misconduct. Faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct to the University's Title IX and Disability Office. In turn, an individual with the Title IX and Disability Office will provide information about rights and options, including accommodations, support services, the campus disciplinary process, and law enforcement options.

A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors, confidential advisors, and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here:

<http://wecare.illinois.edu/resources/students/#confidential>

Other information about resources and reporting is available here: <http://wecare.illinois.edu/>

Course Schedule**Week 1: 1/23**

- Course Introduction
- NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) & OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration)
- Amazon recruiter visit to class

Week 2: 1/30

- Work stress models and theoretical frameworks

Week 3: 2/6

- Common work stressors and strains
- Individual differences in experiencing work stress

Week 4: 2/13

- Emotional labor in human service jobs

- Workplace violence and interpersonal mistreatment
- Intervention Discussion I: Reducing incivility and its related stress at work

Week 5: 2/20

- Organizational injustice as a stressor
- Intervention Discussion II: Displaying fairness while delivering bad news in organizations

Week 6: 2/27

- Situational factors and job characteristics for employee well-being
- Exam review using practice exam questions in class

Week 7: 3/5

- **Exam I**

Week 8: 3/12

- Work-nonwork life conflict and employee well-being
- Intervention Discussion III: Intervention for family-friendly supervisor behavior

3/14 – 3/22 Spring Break**Week 9: 3/26**

- Recovery from work stress
- Corporate wellness programs
- Intervention Discussion IV: Microbreaks and lunch breaks at work

Week 10: 4/2

- Alcohol & substance use problems at work

Week 11: 4/9

- Organizational safety climate & employee accidents and injuries
- Intervention Discussion V: Behavioral approach to occupational safety

Week 12: 4/16

- Stress diagnosis in organizations and stress interventions
- Group project meeting

Week 13: 4/23 (No Class, Instructor will attend a Conference in Austin, TX)

- Group project work

Week 15: 4/30

- Final project presentations

Exam II will be a take-home exam. The exact schedule will be announced later.

** This schedule and topic is subject to change due to unexpected constraints or events. Each week's reading materials can be found on Compass.*