

# **The psychology of emotion and relationships**

**Fall semester 2025, The Swedish Program**

**Instructor:** Lillian Döllinger

**Time:** To be determined.

**Locations:** See schedule.

**Credit:** This course is typically given credit by Psychology Departments.

**Prerequisite:** One course in psychology.

## **Course description:**

In this course, we invite you to take an in-depth journey to explore how emotions, attachment, and relationships shape our everyday experiences and mental health. Together, we'll explore foundational theories of emotion, engage with the nature vs. nurture debate, and examine how emotions are communicated, regulated, and linked to psychopathology. We'll also examine how psychotherapeutic approaches work with emotion and how you can apply this knowledge to enhance your personal and professional relationships. Special attention will be given to cross-cultural perspectives, comparing US and Swedish customs around emotion and relationships, emotion in groups and organizations, and emotion in art and music. You'll have the chance to investigate how we relate to one another and how attachment styles/strategies influence relationship dynamics from childhood to adulthood, while also exploring the social roles of emotion and empathy in building healthy, meaningful connections.

Throughout the course, you'll engage critically with classical theories and the latest research, gaining a deeper understanding of how emotions and relationships affect our lives and psychological well-being. We'll combine lectures, seminars, group discussions, case studies, and practical exercises, giving you opportunities to apply what you learn to real-world scenarios. By the end of the course, you'll have developed both theoretical insights and practical skills to better understand and work with emotions and relationships in diverse contexts.

## **Learning outcomes:**

After completing this course, students will be able to

- demonstrate basic knowledge about theories and research within the psychology of emotion, attachment, mentalizing and relationships.
- discuss, evaluate, compare and integrate different theories and research findings within the psychology of emotion, attachment, mentalizing and relationships.
- apply relevant theories and research findings to real life scenarios.
- professionally and collaboratively present and discuss the results of an independently conducted literature review about one of the course topics.

## **Attendance and active participation:**

Regular attendance is mandatory, and unexcused absences will impact your final grade. In case of sickness or other valid reasons for absence, the student must contact the instructor in advance to determine whether it is possible to compensate for the absence. Active engagement is

essential for students' learning. Participation in this course involves more than showing up – it requires active involvement in discussions and group activities. Preparatory readings or coursework will be assigned before each class and is required to participate in a productive manner. In-class participation, including case studies, group-work and quizzes, cannot be substituted with alternative activities.

### **Classroom Rules:**

Students are expected to maintain a respectful and professional environment by arriving on time, being prepared, giving full attention to speakers, and treating both peers and instructors with respect. Sometimes students might disagree with others' opinions or conclusions and that is ok, as long as discussions are handled in an appropriate and constructive fashion. Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism or the use of AI programs for assignments, is strictly prohibited. Phones should be switched off and laptops or tablets may only be used for course-related activities, like note-taking or group presentations.

### **Required reading:**

In this course, we are reading both book chapters and scientific articles. The book chapters will be provided to the students by The Swedish Program. The articles will be distributed via the course platform. The students will also need to carry out an independent literature review for the topic of their group presentation.

The main books for the course are:

- Keltner, D., Oatley, K., & Jenkins J.M. (2018). *Understanding emotions*, 4 th edition (U.S.). Wiley. ISBN: 978-1-119-49254-2.
- Duschinsky, R., Granqvist, P., & Forslund, T. (2023). *The psychology of attachment*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003020349>

Information about peer-reviewed articles and other material can be found below in the syllabus. Additional references might be added.

### **Course schedule:**

Students are expected to read the course materials before each session and prepare for active participation. Each session is three hours long. The sessions are divided into short lectures by the instructor, group presentations by students, discussions, group work, case files, and other activities. Each student needs to participate in a group presentation about one of the course topics (approx. 30 minutes). This group presentation will be part of the final grade.

### **Examination and grading:**

The final grade of the course is based on several components – active participation in class (including preparations for class and possible quizzes), a group presentation about a course topic of choice, and a final written exam (questions will be published consecutively). See below for the weighing of the various components of the grade. Each student gets the opportunity for a mid-term check-in meeting with the instructor in which a preliminary grading and

opportunities for improvement are discussed. Unexcused absences or extended absences may negatively affect the final grade. Assignments that are submitted after the deadline will be marked down.

*Components of the final grade*

Active participation in class (incl. preparations and possible quizzes)	35%
Group presentation in class	30%
Final written exam	35%

**Syllabus:**

This course explores the multifaceted nature of emotion and relationships (e.g., the role of attachment and mentalizing), providing a comprehensive overview of key theories, research, and applications in psychology. We will cover the following topics:

***Session 1 What is an emotion? (I)***

Course introduction. Exploring emotion and foundational theories of emotion.

*Readings:*

Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins (2018): Chapter 1 & 2

Ekman, P., & Cordaro, D. (2011). What is meant by calling emotions basic. *Emotion Review*, 3(4), 364–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073911410740>

***Session 2 What is an emotion? (II)***

Different perspectives on the origin and function of emotions. Debates within emotion psychology.

*Readings:*

Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins (2018): Chapter 3, p. 144 – 153

Scherer, K. R. (2022). Theory convergence in emotion science is timely and realistic. *Cognition and Emotion*, 36(2), 154–170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2021.1973378>

*Listening:*

Sean Carroll’s Mindscape podcast (2020). Lisa Feldman Barrett on Emotions, Actions, and the Brain <https://www.preposterousuniverse.com/podcast/2020/11/16/123-lisa-feldman-barrett-on-emotions-actions-and-the-brain/>

***Session 3 Communication and experience of emotion***

Emotion expression, emotion recognition, empathy, experiencing emotion.

⇒ Possible student group presentation about one of those topics (approx. 30 minutes)

*Readings:*

Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins (2018): Chapter 4

#### ***Session 4 Regulation of emotion and mentalizing***

Emotion regulation, mentalizing of self and others.

⇒ Possible student group presentation about one of those topics (approx. 30 minutes)

*Readings:*

Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins (2018): p. 164 – 167

Luyten, P., Campbell, C., Allison, E., & Fonagy, P. (2020). The Mentalizing Approach to Psychopathology: State of the Art and Future Directions. *Annual review of clinical psychology*, 16, 297–325. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-clinpsy-071919-015355>

#### ***Session 5 Relationships and attachment in childhood***

Relationships in childhood, attachment theory.

⇒ Possible student group presentation about one of those topics (approx. 30 minutes)

*Readings:*

Duschinsky, R., Granqvist, P., & Forslund, T. (2023). *The psychology of attachment*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003020349>

⇒ Chapters 1 – 4

#### ***Session 6 Relationships and attachment in adulthood***

Relationships in adulthood (e.g., romantic relationships), attachment theory.

⇒ Possible student group presentation about one of those topics (approx. 30 minutes)

*Readings:*

Duschinsky, R., Granqvist, P., & Forslund, T. (2023). *The psychology of attachment*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003020349>

⇒ Chapters 5 – 6

#### ***Session 7 Psychopathology related to emotion and relationships***

Emotion dysregulation, impaired emotion recognition and mentalizing, protective factors.

⇒ Possible student group presentation about one of those topics (approx. 30 minutes)

*Readings:*

Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins (2018): Chapter 13

Lincoln, T.M., Schulze, L. & Renneberg, B. (2022). The role of emotion regulation in the characterization, development and treatment of psychopathology. *Nat Rev Psychol* 1, 272–286. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-022-00040-4>

### ***Session 8 Working with emotion and relationships***

Therapeutic approaches regarding emotion and relationships and how we can apply those methods in various contexts (e.g., personal relationships, professional contexts).

#### *Readings:*

Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins (2018): p. 372 – 386

Greenberg, L. S., Malberg, N. T., & Tompkins, M. A. (2019). Comparing approaches. In L. S. Greenberg, N. T. Malberg, & M. A. Tompkins, *Working with emotion in psychodynamic, cognitive behavior, and emotion-focused psychotherapy* (pp. 161–185). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000130-005>

⇒ Chapter available as e-book.

#### *Listening:*

The Life Scientific (BBC). Peter Fonagy on a revolution in mental health care. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000dpj2>

### ***Session 9 Emotion and relationships in art***

Excursion to a museum, concert or theater to learn more about how emotions and relationships can be expressed and experienced via art.

#### *Readings:*

Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins (2018): p. 113-117

Silvia, P. J. (2005). Emotional Responses to Art: From Collation and Arousal to Cognition and Emotion. *Review of General Psychology*, 9(4), 342-357. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.9.4.342>

### ***Session 10 Cross-cultural perspectives on emotion and relationships***

Cultural influences on emotion and relationships, Sweden and the U.S..

#### *Readings:*

Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins (2018): Chapter 3

*Watch:*

BBC 2023. Why Swedes don't speak to strangers

<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20201203-why-swedes-dont-speak-to-strangers>

BBC 2019. Why so many young Swedes live alone

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190821-why-so-many-young-swedes-live-alone>

### ***Session 11 Emotion in groups***

The role of emotion in social relationships, groups, organizations, society. Emotion contagion, mirroring, bio-behavioral synchrony.

⇒ *Possible student group presentation about one of those topics (approx. 30 minutes)*

*Readings:*

Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins (2018): Chapter 9

van Kleef, G. A., Cheshin, A., Fischer, A. H., & Schneider, I. K. (2016). Editorial: The Social Nature of Emotions. *Frontiers in psychology*, 7, 896. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00896>

### ***Session 12 Integration and farewell***

Final reflection and integration, evaluation, farewell. How do you *feel*?

*Readings:*

TBA