

The psychology of emotion and relationships

Fall semester 2026, The Swedish Program, Stockholm School of Economics

This course is offered by The Swedish Program in collaboration with Stockholm School of Economics. SSE students should note that the course period is from calendar week 36 through calendar week 50. Attendance for all sessions is mandatory.

Instructor: Lillian Döllinger

Time: Thursdays 09:15 -13:15

Locations: See schedule.

Email: lillian.dollinger@swedishprogram.org

Office hours: By appointment.

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 and examine how emotions are communicated, regulated, and linked to psychopathology. 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. We'll also examine how psychotherapeutic approaches work with emotion and attachment, and how you can apply this knowledge to enhance your personal and various professional relationships. Attention will also 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.

Throughout the course, you'll engage critically with classical theories and current research. 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 negatively. 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 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 presentations, case studies, group-work and quizzes, cannot be substituted with alternative activities. If you have the right to academic accommodations, please reach out to the instructor at the beginning of the course.

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 undisclosed 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 book chapters and peer-reviewed articles. The students will also need to carry out an independent literature review for the topic of their group presentation. Other media forms, like videos or podcasts, may be incorporated in the syllabus as well.

The main books for the course are:

- Keltner, D., Oatley, K., & Jenkins J.M. (2019). *Understanding emotions*, EMEA edition, 4 th edition. Wiley. ISBN: 978-1-119-65758-3
- Duschinsky, R., Granqvist, P., & Forslund, T. (2023). *The psychology of attachment*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003020349>

Information about book chapters, peer-reviewed articles and other material can be found below in the syllabus, but might be subject to change.

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 (approximately one hour long). 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. 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 suggestions for improvement can be discussed. Unexcused absences or even extended excused absences may negatively affect the final grade. Assignments that are submitted slightly after the deadline will be marked down. In case of severe lateness, the assignment will not be accepted anymore. Contact the instructor if you are struggling with a deadline well in advance. It is up to the instructor whether additional time is granted (against a late penalty).

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 (preliminary):

2026-09-03	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships
2026-09-10	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships
2026-09-17	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships
2026-09-24	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships
2026-10-01	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships
2026-10-08	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships
2026-10-15	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships
2026-10-22	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships
2026-11-12	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships
2026-11-19	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships
2026-11-26	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships
2026-12-03	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships

2026-12-10	Thursday	9:15	12:15	The Psychology of Emotion and Relationships (FINAL EXAM)
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Session 1 What is an emotion? (I)

Thursday, September 3 2026, 9:15-12:15

Course introduction. Exploring emotion and foundational theories of emotion.

Readings:

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

Session 2 What is an emotion? (II)

Thursday, September 10 2026, 9:15-12:15

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

Readings:

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

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>

=> from page 160 for an overview.

Watching

Lisa Feldman Barrett's TED Talk:

<https://lisafeldmanbarrett.com/2018/01/13/ted-talk-you-arent-at-the-mercy-of-your-emotions-your-brain-creates-them/>

Session 3 Communication and experience of emotion

Thursday, September 17 2026, 9:15-12:15

Emotion expression, emotion recognition, empathy, experiencing emotion.

Readings:

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

Session 4 Regulation of emotion and mentalizing

Thursday, September 24 2026, 9:15-12:15

Emotion regulation, mentalizing of self and others.

⇒ Possible student group presentation about a topic within emotion regulation research (approx. 60 minutes)

Readings:

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

Gross, J. J. (2015). Emotion regulation: Current status and future prospects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 26(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.940781>

Session 5 Relationships and attachment in childhood

Thursday, October 1 2026, 9:15-12:15

Relationships in childhood, attachment theory.

⇒ Possible student group presentation about a topic within the childhood attachment realm (approx. 60 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

Thursday, October 8 2026, 9:15-12:15

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

⇒ Possible student group presentation about a topic within the adult attachment realm (approx. 60 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

Thursday, October 15 2026, 9:15-12:15

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

⇒ Possible student group presentation about a topic within the psychopathology realm (approx. 60 minutes)

Readings:

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

Listening:

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

Session 8 Working therapeutically with emotion and relationships

Thursday, October 22 2026, 9:15-12:15

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

Cabaniss, D. L., Cherry, S., Douglas, C. J., & Schwartz, A. R. (2011). *Psychodynamic psychotherapy: A clinical manual*. Wiley Blackwell.

=> Chapter 13

London, M., & Zyberaj, J. (2025). Developing Leader-Follower Relationships Through Improved Communication, Functional Support, and Secure Attachment Style: A Conceptual Review. *Human Resource Development Review*, 0(0).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/15344843251384341>

Fall break The Swedish Program (no classes)

Session 10 Emotion and relationships in art

Thursday, November 19 2026, 9:15-12:15 (preliminary)

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

TBA

Session 11 Emotion in groups

Thursday, November 12 2026, 9:15-12:15

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

⇒ *Possible student group presentation about a topic within this realm (approx. 60 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 11 Cross-cultural perspectives on emotion and relationships

Thursday, November 26 2026, 9:15-12:15

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

⇒ *Possible student group presentation about a topic within the cross-cultural realm (approx. 60 minutes)*

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 12 Integration and farewell

Thursday, December 3 2026, 9:15-12:15

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

Readings:

TBA

Final written exam

Thursday, December 10 2026, 9:15-12:15