

**The Pennsylvania State University
Department of Biobehavioral Health**

Stress and Health across the Lifespan: From Cells to Behavior (BBH 597C)
Fall 2014 Course Syllabus

Course Time: Mondays 5:00-7:30
Location: 218 Biobehavioral Health Bldg.

Instructor

Idan Shalev, Ph.D.

Email: iush14@psu.edu

Phone: 814-865-5764

Office Hours: By appointment (email to schedule)

Office: 111 Biobehavioral Health Building

Mailbox: 221 Biobehavioral Health Building

Course Objectives

The goal of this course is twofold; (1) to introduce the emerging field of telomere science, the evidence base, open questions and future directions, and (2) using the STROBE Statement, to critically review and interpret empirical studies. The overarching aim is to cover basic aspects of the cutting-edge science of stress and telomere biology with the ability to learn how to read, interpret and review scientific papers.

The course objectives are:

1. To summarize recent research on the effects of stress across the lifespan on telomere biology.
2. Gain experience in the critical evaluation of empirical and conceptual articles in the field of stress and telomere biology.
3. To discuss the STROBE Statement in detail on which items should be included in reports of cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies.
4. To review in class recent empirical studies highlighting the promise of telomere science, as well as the obstacles in the field. To critically review current strengths, limitations and future directions.
5. To enhance critical thinking skills, particularly in regards to reading research reports in the emerging field of telomere science.

Required Readings:

- 1) Shalev et al. (2013). Stress and telomere biology: A lifespan perspective. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*
- 2) Von Elm et al. (2007). The Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) statement: guidelines for reporting observational studies. *Preventive medicine*
- 3) Shalev (2012). Early life stress and telomere length: investigating the connection and possible mechanisms. *Bioessays*

These and further readings will be available for download on the ANGEL website. In weeks 2-4 we will review 2 papers in each class. It is expected that you will bring copies of these papers with you to class.

Grading Scheme:

Class Participation (20%). The success of this class relies heavily on your active participation including answering and asking questions and taking part in discussions.

Completed Assignments (20%): To enhance discussion and the learning process, weekly classes (in weeks 2-4) will be accompanied by required readings and written (or typed) assignments based on the STROBE that should be completed prior to class. If you can't attend class, please notify me in advance and plan to submit your assignment online before the class starts.

Final In-Class Writing (60%). There will be one final writing assignment in which you will read and write a critical review. Your goal is to complete a solid draft of a review in the time of the class. The end result of completing the review will be worth 60% of your grade.

Final Grade Distribution

A = 94-100%	B = 83-86%	C = 70-75%
A- = 90-93%	B- = 80-82%	D = 60-69%
B+ = 87-89%	C+ = 76-79%	F = < 60%

BB H 597C, Section 001: Tentative Schedule

Week 1: 9/29 (required readings)

Introductions
Course overview and goals
Introduction to STROBE
Stress and telomere biology across the lifespan (lecture)

Week 2: 10/6 (readings TBD)

Stress and telomeres: The evidence base

Week 3: 10/13 (readings TBD)

Caveats and open questions

Week 4: 10/20 (readings TBD)

Implications for prevention and intervention

Week 5: 10/27

Final writing assignment in class. Writing a critical review.

Class Policies

Please don't engage in behavior that can be distracting to other students during class (e.g. talking). Please try to remember to turn off your phone when you come into class and under no circumstances are you to answer your phone during class. The instructor reserves the right to deduct points from your grade for repeated class disruptions.

Attendance: I will not take attendance, but you need to be able to make every class. We will cover new material each week and the final writing assignment will be based on what we have covered.

EMAIL: I will make every effort to respond to emails within 24 hours. If you do not receive a response within 24 business hours (e.g. if you send an email at 4:00 pm on Friday and do not hear back before 4:00 pm on Monday), please contact me again to be sure I have received your message. I will make announcements using the ANGEL email interface, so please be sure to check your ANGEL email to be sure you have all of the information you need for the course. ***It is highly recommended that you set your ANGEL messages up to forward to the email address you use most frequently.***

Statement on Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create

and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others. Students are responsible for ensuring that their work is consistent with Penn State's expectations about academic integrity. Ignorance of the policies and/or violations of academic integrity is no defense against sanctions.

Sanctions for violations of academic integrity

Penn State University and the College of Health and Human Development have policies on dealing with academic integrity problems. *Please note that it is the responsibility of the student to be sure that they understand what constitutes a violation of academic integrity (per above) and what the policies are with respect to such violations.* The University procedures for dealing with a violation are described in detail at this website: <http://www.psu.edu/dept/oue/aappm/G-9.html> The College's website for procedures relating violations of academic integrity can be found at: <http://www.hhdev.psu.edu/policies/academicintegrity/>

It is important that you read the policies and understand the procedures for violations of academic integrity. Sanctions for violations of academic integrity may range from minor to severe. Sanctions for plagiarism may range from downgrading the assignment with opportunity for re-submission (very minor mistakes in citation, over paraphrasing, etc.) to failure for the assignment with no opportunity for make-up (e.g., excessive paraphrasing; multiple failures to cite properly, etc.) to failure of the course with F grade (multiple copying of paragraphs; use of work of other students; ghostwritten work etc.). Unusually serious violations of academic integrity may result in expulsion from the University. It is important that you know that the Department of Biobehavioral Health – and the faculty course instructors and Teaching Assistants – are committed to the principles of academic integrity and that students who violate the principles of academic integrity will be reported and appropriate sanctions will be taken.

Statement on Religious Holiday Absence Policy

Faculty and students are reminded of Penn State's policy regarding students' requests for absence from class for the purpose of observing a religious holiday. The University makes every effort to avoid conflicts with religious holidays, when conflicts are unavoidable, the policy is for individual instructors to make special arrangements for the student affected. I follow the PSU policy on observance of religious holidays. <http://www.sa.psu.edu/cera/relhol.html>

Statement on Disabilities

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. The Office for Disability Services (ODS) Web site provides contact information for every Penn State campus: <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/dcl> For further information, please visit the Office for Disability Services Web site: <http://equity.psu.edu/ods>. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/guidelines>. If the documentation

supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

Final course considerations: Any student who encounters any problem with any aspect of this course should not hesitate to talk with the professor as soon as possible. If you disagree with the policies described in this document, you should not take the course. To remain in the course is to accept the policies both herein and as described in class.