

HONORS 324: GREAT BOOKS ON THE SCIENCE OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR UWEC SPRING 2025

Class Info: MWF 1-1:50pm, HHH 202

Instructor: Dr. April Bleske-Rechek

Office: HHH 255 (you can also find me in my lab-HHH 220A)

Contact: Email: bleskeal@uwec.edu Text/Phone: 715-864-8000

Drop-in hours (in HHH 255): TBD

Course plan and objectives

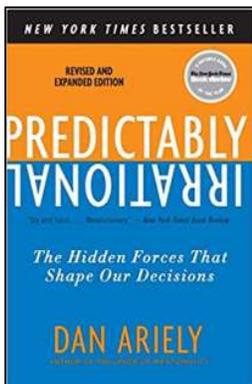
In this course we will read and discuss nonfiction books – a few of the latest and a few of the greatest (in my opinion) – that have been published by psychological scientists and science writers interested in the scientific analysis of human behavior. My basic objective is for you to see that many of society’s most pressing questions about people can be tackled, in some way or another, by scientific analysis. In the process of our readings and discussions, I will be inviting you to contemplate how common sense often conflicts with what science tells us about ourselves, how scientific methods can be used to help us understand ourselves, and, further, how a clear understanding of ourselves can help us lead more satisfying and fulfilling lives and relationships. I hope that you will leave this class with a new or renewed love of reading, and a desire to engage in continued intellectual discussions about current issues relevant to both the public interest and to your personal life choices and relationships.

Our first 12 weeks (and four books)

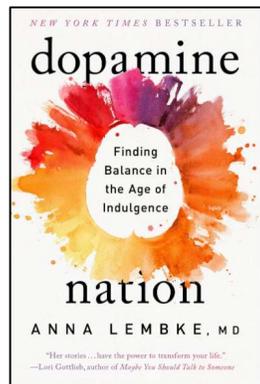
For the first 12 weeks of the semester, we will read four books together. We will have reading checks each day, formal or informal, to make sure that you arrive to class having done the reading for the day. In addition to reading checks of varying types, I will provide class material and activities to reinforce material and facilitate discussions. I will track your class “attendance” through your completion of these class activities and assignments. In other words, you will earn points each day for being in class and demonstrating you have come to class prepared.

These are our first books:

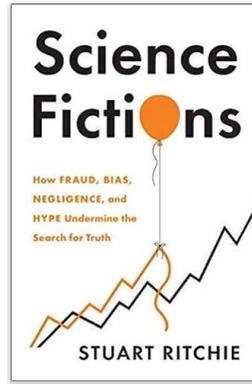
Ariely, D. (2009). *Predictably irrational: The hidden forces that shape our decisions* (revised and expanded edition). HarperCollins.



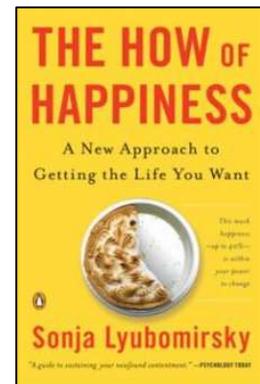
Lembke, A. (2022). *Dopamine nation: Finding balance in the age of indulgence*. Dutton.



Ritchie, S. (2020). *Science fictions: How fraud, bias, negligence, and hype undermine the search for truth*. Metropolitan Books.



Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The how of happiness: A new approach to getting the life you want*. Penguin Books.



Course requirements

Attendance is essential in this course. Beyond the scheduled “reading break” days, you are allotted one more “free pass” – an unexcused absence with no penalty. Save that “pass” for when you really need it! As already alluded to, I will use class time for retrieval practice; to expand upon the readings and to introduce new material; to engage you in activities that apply the material; and to engage you in focused discussion about the ideas in the books.

- On many class days, there will be a reading check or activity on the reading assigned for the day.

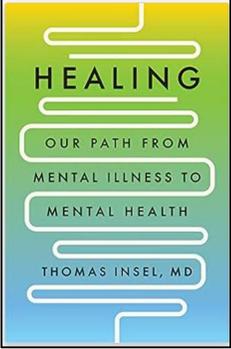
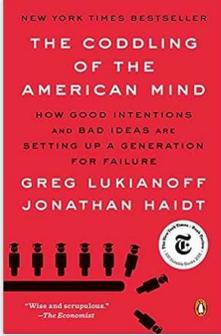
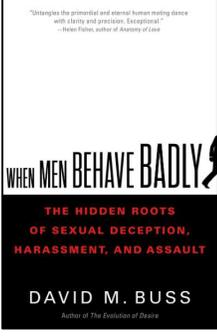
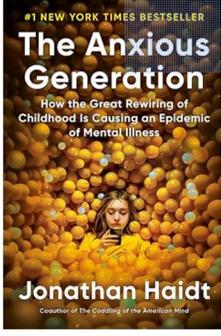
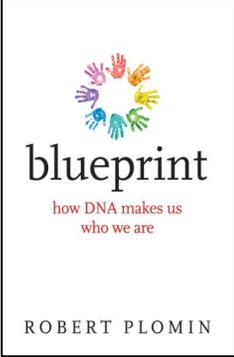
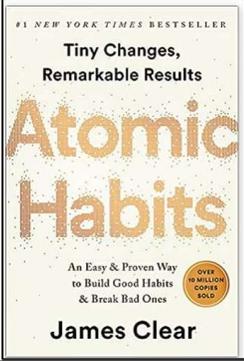
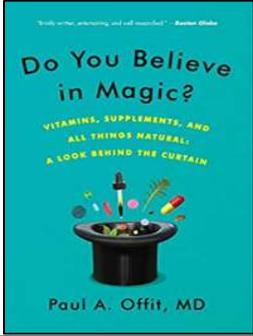
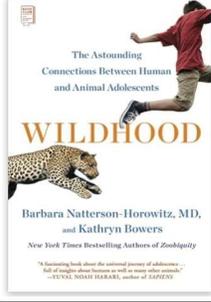
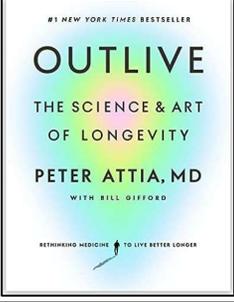
Sometimes there will be a formal set of questions about the reading; sometimes there will be a more informal writing activity; on occasion, we might watch and discuss a TED talk during class time. Whatever we do, it will require you to have read your material for the day, so if you come unprepared you are unlikely to earn full points for the day.

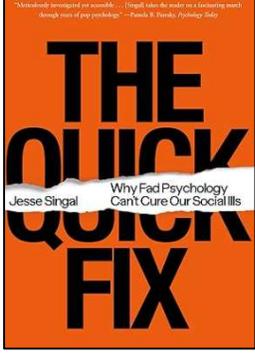
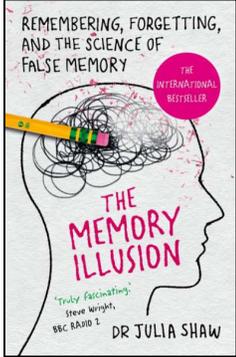
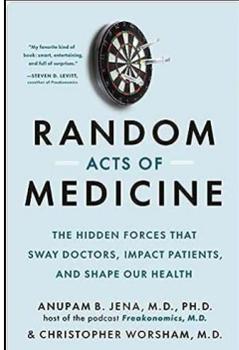
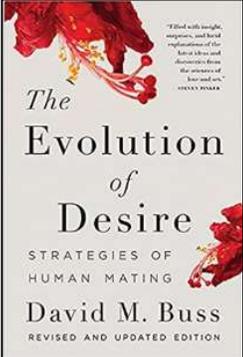
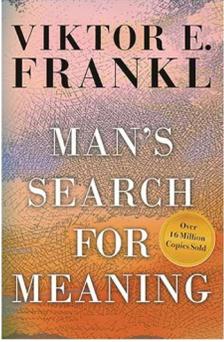
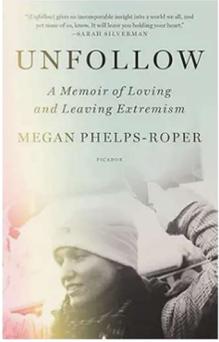
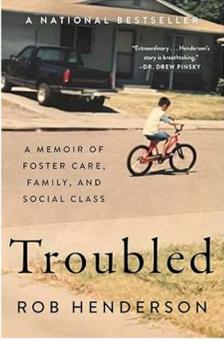
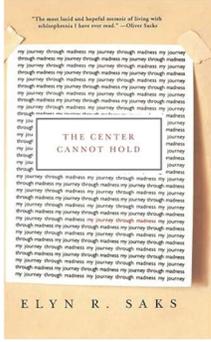
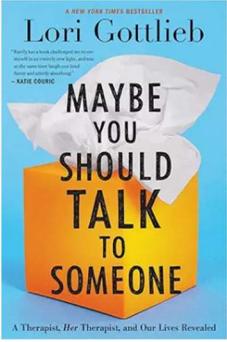
- During nearly all of our class sessions, we will devote time to interactive discussion. The best part of this course is that we have lots of time to discuss what we are reading about! I look forward to getting your reactions and input as we try out different ways of hearing each other's perspectives and pursuing deeper inquiry into the topics. I will be looking for you to engage with me and your peers, but please don't worry about being required to offer a certain number of contributions or anything like that. If I structure our discussions well, contributing and interacting with one another should happen organically. Note that the insights and reflective learning that accompany small- and large-group activities and discussions cannot be re-created, which is why I take attendance very seriously.

Below, I have laid out unexcused and excused absences. If you have an excused absence, I will figure out a reasonable way for you to make up the activity you miss. For example, I might have you write a written review of and personal reflection on the assigned reading for that day.

Reason for missing class	NOT excused	Excused
Email from me telling you that class is optional or cancelled		X
Class field trip with written notice from instructor (e.g., Marching Band trip, trip to Stanley Prison)		X
Varsity or Club sporting event with written notice from coach or athletic director		X
Conference attendance or presentation, with written notice from faculty lead (this includes CERCA, NCUR, etc.)		X
UWEC organization event (such as Forensics competition, mock trial, etc.) with written notice from leader		X
University event with attendance required (e.g., meeting with the Chancellor, RA duty)		X
Court-required attendance (e.g., jury duty, court appearance)		X
Graduate school interview or job interview		X
Going to a medical/therapy appt. or ER/urgent care <i>and</i> having documentation from a healthcare professional		X
Being sick (flu, cold, virus, pink eye etc.) <i>and</i> having documentation from a healthcare professional		X
*Going to a medical/therapy appt. or ER/urgent care and <u>not</u> having documentation from a healthcare professional	X	
*Being sick (flu, cold, virus, pink eye etc.) and <u>not</u> having documentation from a healthcare professional	X	
*Taking a friend/partner to the ER, doc, airport, etc.	X	
*Taking your pet to the vet	X	
*Family event (funeral, parental or sibling care, wedding, send-off, sibling's graduation, etc.)	X	
*Sleeping through your alarm clock	X	
*Getting stuck at home because of bad weather	X	
*Car malfunction, car accident, etc.	X	
*Getting scheduled at work despite asking for the time off	X	
*Vacation, planned or unplanned	X	
*Taking a mental health day	X	
*Can't find parking	X	

During the final three weeks of class, we will split into mini “book clubs.” I ask that you choose one of the books shown below. I have tried to choose a wide variety of books that can be digested in three weeks’ time. I will group you with peers who are interested in reading and discussing the same book you are. We will still meet each class day during those weeks to discuss the books and share ideas that you find important. Below are the books I recommend you choose from. If you have another book that you and others want to read together, run it by me.

Mental Health	Culture Wars	Sex and Aggression	Current Issues	Behavior Genetics
<p>Insel, T. (2022). <i>Healing: Our path from mental illness to mental health.</i> Penguin.</p> 	<p>Lukianoff, G., & Haidt, J. (2018). <i>The coddling of the American mind: How good intentions and bad ideas are setting up a generation for failure.</i> Penguin.</p> 	<p>Buss, D. M. (2021). <i>When men behave badly: The hidden roots of sexual deception, harassment, and assault.</i> Little, Brown Spark.</p> 	<p>Haidt, J. (2024). <i>The anxious generation: How the great rewiring of childhood is causing an epidemic of mental illness.</i> Penguin.</p> 	<p>Plomin, R. (2018). <i>Blueprint: How DNA makes us who we are.</i> Penguin.</p> 
Personal Growth	Science and Pseudoscience	Political Psychology	Comparative Psychology	Exercise, Diet, and Health
<p>Clear, J. (2018). <i>Atomic habits: An easy & proven way to build good habits & break bad ones.</i> Avery.</p> 	<p>Offit, P. (2013). <i>Do you believe in magic? Vitamins, supplements, and all things natural: A look behind the curtain.</i> Harper.</p> 	<p>Haidt, J. (2012). <i>The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion.</i> Pantheon.</p> 	<p>Natterson-Horowitz, B., & Bowers, K. (2020). <i>Wildhood: The astounding connections between human and animal adolescents.</i> Scribe.</p> 	<p>Attia, S. (2023). <i>Outlive: The science and art of longevity.</i> Harmony.</p> 

Consumerism	Skepticism	Memory	Medicine	Relationship Science
<p>Miller, G. (2010). <i>Spent: Sex, evolution, and consumer behavior</i>. Viking.</p> 	<p>Singal, J. (2022). <i>The quick fix: Why fad psychology can't fix our social ills</i>. Picador.</p> 	<p>Shaw, J. (2017). <i>The memory illusion: Remembering, forgetting, and the science of false memory</i>. Random House.</p> 	<p>Jena, A. B., & Worsham, C. (2023). <i>Random acts of medicine: The hidden forces that sway doctors, impact patients, and shape our health</i>. Doubleday.</p> 	<p>Buss, D. M. (2016). <i>The evolution of desire: Strategies of human mating</i>. Basic Books.</p> 
Memoir	Memoir	Memoir	Memoir	Memoir
<p>Frankl, V. (1946/2006). <i>Man's search for meaning</i>. Beacon Press.</p> 	<p>Phelps-Roper (2020). <i>Unfollow: A memoir of loving and leaving extremism</i>. Picador.</p> 	<p>Henderson, R. (2024). <i>Troubled: A memoir of foster care, family, and social class</i>. Gallery Books.</p> 	<p>Saks, E. R. (2007). <i>The center cannot hold: My journey through madness</i>. Grand Central Publishing.</p> 	<p>Gottlieb, L. (2019). <i>Maybe you should talk to someone: A therapist, her therapist, and our lives revealed</i>. Harper.</p> 

Learning goals

The UW-Eau Claire Liberal Education (LE) Core curriculum serves as a strong foundation for all our academic programs. Our LE Core embodies interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary learning. It has been developed to ensure that you acquire the knowledge AND skills AND responsibility that you will need to actively engage in a global society. Through meeting the requirements of the LE Core, you will develop the ability to think critically, creatively, and independently. You will learn to integrate and apply your knowledge and develop values essential to becoming a constructive global citizen. The outcomes will empower you and prepare you to deal with complexity, diversity, and change in multiple settings. They will also develop highly marketable skills and lead to life-long learning and civic engagement. (For a complete list of LE Core Outcomes, see <https://www.uwec.edu/ULEC/Liberal-Education-Framework-Learning-Outcome-and-Rubrics.htm>).

This course is designed to help students meet the following Liberal Education Learning Outcomes:

- Knowledge 2: Use knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to explain and evaluate human behavior and social institutions.
- Responsibility 3: Use critical and creative thinking to address civic, social, and environmental challenges.

I hope you will agree with me that this is a great course for us to pursue the learning outcomes of the honors program at UWEC:

- Engage in civil discussion of complex ideas and diverse perspectives.
- Make connections across academic or experiential contexts.
- Demonstrate broadened perspectives by connecting academic knowledge to one's own experiences.

You will develop and demonstrate your growth on these outcomes through reading, discussion, written reading checks and reflections, and other course activities throughout the semester.

Grades

Grades will be calculated as a proportion of points earned out of total possible.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

	B+	89-91.99%	C+	80-82.99%	D+	70-73.99%		
A	95-100%	B	86-88.99%	C	77-79.99%	D	67-69.99%	
A-	92-94.99%	B-	83-85.99%	C-	74-76.99%	D-	64-66.99%	F <64%

Please do not fret about this grading scheme. I know it seems more strict than usual. It is designed to adjust for grade inflation as well as my awareness that most of the work in this class is low stakes. You will do very well *if you keep up with the reading and come to class to engage with our course activities.* If you enjoy the books at all – which the vast majority of students do – then the course activities function merely to help you (and me) solidify the ideas and hence remember them better!

Other policies

(1) The last day to drop a course with no record is February 7. The final day to withdraw from a course is April 11.

(2) UWEC policy combined with provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) indicates that you have a right to see your records and that I cannot release any information about you to a third party without written permission from you that clearly spells out what type of information may be released. For more information, please see: <https://www.uwec.edu/tuition-financial-aid/parent-family-information/ferpa-privacy-policy/>.

(3) If you have a documented disability and are in need of special accommodations, please notify the Office for Services for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible so that we can actively discuss how best to meet your needs: <https://www.uwec.edu/equity-diversity-inclusion/edi-services-programs/services-for-students-with-disabilities/>. I ask that you talk with me in person about accommodations that involve flexibility surrounding attendance and assignment due dates, because there is no federal mandate for this accommodation and hence no agreed-upon definition of flexibility. It is not possible to meet the expectations of a book club course without being in class regularly.

(4) I expect academic honesty. Sample violations of integrity include (a) using ChatGPT to generate responses; (b) using student homework, papers, or ideas from previous semesters, unless approved by me; (c) asking for or giving information about the content of my reading checks (e.g., studying from an unauthorized file); (d) representing work done by someone else as your own (i.e., plagiarism), for example, by looking over at the responses on a neighbor's paper. If you are concerned that an activity you or someone else is considering might fall into the dishonest category, ask me about it. I consider academic misconduct in this course as a serious offense, and I will pursue the strongest possible academic penalties for such behavior. The disciplinary procedures and penalties for academic misconduct are described on the UW-Eau Claire Dean of Students web site: <https://www.uwec.edu/kb/article/blugold-student-conduct-code/>.

Relatedly, I do not consent to having notes – or any materials - from my class uploaded to the internet, including commercial note-selling websites such as StudySoup. Some companies target students and solicit course material acting as if they are working in coordination with colleges and universities, but that is not true for this class. This

means that you do not have the right to provide your notes to anyone else or to make any commercial use of them without express prior permission from me. Unless you have been given university permission, you do not have the right to record my lectures. Inappropriate use of notes may be in violation of the Blugold Conduct Code and sanctions will be pursued accordingly.

(5) Other absences: As a general rule, make-ups for missed in-class activities, reading checks, etc. will be provided only when due to an authorized absence or emergency. It is your responsibility to inform me of such situations and to provide appropriate documentation if needed. Please consult with me regarding the nature of the make-up work and due dates. Work that is late for non-authorized reasons will incur a late penalty of 50% per day, and if it is too late, it will not receive any credit.

(6) Diversity and inclusivity: As a differential psychologist (i.e., I study individual and group differences), “diversity” means much more to me than race, gender, and sexuality. That is, you are welcome and respected in my classroom whatever your ancestry and racial identity; whatever your sex, gender identity, and gender expression; whatever your sexual orientation; whether you are poor or rich, shy or gregarious, single or married, parent or non-parent, smoker or non-smoker, student-athlete or exercise-averse, veteran/military serviceperson or civilian, native English speaker or not, old or young, conservative or libertarian or liberal or woke, born-again Christian or atheist, mentally healthy or unhealthy, etc. I will try to create and maintain an environment in which we respect one another and ask of each other what we all want for ourselves: freedom of thought and viewpoint, freedom of speech, and freedom to associate with whom we please.

Norms and working agreements

In pursuit of a broad and deep learning experience for all of us, I ask that we follow a set of norms – conditions for shared learning – and agreements – agreed-upon procedures.

Norms: conditions for shared learning	Agreements: agreed-upon procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presume positive intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use names to address each other
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen attentively	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speak to be heard
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aim for shared participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Criticize and affirm ideas rather than people
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage respectfully	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start and end on time
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use electronics respectfully

Hnrs 324: Great Books on the Science of Human Behavior

Date:	To read before class:
M 1/27	Syllabus
W 1/29	Ariely Intro, Ch. 1-2 Relativity; Supply and Demand
F 1/31	Ariely Ch. 3-5: Cost of Zero; Social Norms; Free Cookies
M 2/3	Ariely Ch. 6-7: Arousal; Procrastination/Self-Control
W 2/5	Ariely Ch. 8-10: Ownership; Keeping Doors; Expectations
F 2/7	Ariely Ch. 11-12: Power of Price; Cycle of Distrust
M 2/10	Ariely Ch. 13-15: Character I and II; Beer & Free Lunches
W 2/12	(No class – Reading Break)
F 2/14	Lembke Intro & Ch. 1: The Problem; Our Masturbation Machines
M 2/17	Lembke Ch. 2-3: Running from Pain; The Pleasure-Pain Balance
W 2/19	Lembke Ch. 4: Dopamine Fasting
F 2/21	Lembke Ch. 5-6: Space, Time, & Meaning; A Broken Balance?
M 2/24	Lembke Ch. 7: Pressing on the Pain Side
W 2/26	Lembke Ch. 8: Radical Honesty
F 2/28	(No class – April probably has to be in Madison for Pluralist Lab training)
M 3/3	Lembke Ch. 9 & Conclusion: Prosocial Shame; Lessons of the Balance
W 3/5	(No class – Reading Break)
F 3/7	Ritchie Preface, Ch. 1 & 2: Ought and Is; How Science Works
M 3/10	Ritchie Ch. 3: Fraud
W 3/12	Ritchie Ch. 4: Bias
F 3/14	Ritchie Ch. 5: Negligence
March 17-21	(No class – Spring Break)
M 3/24	Ritchie Ch. 6: Hype
W 3/26	Ritchie Ch. 7: Perverse Incentives
F 3/28	Ritchie Ch. 8: Fixing Science
M 3/31	(No class – Reading Break)
W 4/2	Lyubomirsky Foreword & Ch. 1: Is It Possible to Become Happier?
F 4/4	Lyubomirsky Ch. 2-3: How Happy Are You?; How to Find Happiness Activities that Fit
M 4/7	Lyubomirsky Ch. 4: Practicing Gratitude and Positive Thinking
W 4/9	Lyubomirsky Ch. 5: Investing in Social Connections
F 4/11	Lyubomirsky Ch. 6: Managing Stress, Hardship, and Trauma
M 4/14	Lyubomirsky Ch. 7-8: Living in the Present; Committing to Your Goals
W 4/16	Lyubomirsky Ch. 9-10: Taking Care of Your Body and Soul; The Five Hows of Sustainable Happiness
F 4/18	(No class – Reading Break)
M 4/21	Planning the weeks ahead: Mini book groups
W 4/23	Book 5 Day 1
F 4/25	(No class – CERCA/PHS)
M 4/28	Book 5 Day 2
W 4/30	Book 5 Day 3
F 5/2	Book 5 Day 4
M 5/5	Book 5 Day 5
W 5/7	Book 5 Day 6
F 5/9	Final Group Review, Reflections, and Recommendations; Course/Instructor Evaluation