

**SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY**  
**Psychology Department**  
**Fall 2026**

**ETHICS IN PSYCHOLOGY (PSYC 114)**

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<b>Instructor:</b>	<b>Thomas G. Plante, Ph.D., ABPP</b>
<b>Office:</b>	Alumni Science 203
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<b>Office Hours:</b>	Typically, before class or by appointment
<b>Course Meeting Times:</b>	Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 3:30pm -4:35pm
<b>Course Meeting Location:</b>	Alumni Science 101

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**Required Reading:**

Texts: 1. Vaughn, L. (2024). *Deciding What's Right: A practical guide to moral theory*. NY: Norton. ISBN: 978-1-324-07133-4

2. Knapp, S. J., & Fingerhut, R. (2024). *Practical Ethics for Psychologists: A Positive Approach (4th Edition)*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. ISBN 9781433842504

3. Plante, T. G. (2024). *Living Ethically in an Unethical World: Doing the Right Thing, Second Edition*. San Diego, CA: Cognella. ISBN: 979-8-8233-1826-6.

APA Ethics Code also located at... <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx#>  
 Keep it by your bedside!!!

Additional readings will be provided during the class.

PowerPoint slides for class can be found here:  
[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hYw3EqP1ThRsD1\\_elQ1w-j5thPJVCKsD?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hYw3EqP1ThRsD1_elQ1w-j5thPJVCKsD?usp=drive_link)

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**Course Evaluation:**

Midterm Quest 1:	End of Week 3
Midterm Quest 2:	End of Week 6
Midterm Quest 3:	End of Week 9
Final Quest:	Exam week
Ethics Reflection Paper:	Last day of class
Class Participation, Behavior, Scholarly Enthusiasm, and Attendance:	

+/- can improve or decrease your course grade.

Pass everything, get an "A." Fail any one of assigned tasks and get a "B." Fail two of the tasks and get a "C," etc. Two low passes equal one fail. Additionally, you are expected to take and attend class with integrity (at least 80% of the time unless you have a documented excused absence due to sports, sickness, and so forth). Only those who meet the attendance requirement will be eligible for an "A" in the class. Less than 60% attendance will result in a double fail (i.e., two letter grade reduction) while less than 50% will result in a failing grade. Also, only pass minuses can be earned for late assignments after the offered grace period ends on Camino.

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**Course Description:** Ethics in psychology involves the role of ethical behavior and decision making in the field of psychology and related behavioral, medical, and social sciences (e.g., clinical/counseling psychology, medicine, public policy, nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy). In accordance with the University's statement of purpose, the course seeks to "prepare students to assume leadership roles in society through an education that stresses moral ...values..., seeks to answer ...'what should be'...and (promotes) justice...and the common good." Class topics include issues related to competence, integrity, professional, scientific, and social responsibility, respect for other's rights and dignity, concern for other's welfare and other topics. Suggested prerequisites include PSYC 1 or 2.

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**Learning Objectives:** (from University Core Curriculum Requirements)

- 1.1 Be able to reason ethically by drawing on major ethical theories and traditions, (e.g. virtue ethics, feminist ethics, deontological or consequentialist theories); by normatively assessing individual, professional, and institutional decisions; and by articulating their personal engagement with the meaning of the right and the good. (Arts & Humanities, Ethical Reasoning, Critical Thinking)
- 1.2 Be able to analyze, critically evaluate, and apply major ethical theories and traditions to significant personal, professional, and institutional decisions. As part of such efforts, students will be able to articulate who they understand some central ethical concepts such as justice, happiness, the good, virtue, dignity, rights, and equality. (Arts & Humanities, Critical Thinking, Ethical Reasoning)
- 1.3 Be able to demonstrate appreciation of nuance and ambiguity, as well as clarity and precision, in their thinking and writing about moral problems, concepts, and ideals. (Critical Thinking, Complexity)
- 1.4 Reflect on their own ethical decisions and actions, on their roles as morally responsible members of the human community, and on what it means to be a good person. (Critical Thinking, Complexity)

**Course Goals:** (1) To understand ethical issues and ethical decision making in the field of psychology and related fields.  
 (2) To provide a framework for understanding and thinking about ethical issues in psychology and other behavioral, social, and medical sciences.  
 (3) To provide the foundation for students taking additional courses and advanced training in psychology and other behavioral and social science fields.

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**Sequence of Topics and Readings:**

Week 1:	Introduction to Course & to Ethics	V# 1, P 1-2
Week 2:	Methods & Perspectives in Ethical Decision-Making	V 2-5, P 3
Week 3:	Methods & Perspectives, cont.	V 6-16
Week 4:	Application of Ethics to Psych & Related Fields	K 1-4 & APA Code
Week 5:	The 3 C's: Competence, Consent, & Collaboration Boundaries	K 5-7; P 4-8
Week 6:	2 More C's: Confidentiality & Commitment	K 8-9;
Week 7:	Assessment and Forensics	K 10-11
Week 8:	Special Topics and Business Issues	K 12-13
Week 9:	Education Ethics	K 14-15
Week 10:	Research Ethics	K 16, P 9-10

*Term Paper Due: Last class day*  
 (Assessing Learning Objectives 1.1 – 1.4)

# **V** = Vaughn book, **K** = Knapp book, **P** = Plante book

**NOTE:** *Final Quest during exam week* (Assessing Learning Objectives 1.1 – 1.4)

**Additional Items**

1. Term papers should also be handed in via Camino. More about the paper will be discussed in class. Papers won't be accepted after the final. The paper should address a psychology ethics challenge that interests you and should be about 10 pages long with about 7 professional peer reviewed references other than the books used in class and written in APA style. The paper should provide the background of the ethical challenge that is the focus of your paper and then use ethical principles highlighted in class and the texts to problem solve the dilemma. The paper should include a title page, abstract page, body of paper, and reference page(s).
2. In keeping with the mission of the university, relating the course material to the "greater glory of God and to the common good" as well as helping to educate leaders with *competence, conscience, compassion, and community* (the 4 Cs) will be integrated into class material where appropriate.

## Please Read

### How and why I Teach Class as I Do

As Polonius states in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "*Though this be madness, yet there is method in't*".

I teach my classes a bit differently than perhaps most other classes that you have taken at SCU or elsewhere but I do so for intentional and carefully throughout reasons. So, there is actually a "method to the madness" and I will explain why I teach as I do and give you a brief rationale in the hopes that you not only understand why I teach as I do but also give you full informed consent as we proceed. There are four principles that I keep in mind as I design and implement my classes.

#### **Principle 1: Class should be stress free, fun, engaging, and all about learning with practical implications**

There is plenty of quality empirical evidence that anxiety, depression, and stress among your generation of college students is very high (e.g., Haidt, 2024; Lipson et al., 2022; Sheldon et al., 2021). Even the US Surgeon General issued an unprecedented advisory report in 2021 about this issue. I try to make my classes stress free, fun, engaging, and all about learning with plenty of "news you can use" focused on practical implications. I design classes so that you can control your own grades and deadlines to assist in this more stress-free approach

#### **Principle 2: You are adults and will be treated as such**

I'm here to provide you with course content and material that I have expertise in while it is up to you to fully engage and absorb it. I will not micromanage you with assignment rubrics, points for this and that, and many class rules. If you were raised in the USA you likely had assignment rubrics throughout your educational career. While they make sense for elementary school they don't always make sense in college (in my humble view) as they can stifle creatively, challenge individual learning experiences and differences, and do not help with some of the complexities and nuance of learning (Ling, 2025; Swierczek & Bechter, 2024). However, I do ask you for 80% of attendance since you can't take the class with integrity unless you are actually ["in the room where it happens."](#)

#### **Principle 3: I tell stories**

There is plenty of research evidence that speaks to our ability to better learn and retain information through narrative (e.g., Alterio & McDrury, 2003; Lawrence & Paige, 2016; McNett, 2016). I take this seriously and you'll hear a lot of stories from me that illustrate or provide examples of the concepts I am trying to teach and help you understand and appreciate. Since

I've been in clinical practice as a licensed psychologist for almost 40 years, I have plenty of clinical experiences in both inpatient and outpatient settings that well illustrate the issues that we are trying to learn and understand. Of course, to maintain patient confidentiality, I will not provide any identifying information of patients under my care and may tweak a fact or two in order to do so.

#### **Principle 4: OAE accommodations are normalized in class**

Since many students (typically about 25-30% of all students in class) have OAE approved learning accommodations that must be provided and considered confidential, I try to provide a class environment where most of these typical accommodations are normalized for the entire class. This includes the use of laptops, take home rather than in-class exams, and coming and going as needed.

In order to accomplish these principles, we do the following:

1. All exams (which I call "Quests" as they are something between a quiz and a test) are take home and graded pass/fail.
2. All power point slides are provided for your use via Google Docs. While I expect you to read the assigned materials in the text (and I know that so many students of your generation don't read books or other material of length very often) I don't micromanage or check your reading.
3. If you pass all assignments, you get an A. If you fail or select not to complete an assignment you lose a letter grade. If you perform marginally on assignments you get a pass minus that reduces your grade by a half letter grade for each pass minus. Thus, you are in control of your grade.
4. Higher education is ridiculously expensive. Someone in your life (i.e., parents, donors, you) are paying almost 100K a year for your education. I want you to make the most of it. I'm here to help you learn but you have to do your part too. I expect you to take your education seriously and see me as a resource for you in doing so. I've been in this field for a very long time and am happy to share my expertise with you. I will do my part and hope that you will do yours to maximize your educational learning experience.

#### **References**

Alterio, M., & McDrury, J. (2003). *Learning through storytelling in higher education: Using reflection and experience to improve learning*. Routledge.

Haidt, J. (2024). *The anxious generation: How the great rewiring of childhood is causing an epidemic of mental illness*. Penguin.

Lawrence, R. L., & Paige, D. S. (2016). What Our Ancestors Knew: Teaching and Learning Through Storytelling. *New directions for adult & continuing education*, 2016(149).

Ling, J. H. (2025). A review of rubrics in education: Potential and challenges. *Indonesian Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning*, 2(1), 1-14.

Lipson, S. K., Zhou, S., Abelson, S., Heinze, J., Jirsa, M., Morigney, J., ... & Eisenberg, D. (2022). Trends in college student mental health and help-seeking by race/ethnicity: Findings from the national healthy minds study, 2013–2021. *Journal of affective disorders*, 306, 138-147.

McNett, G. (2016). Using stories to facilitate learning. *College Teaching*, 64(4), 184-193.

Sheldon, E., Simmonds-Buckley, M., Bone, C., Mascarenhas, T., Chan, N., Wincott, M., ... & Barkham, M. (2021). Prevalence and risk factors for mental health problems in university undergraduate students: A systematic review with meta-analysis. *Journal of affective disorders*, 287, 282-292.

Swierczek, F. W., & Bechter, C. (2024). Against Rubrics. *Journal of Educational Thought/Revue de la Pensée Educative*, 57(2).

## **What to Expect in your SCU Psychology Courses**

1. **Mutual Respect.** The faculty in the psychology department are committed to an environment of mutual respect. Please be courteous in your communications with us and your fellow students, get to class on time, do not pack up your belongings when class is still in session, and if possible, use the restroom before coming to class. It's our intent to show you similar levels of respect!
2. **Cell Phones and Other Devices.** Please turn off or silence your cell phone during class. If you need to take an important call, e.g., you have a family member in surgery, please let your professor know at the start of class. Not all professors allow use of laptops in classes—please ask!
3. **In Person Classes.** Almost all of our classes in psychology are scheduled as fully In Person classes. This means that there will be no way to participate via Zoom. If you have to miss a class, refer to your professor's policies for details on how to handle that.
4. **Responses to Email.** In the interest of valuing work-life balance, and respecting that your professors have both professional and personal responsibilities beyond your class, faculty may not reply to your emails during certain hours of the day. This depends on the course time and your professor, of course. Please ask us what our policies are!

5. **The Final Exam.** When a final exam is required in a course, you must take it on the day and time it is scheduled. The [schedule is established by the University](#) and we as professors do not control it. If you know in Week 1 that you will not be able to attend the final exam in a course, you should consider taking a different course or discussing your conflict with your professor.
6. **Late Policies, Extensions, and Incompletes.** Please check with your professor about their policies on late work and requests for extensions. For Incomplete grades, keep in mind that these are typically only given when you have missed a single major assignment due to circumstances beyond your control and do not have time to make it up before the course grading period ends.
7. **Absences due to Illness.** Please consult the [University policy](#) on what to do if you test positive for COVID. If you have to miss class due to illness or an emergency beyond your control, please consult with your individual professor for their policies on what to do.
8. **Extra Credit.** Extra credit will not be awarded to make up for missed assignments or to increase scores on completed assignments.
9. **Equity in Course Policies and Grading.** Your Psychology professors are making every effort to make sure that course policies and grading are implemented the same way for all students. Some students may be used to asking for exceptions, believing “It can’t hurt to ask.” But granting such exceptions would violate the principle of equity and the transparency of our syllabus statements. Please think twice before asking for exceptions, showing us that you value these principles too!
10. **Enjoy the Ride!** You are here to learn and grow as a whole person! We expect you to make mistakes and to struggle with learning from time to time. If you weren’t doing that, you wouldn’t grow very much over the course of your college experience. And remember that you are more than your grades.

## REQUIRED SYLLABUS STATEMENTS

Required Policy Information for all Course Syllabi  
Last Reviewed December 2025

All Santa Clara University syllabi must refer students to the following policies.

### **Academic Integrity**

The Academic Integrity pledge is an expression of the University's commitment to fostering an understanding of—and commitment to—a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states:

I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code.

Academic integrity is part of your intellectual, ethical, and professional development. I expect you to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class. I will clarify expectations on academic integrity—including the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT and course sharing sites for all assignments and exams in this course. If you have questions about what is appropriate on any assignment, please let me know before you hand in work. For more resources about ensuring academic integrity in your work, see this [LibGuide on Academic Integrity](#).

### **Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct (Title IX)**

Santa Clara University is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment free of all forms of discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.

Please know that as a faculty member, California law and University policy require me to report any information brought to my attention about incidents of sexual harassment or misconduct to the SCU [Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX](#) (408) 551-3043. This includes, but is not limited to, disclosures in writing assignments, class discussions, and one-on-one conversations.

Should you need support, SCU has dedicated staff trained to assist you in navigating campus resources, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and filing a formal complaint with the University or with law enforcement. Please see the [Student Resources](#) page for more information about reporting options and resources.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence and wishes to speak to a **confidential** resource who is not required to report, please contact one of the following SCU resources for support:

- [SCU Wellness Center](#)
- [CAPS](#)

- Any individual (clergy, counselors) acting in a professional capacity for which confidentiality is mandated by law.

I am happy to help connect you with any of these resources.

### **Accommodations for Pregnant and Parenting Students**

Santa Clara University is committed to creating and maintaining a non-discriminatory learning environment for all students, including students who are pregnant or parenting. Absences due to medical conditions relating to pregnancy and childbirth will be excused for as long as deemed medically necessary by a student's doctor, and students will be given the opportunity to make up missed work. Students needing accommodations can often arrange accommodations by working directly with their instructors, supervisors, or departments. Students needing accommodations can also seek assistance with accommodations from the [Office of Accessible Education](#) (OAE) or from the [Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX](#). This [resource page](#) from the Title IX Office provides information regarding support for students and employees who are pregnant or parenting.

### **Office of Accessible Education**

If you have a documented disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact the [Office of Accessible Education](#) (OAE) as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through OAE, please be sure to request your accommodations through the OAE portal and discuss them with me during my office hours within the first two weeks of class. To ensure fairness and consistency, individual faculty members are required to receive verification from the Office of Accessible Education before providing accommodations. OAE will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assistive technology.

Students who are approved for extended time or other exam accommodations should talk with me as soon as possible. The Office of Accessible Education must be contacted in advance (at least two weeks' notice recommended) to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. Students should continue to reach out to OAE ([oea@scu.edu](mailto:oea@scu.edu)) regarding access barriers related to this course or content.

### **Academic Freedom**

The University is dedicated to an uncompromising standard of academic excellence and a commitment to [academic freedom](#), freedom of inquiry, and freedom of expression in the search for truth. We are here to engage a set of ideas and research findings that often have long and complicated histories. Scholars may disagree on the topics we will be discussing. Assignment of and references to sources (readings, films, websites, etc.) are not an endorsement of the opinions or content contained in those materials. Students are expected and required to become familiar with the literature relevant to the topic of this course regardless of whether the professor, the University, or the students find this content

agreeable. You are invited to introduce additional challenges in a serious and open-minded manner.

## **RECOMMENDED SYLLABUS STATEMENTS**

### **Safety Measures**

In order to meet our learning objectives, we will adhere to the highest standards for safety and mutual respect. University policy allows faculty to request that students comply with University health and safety recommendations, including the use of face coverings occasionally or throughout the academic term. Failure to comply with my request is a violation of the [Student Conduct Code](#), which I will need to report.

### **Use of Classroom Recordings**

Depending on the learning objectives and pedagogical approaches used in a lesson, some classes may be recorded and made available on Camino. However, as is stated in the [Student Conduct Code](#): "...Dissemination or sharing of any classroom recording without the permission of the instructor would be considered 'misuse' and, therefore, prohibited. Violations of these policies may result in disciplinary action by the University. At the instructor's discretion, violations may also have an adverse effect on the student's grade."

### **Copyright Statement**

Materials in this course are protected by the United States copyright laws. I am the copyright holder of the materials I create, including notes, handouts, slides, and videos. You may make copies of course materials for your own use and you may share the materials with other students enrolled in this course. You may not publicly distribute the course materials without my written permission.

### **Technology Support**

SCU can provide you with technical assistance, and you can also reach out to our providers directly for questions. For support with Camino (SCU's branded instance of Canvas), contact [caminosupport@scu.edu](mailto:caminosupport@scu.edu) or call 408-551-3572. You can also find support resources via the help button within the Camino platform (on the left-hand navigation) to access after-hours support via email, chat, or phone.

For Zoom assistance, contact Media Services at [mediaservices@scu.edu](mailto:mediaservices@scu.edu) or 408-554-4520. You can also get support from the [SCU website](#) or the [Zoom Help Center](#) website.

For SCU network and computing support, contact the SCU Technology Help Desk at [techdesk@scu.edu](mailto:techdesk@scu.edu) or 408-554-5700. They can provide support for MySCU Portal, Eduroam, Duo, hardware and software issues, and more.

### **Land Acknowledgment**

Santa Clara University occupies the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ohlone and Muwekma Ohlone people.

**Respect for All**

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students of all backgrounds bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of all identities and perspectives. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

**Gender Inclusive Language**

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you go by a name different from what is on the class roster, please let me know. Using correct gender pronouns is important to me, so please share your pronouns with me and correct me if I make a mistake. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. For more on personal pronouns see [www.mypronouns.org](http://www.mypronouns.org)

**Wellness Statement**

I know you will do the best you can in this class (and all of your classes); however, it should never be at the expense of your own mental and physical health and your overall well-being. Jesuit education is grounded in *cura personalis*, concern for the whole person—mind, body, and spirit. What does this mean for you? Be kind to others, and more importantly, be kind to yourself. Attend to your sleep (quantity *and* quality); drink lots of water; move; get outside; and pay attention to beauty that isn't coming to you on a screen. Eat good food, laugh, enjoy friends and family, look for opportunities to connect with others in new ways, pray, meditate, or otherwise attend to your spirit. And ask for help, even if you don't think you need it. Lots of folks, including me, are here to support you. It's never too late to reach out, and I am committed to helping you.

SCU has many resources and programs to support you. These resources may be especially helpful:

**Wellness Center**

The Wellness center provides resources to aid and promote student well-being across the eight dimensions of wellness, including student peer groups for healthful living, violence prevention, and recovery.

**CAPS**

Santa Clara students are provided confidential counseling sessions at no cost through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). Students have access to clinically appropriate, short-term therapy; group therapy; and other resources for care. A new 24/7 support line is also available: **408-554-5220**.

### [SCU Culture of Care](#)

If you are concerned for the mental or physical welfare of one of your peers, the Office of Student Life Culture of Care website provides resources for recognizing and helping someone in distress.

### **Academic Concerns**

If you are concerned with your progress in this class, please contact me so that we can find solutions together. [Drahmann Center](#) can also offer support with issues regarding your academic progress more broadly.

SCU also has multiple options for free academic tutoring. Students can make appointments to discuss work in a range of courses:

- [Drahmann Tutoring](#) (for many courses in the College of Arts & Sciences including Natural Sciences, Modern Languages, Economics, and Computer Science)
- [The HUB Writing Center](#) (Writing and Public Speaking assignments across departments)
- [Mathematics Learning Center](#) (MATH 4, 6, 8, 11-14, 30-31, 35-36, 51, 53)

### **Grief Resources and Support**

An important part of healing from loss is the support of others. The SCU community is committed to supporting you during this difficult time. If you need to miss class or foresee being late on upcoming deliverables due to bereavement, please let me know immediately so we can make appropriate arrangements. If you need additional support, you can contact the Dean of Students Office at (408) 554-4583 or email [dso@scu.edu](mailto:dso@scu.edu). Staff in DSO can notify other faculty and/or campus supervisors on your behalf and connect you with helpful campus resources.

***Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam***