

“Psychology in Context: The Psychology of Thrill-Seeking”

Kenneth Carter
Oxford College of Emory University

Organizing a course around a central theme can provide much-needed context to help students learn psychological concepts. A rich central theme can advance critical thinking, increase motivation, and foster active learning. In this presentation, I'll demonstrate how the psychology of thrill-seeking can serve as such a theme. Thrill-seekers crave intense experiences despite physical or social risks. They jump out of planes, climb skyscrapers, and eat anything (even poisonous pufferfish) while others, the chill-seekers, are overwhelmed by the same experience. Over the last 50 years, hundreds of studies have been published examining various aspects of thrill-seeking. Thrill-seeking can be used as a theme to teach various aspects of psychology such as theories of personality, research methods, statistics, and positive psychology in a way students find personally engaging and memorable. In addition to learning about thrill-seeking, attendees will learn how they can incorporate themes into their own curricula in order to provide deeper context, increase engagement, and help students apply their knowledge.

Speaker Bio

Dr. Ken Carter is Charles Howard Candler Professor of Psychology at Oxford College of Emory University, where he teaches introductory courses in psychology as well as advanced courses in clinical psychopharmacology, research methods, and personality.

Before joining the Oxford College faculty in 1994, Carter served as a senior assistant research scientist in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's prestigious Epidemic Intelligence Service, with a research focus on smoking as a risk marker for suicidal behaviors in adolescents.

Carter has published extensively in both academic and lay publications, actively engaging in the translation of research in psychology into everyday language. His articles have been published in magazines such as *mental_floss*, and has appeared on news programs such as *Connect With Kids* and NBC's *Today* show

He is the co-author of *Learn Psychology* (Jones and Bartlett), a textbook now in its second edition, and he is currently at work on an introductory psychology textbook for SAGE publications as well as a psychopathology textbook for Cambridge University Press. He is the designer and instructor of a course on the psychology of thrill-seeking now offered by Emory University and [Coursera](#) as a MOOC (massive online open course). Canadian museum [Science North](#) has launched an [exhibit](#) on sensation-seeking that was informed by Carter's work that is currently traveling in [North America](#). His most recent book is [Buzz!: Inside the Minds of Thrill-Seekers, Daredevils, and Adrenaline Junkies](#) (Cambridge University Press).

A graduate of Oxford College and Emory University, Carter received an MA and PhD in psychology from the University of Michigan. After completion of his doctoral work he also earned an MS in psychopharmacology from Fairleigh Dickinson University and gained board certification as a clinical psychologist.