

Psychology 486
Comprehensive Research Project
Fall 2013

TuF 1:00 – 2:20
TBA

Instructor: Rachael Reavis
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Office: LBC 305
Office Hours: by appointment only

Course Readings:

Required: 6th Edition of the APA manual

Additional course documents on Moodle

Course Description & Objectives:

This course is really about you and what you have learned as a psychology major. It is an opportunity for you to explore a specific research question of your own making. Even if you are not going into a research field, you will gain an important perspective on how research is really conducted that will benefit you in whatever career you find yourself. Research is exciting and fun, but it is also hard work. Take your topic selection seriously, because you will be spending many hours across several months immersed in your topic. If you aren't fascinated by your topic in the beginning, you aren't likely to be by the end. During the course of the semester you will demonstrate and improve upon all the skills you have acquired during your years as an Earlham psychology major, culminating in a final paper and presentation to the department. If all goes well, you will also have contributed to our understanding of psychological phenomena and processes.

Specific Course Goals

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Design and implement a research study.
2. Analyze data and report results in written and spoken work.
3. Understand the role of research in psychology, and identify its strengths and limitations.
4. Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences.
5. Understand psychology as a science.
6. Critically evaluate existing work.
7. Provide helpful, but constructive, feedback to work in progress.

Psychology Department Goals

The following psychology department goals (based on the APA guidelines) are especially relevant for this course.

1. Research Methods in Psychology
2. Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology
3. Application of Psychology
4. Values in Psychology
5. Communication Skills
6. Information and Technological Literacy
7. Communication Skills

Earlham General Education Goals:

The following general education goals are especially relevant for this course.

1. Close and critical reading, thoughtful reflection, ready discussion, and cogent writing.
2. Increased adeptness in thoughtfully considering texts of all sorts, whether singly or in comparison with one another.
3. Gaining an understanding of the scientific process through direct experience.
4. Systematic understanding and overt application of quantitative and analytic reasoning.
5. Practice and discipline in group learning. This includes thoughtful community membership.
6. The ability to gather information from print and electronic sources and critical capacity to evaluate the data gathered and the ideas encountered.

Evaluation:

Your final grade will be based on your final paper and presentation, but also on your ability to meet deadlines, your ability to respond appropriately to criticism, and your participation in the class, which will be taken very seriously.

- 1) **Attendance.** Attendance will be taken every day. Some days will be designated as “independent work” days, but **you are still expected to come to class and check in.** Doing a full and well-executed research project in one semester is a significant task, and it is easy to fall behind and hard to catch up. Although you are expected to come to class every day, if you miss one class period, your grade will not suffer. However, each class period missed after that will result in your **final grade being lowered by a full percentage point.** If you are hospitalized or have a death in your immediate family, we will work together to determine whether you can complete the course or should take an incomplete.
- 2) **Participation.** You will be part of working groups of 3-4 people. You will be brainstorming about ideas, helping others to refine their ideas, reading each other’s drafts, providing constructive feedback, responding constructively to feedback, and other supportive endeavors. Your participation grade will be based on what I observe, a self-evaluation of your performance as a group member, and an evaluation from each of your group members about your contributions.
- 3) **Drafts.** Research and dissemination (writing and presenting) require a lot of drafting. The first thought you think or the first draft you write will not be polished. This is true for novice and seasoned writers alike. Furthermore, draft deadlines help you stay on schedule. If you follow the deadlines in the syllabus, then you will have no trouble completing your project in time. If you don’t, then your grade will suffer and you will run the risk of not completing your project. The due dates listed are the last possible due dates, but I will read drafts earlier if you turn them in, and I will read multiple drafts. Part of your grade will also be based on your ability to incorporate (or thoughtfully explain why you are not incorporating) both my feedback and the feedback of your working group. Failure to respond to or incorporate feedback will negatively affect your grade.
- 4) **Final Paper.** Your final paper will be graded for the design of your project, conceptual and theoretical soundness of your project, writing (including clarity and grammar), and APA style. Your paper grade will be based on my evaluation and the evaluation of your second reader.
- 5) **Final Presentation.** Your presentation grade will be based on the clarity of your message, the eloquence of your delivery, and the thoughtfulness of your responses to audience questions.

Grading:

A-: 90-92.9%; A: 93%-99.9%; A+: 100%
B-: 80-82.9%; B: 83-86.9%; B+: 87-89.9%
C-: 70-72.9%; C: 73-76.9%; C+: 77-79.9%
D: 65-69.9%
F: < 65%

I do NOT round grades. For example, 79.9999 is a C+, no exceptions. Please note the grading scale—it may be different from other classes you have had.

Office hours etiquette: I am a part-time employee and will only be on campus Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons. I can meet with you at other times, but you will need to make an appointment. I will be coming on to campus specifically to meet with you. If you do not show up to the meeting, I will not schedule future times to meet with you outside of class.

Email Etiquette:

You are encouraged to contact me via e-mail with any questions that you may have, but I ask that you make sure you have looked for the answer yourself first (on Moodle, in course documents) and that you correspond professionally. It will be much easier to reach me via email than trying to catch me in my office. We can also use email to schedule a time to chat online or via Skype.

Academic Honesty:

All students are expected to conduct themselves with honesty and integrity in this course. The honor code is both a privilege and a responsibility, and you are expected to take it seriously. Suspected infractions, such as plagiarism or fabrication of reports will be treated seriously and will be reported. Furthermore, if you are aware of a violation of academic integrity, it is your responsibility to take action.

Students with Disabilities:

Please speak with me as soon as possible and let me know what accommodations Academic Support Services has suggested for you. Accommodation arrangements must be made in the first 2 weeks of the semester. Please see <http://www.earlham.edu/policies/learning-disabilities.html> for details.

Schedule of Topics & Assignments

Please note that this schedule is tentative and may change as circumstances require.

**Readings are due the first day they are listed.*

8/23	Kathy & Rachael's class together Introduction; initial topics; dividing class
8/27	<i>Current Directions</i> – Selecting topics Creating working groups
8/30	Library instruction day; IRB training certification (see Moodle) due in class <i>Topics due on Moodle by 11:59pm</i>
9/3	Bring ideas for study design for your topic (bring ideas for at least 2-3 studies), and be able to discuss at least 5 relevant articles <i>Submit on Moodle by class time.</i> Brainstorm with working group in class Meet with working group prior to next class to create a well-developed study design
9/6	Bring to class a well-developed study design, as well as possible questionnaires (gathered from empirical studies, not self-authored) <i>Submit on Moodle by class time</i> Be prepared to present it to the class for critique
9/10	In class: What makes a good introduction? (Read article titled Introduction by class time) Name of 2 nd reader <i>due by class time on Moodle</i> (you should have asked them if they are willing by now and given them time to respond) Email or give each member of your working group a draft of your introduction and methods by 9/13. Return edited drafts to workgroup authors by 9/16. Editing won't take place during class time.
9/13	Bring materials to class for piloting (Read articles on Moodle titled "Methods" and "Titles & Abstracts" by class time)
9/17	Bring completed Human Subjects Form for peer review; (If time, talk about Methods) <i>Human Subjects Forms due on Moodle by 11:59pm</i>
9/20	Bring Intro/Methods (Conceptual focus) 2 nd draft to class for peer review <i>Intro/Methods (Conceptual focus) due on Moodle by 11:59pm</i>
9/24	Brainstorm about data collection – staying organized, creating a schedule, etc.
9/27	Create SPSS databases for data entry
10/1	In working groups, plan analyses. If time, enter fake data into databases and run analyses
10/4	Discuss any required or suggested changes to protocols, based on feedback from Human Subjects Board

10/8	Independent (or working group) work; meeting with Rachael Start running subjects this week, if Human Subjects Form is approved
10/11	No Class, Mid-Semester Break
10/15	Independent (or working group) work; meeting with Rachael
10/18	Independent (or working group) work; Rachael at conference; Complete questionnaire on Moodle by 11:59pm detailing what you accomplished during class time
10/22	Data entry & analyses
10/25	(Read article titled Results) In class: What makes a good results section? Intro/Methods 3rd draft due to Moodle by 11:59pm
10/28	(Read article titled "Discussion" and "Citations & References") In class: What makes a good discussion?
11/1	In class: What's the "so what?" of your project? Submit on Moodle by class time. Be prepared to discuss your results, but more importantly, to discuss why anyone should care.
11/5	Bring Results/Discussion draft to class for peer review
11/8	In class: independent (or working group) work Results/Discussion due to Moodle by 11:59pm
11/12	Bring full draft to class for peer review. Print (or bring your computer) article titled "50 tips." As you read through drafts, indicate which "tips" the author did properly and which tips need more focus. (Not all 50 will be relevant.)
11/15	In class: independent (or working group) work Completed draft due on Moodle by 11:59pm. Also attach a separate file with a self-assessment, indicating the degree to which you have followed the tips for writing an empirical article. In this file, also explain which comments from your group you have incorporated and which you have decided against and why.
11/19	Practice Talks & Critique On the day of your practice talk, bring a typed copy of at least 10 questions you think an audience member might ask you. Upload these to Moodle by class time.
11/22	Practice Talks & Critique
11/26, 11/29	No Class, Thanksgiving Break
12/3	Presentations to Department & Guests!
12/4, 12pm	Presentations to Department & Guests!
12/9	Presentations to Department & Guests! Papers Due to Rachael (via Moodle) & to 2nd Reader by 4pm