

Psychology 486  
**Comprehensive Research Project**  
“Senior Research”  
Spring 2018

**Tuesdays & Fridays, 1:00-2:20**  
**LBC315**

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**Course Readings:** Will be posted on Moodle

**Course Description & Objectives:**

This course is really about you and what you have learned as a psychology or neuroscience 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 College Learning Goals:**

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

1. Communicate
2. Investigate
3. Integrate

## 4. Create

**Course Credit Explanation**

Following the successful completion of PSYC 486, you will earn three course credits. The federal expectation of each credit hour is one hour of class per week, plus a *minimum* of two hours of work per week outside of class (<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?rgn=div8&node=34:3.1.3.1.1.1.23.2>). This means a minimum of nine hours of work devoted to a three-credit class each week. Many classes will require more work and preparation outside of class, and PSYC 486 is likely to be one of those. Anticipate spending an *average* of 10-15 hours per week devoted to your senior research project. (That means that some weeks you may spend even more than that on the project.)

**Evaluation:**

Your final grade will be based largely 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, and lateness will be noted. 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. Your attendance will count for **5% of your grade.** However, if you **miss more than four classes,** we will have a serious discussion about you withdrawing from the class. 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. Please note that **attendance is expected at all presentations,** even if you are not scheduled on that day.
- 2) **Effort.**
  - **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 we observe, a self-evaluation of your performance as a group member, and an evaluation from each of your group members about your contributions.
  - **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 be able to complete your project in time. If you don’t, then you will run the risk of not completing your project and your grade will suffer. If you would like to turn in drafts more frequently than what is listed on the syllabus, please just let us know. Part of your grade will also be based on your ability to incorporate (or thoughtfully explain why you are not incorporating) both instructor feedback and the feedback of your working group. Failure to respond to or incorporate feedback will negatively affect your grade.
  - **Effort** will account for **5% of your final grade.** There are two important aspects to notice. First of all, displaying very little effort during the semester can have a large impact on your grade (a full letter grade). However, the bulk of your final grade will be based on the final product of your paper and presentation. Simply stated, this is not an “A for effort” project, but a lot of effort is needed to do a good job.
- 3) **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 instructor evaluation (**25% of your final grade**) and the evaluation of your second reader (**25% of your final grade**). To pass this portion of your comps, both your instructor and second reader need to

judge your paper to be at least a C-. See below for the graduation requirement. Please note that excellent papers require many, many drafts. We will make suggestions for major problems we see in each draft. Don't be surprised, however, when the next draft also has many suggestions. Although it can be frustrating, this is the nature of the writing process. The more you let us see your work, and the more effort you put into making changes (or justifying why you do not agree with those changes), the better your paper will get. We encourage you to focus not on getting a particular grade, but on doing the best work that you can.

- 4) **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. Like your paper, presentations require many drafts and new comments and issues will be identified in each draft. Your presentation grade will be based on instructor assessment (**20% of your final grade**), which will be influenced by your incorporation of suggestions from your instructors and your classmates. The psychology and neuroscience professors present at your talk will also assess your performance. Their assessments will be averaged and that average will account for **20% of your final grade**.
- 5) **Final Grade & Graduation Requirement.** There are two key components to successfully completing this portion of your comprehensive exam in psychology or neuroscience: the final paper and the oral presentation. If you complete both components by the end of the semester and the paper is judged by both your first and second readers as at least a C-, you will have passed this portion of your comprehensive exam. As of [April 1](#), the department must report to the Registrar whether there is a reasonable expectation that you will satisfactorily complete your paper and presentation, so they know whether to list you in the Commencement program as a May graduate. If we do not believe your progress justifies this report to the registrar, we will so inform you and the Registrar. You will have until the last day of final exams to satisfactorily complete both components. If you do not, then you will receive a D- and be a December graduate. You will have 30 days from the last day of finals to satisfactorily complete the course. If you do not, you will receive an F, have to re-register for Senior Research in the fall semester, and will be required to pay the enrollment cost for that course.

**Grading:**

Advisor's assessment of final paper:	25% of grade	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%
2 <sup>nd</sup> reader's assessment of the final paper:	25% of grade	
Advisor's assessment of final presentation:	20% of grade	
Average of other faculty assessment of final presentation:	20% of grade	
Attendance:	5% of grade	
Effort/Deadlines:	5% of grade	

*We 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 hour etiquette:**

If you have questions or concerns, we encourage you to use our posted office hours time to discuss these things! If you have class, lab, or athletic conflicts with my office hours, then you are welcomed to email me to schedule a meeting time. If you set up a meeting with us, please be courteous and arrive on time for your meeting. If you arrive late or do not come (without informing us well in advance), then this takes away from time we could be spending with other students. If you consistently cannot make it to your scheduled appointments, then we may have to limit our meetings to class time and via email.

**Email Etiquette:**

You are encouraged to contact us via e-mail with any questions that you may have, but we ask that you make sure you have looked for the answer yourself first (on Moodle, in course documents) and that you correspond professionally.

**Technology guidelines<sup>1</sup>:** You need to protect yourself against technology problems. You need to develop work habits that take potential technological problems into account. These habits will serve you in your career. Technological problems are a fact of life, and are not considered unforeseen issues. (Your dorm falling into a sinkhole would qualify as “unforeseen”). Start early and save often. Always keep a backup of your work. Carbonite and Backblaze are two services that will automatically back your work up into a cloud. Or you can invest in an external hard drive. Or you can email yourself your work.

Computer viruses, lost flash drives, corrupted files, incompatible formats, WiFi connectivity problems – none of these unfortunate events should be considered an emergency. Take the proper steps to ensure that your work will not be lost forever. Learn the locations and operating hours of all the computer labs on campus. Do not procrastinate. Know the resources on campus for technical problems with connectivity or Moodle. The Help Desk will need time to assist you. Again, don't procrastinate.

### **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, fabrication of data, and cheating 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.

Learning to think for yourself, assess information judiciously, and speak and write effectively in your own voice is at the heart of a liberal arts education and global citizenship. Treasure and cultivate these skills. Papers and other work, including digital creations, downloaded or copied from other sources, or in which words or ideas belonging to others have been deliberately misrepresented as your own, will receive an automatic F, as they thwart your learning process and damage the integrity of knowledge-discovery. If you have questions about how to find, integrate, and properly cite sources, never hesitate to ask for help.

An excellent place to find help in knowing when and how to cite others' work appropriately can be found on the Libraries page: [http://library.earlham.edu/friendly.php?s=academic\\_integrity](http://library.earlham.edu/friendly.php?s=academic_integrity). The site also includes Earlham's full statement on academic integrity and procedures for addressing academic violations of the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Writing Center:**

The Writing Center can help you with both your presentation and your paper at any point throughout the process. We encourage you to take advantage of this resource. [www.earlham.edu/writing-center](http://www.earlham.edu/writing-center)

### **Counseling Center:**

Senior year can be a stressful time. If you need to talk to someone, please don't hesitate to contact counseling services: <http://www.earlham.edu/counseling-services/>

### **Students with Disabilities:**

Students with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, visual, hearing, etc.) who need to arrange reasonable classroom accommodations must request accommodation memos from the Academic Enrichment Center and contact their instructors each semester. For greater success, students are strongly encouraged to visit the Academic Enrichment Center within the first two weeks of each semester to begin the process.

<http://www.earlham.edu/policies-and-handbooks/academic/policy-on-student-learning-disabilities/>

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<sup>1</sup> Drawn from material by George H. Williams