

RESEARCH IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
Psychology 395 (Section 01)
Fall, 2006

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Class Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30 - 12:20, PAS 3026
Required Readings: Book of Readings (and some on-line articles)

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course will consist of both lecture and seminar styles. Early in the term, the majority of class time will be devoted to lectures. The focus will be on the decisions that must be made in conducting research. The strengths and weaknesses of various designs will be presented. This lecture material will serve as the background for the "hands on" work you will be doing both individually and as a group member.

CLASS TIME AND READINGS

The readings have been selected to supplement the lectures. We will be discussing these in class so it is essential that you keep up with the assigned readings. Concurrent with the readings, you will begin "experiencing" research as a member of a research group. By the sixth week, you will have completed the course readings and be well on your way to designing your own research.

PARTICIPATION

The effectiveness of this course depends on the participation of everyone. You will be expected to play an active role in your group work. You will also be expected to make contributions to class discussions and the research presentations of your fellow students. To encourage participation, 10% of your final grade will be awarded for group and class activity. We will establish some "ground rules" so everyone knows what is expected.

RESEARCH GROUPS

At the beginning of the term you will be assigned to a research group of about four people based on common research interests. Although each student is expected to pursue their own research, the group will enable you to share some of the tasks and decisions that are part of the enterprise.

Group assignments:

There will be three small group assignments during the early part of the course. These are designed to get you started with your research. Each assignment will require a brief (e.g., 2-3 pages) individual submission that will be graded. The fruits of your labour will also be shared with your research group so everyone can benefit. Following is a description of the assignments.

- 1) Literature review: You will perform a literature search for empirical articles in your area of interest. You will then select and find two recent articles from your literature search. You may wish to make a group

decision to delegate articles. For each article you will answer the following questions: What theoretical or nominal concepts are being studied? How are they operationalized? How do the authors justify their choice of operationalization? What specific hypotheses do they make? What were their findings for each hypothesis? What sample did they use (i.e., describe the subjects and how many there were)? These article reviews will provide a theoretical basis for the research proposal (described later) of each group member. This assignment is worth 10% of your grade.

2) The research question: Formulate a researchable question for your individual research proposal. Briefly articulate your rationale for examining this question and the conceptual hypotheses you are making (i.e., answers to the question). Clearly delineate your independent and dependent variables. Briefly provide some speculation about how these variables might be operationalized. Although you will share this information with your research group, you may also want to work together in formulating your ideas. (NOTE: Although you share a common area of interest with the group, each student must formulate a unique researchable question). This assignment is worth 15% of your grade.

3) Ethics review submission: You will complete a standard ethics review form required for all research conducted under the auspices of the University of Waterloo. Each group will also serve as an "ethics review board" and will provide written feedback to the researchers they review. The entire process will be anonymous. Your mark on this assignment will be based in part on the evaluations of the "review board." This assignment is worth 15% of your grade. You must submit your ethics review form on the due date in order to participate in a review board. Failure to do so will result in a mark of 0% for this assignment.

SEMINARS

The latter part of the course will take on a distinctively different flavour. Classes will consist of the sharing of ideas and problems involved in completing your research projects. The focus will be on applying the knowledge gained earlier in the course.

Presentations:

The seminars will begin on October 31 with individual presentations. Each student will be allotted ten (10) minutes to present their research ideas; including some theoretical background, conceptual hypotheses, operationalizations, method design, and expected results. Following each presentation ten (10) minutes will be given to class discussion and feedback of your research decisions. Although these presentations are an informal sharing of ideas and suggestions, you will be expected to be prepared so you will not waste valuable class time. The presentation will be worth 10% of your final grade. To gain the maximum benefit from these seminars, it is essential that everyone participate.

Following the presentations, the remainder of the seminars will be devoted to tutorials and discussion sessions. The tutorials will offer advice for constructing and writing your research proposals. Discussion sessions will centre on specific problems identified during the presentations, new difficulties expressed by students, and general issues of social psychological research. These will be very flexible and open classes designed to help you through your major term assignment, the research proposal. Students will be welcome to share ongoing issues and ideas as they are putting their proposals together.

THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The major project is a research proposal that will be the culmination of your work in the course. Your proposal will be worth 40% of your final mark. As the name suggests, this will be a proposal of the research that you would conduct in order to examine a particular social psychological phenomenon. These proposals are typically written when researchers are requesting funding for their work. In fact, the term "grant proposal" is often used to describe this process. Because this is a proposal, you will not be actually conducting the research, however, you will be expected to present detailed methodology and anticipated results. The topic for your research proposal will be uniquely your own. It cannot be the same as any of your group members. I would recommend that you select your area of interest as soon as possible so you can begin putting your proposal together "in sync" with your work on the group projects.

Your research proposal will be in the format of a standard journal article. The proposal will include: (a) an introduction (in which the hypotheses are proposed and relevant past research is reviewed); (b) a method section (in which the research design is presented with particular attention to instructions to participants and the procedure for measuring the dependent and independent variables); (c) a results section (in which the expected findings are presented); and (d) a discussion section (in which the strengths and weaknesses of the experiment are discussed as well as the potential significance of the study). The seminars will address these issues in some detail.

Your proposal should not exceed 25 pages (double-spaced) of text. In fact, you should attempt to keep it to less than 20 pages! Good writing necessarily means concise expression of your ideas. Specific formatting instructions will be discussed in the seminars but be forewarned: **your proposal should be a professional product, both in content and appearance!**

Your research proposal will be due at 12:00 noon, Monday, December 11, 2006. It may be submitted to my office (slide it under the door) or placed in my mail slot (the Psych Mail Room is situated in the middle of the third floor of the PAS building).

I appreciate that the end of term is a busy time, so you may take an extension if you so desire. The extended due date is 12:00 noon, Friday, December 15, 2006. If you take the extension, I must be notified in writing prior to the initial due date; otherwise your proposal will be considered late. Failure to meet the appropriate due date will result in the deduction of 3 marks per weekday!

Additional Comment:

Given the nature of this course, attendance at class meetings should be given a top priority. Absenteeism will directly harm the other members of the class and your research group. If you are not willing to commit to regular attendance I strongly suggest (request) that you drop the course immediately.

This course will demand a great deal of effort. However, I believe that you will emerge from this experience with a greater critical appreciation for scientific research, a more intimate knowledge of social psychology, and vastly improved research skills. It is my fervent hope that this course will pay dividends for you throughout your remaining academic and professional life. In other words, the effort should be worth it!

I hope that this course will be fun and interesting for you while simultaneously challenging your abilities. I find research to be an exciting endeavor and I want that excitement to be contagious. Class meetings and group projects have been designed to spark your curiosity in social psychology. Toward that end, I promise to keep the meetings as informal as possible; and to treat you as a fellow researcher engaged in the passionate pursuit of knowledge!

MARKING SCHEME AND IMPORTANT DATES

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1	Thu Sep 28	10%
Assignment 2	Thu Oct 12	15%
Assignment 3	Thu Oct 26	15%

Assignment Total: 40%

PARTICIPATION

10%

CLASS PRESENTATION

10%

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Mon Dec 11

40%

TOTAL: 100%

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Note for students with disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

Note on avoidance of academic offenses: All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offense, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offense is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 on page 1:10 of the 2003/2004 Undergraduate Calendar http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infoucal/UW/policy_71.html.

If you need help in learning how to avoid offenses such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, see the Arts Faculty Web pager:

<http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sager/plagiarism.html>.

Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve; refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infoucal/UW/policy_70.html.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Seminar	Readings
Sep 12 Sep 14	Introduction to course Generating ideas	
Sep 19 Sep 21	Reliability and validity Reliability and validity	
Sep 26 Sep 28	Reliability and validity Assignment 1: Literature Review Designing experiments	Huff Cialdini
Oct 3 Oct 5	Designing experiments Designing experiments	Aronson et al. Kelman
Oct 10 Oct 12	Designing experiments Assignment 2: Research Question Survey and questionnaire designs	Hoyle et al.
Oct 17 Oct 19	Survey and questionnaire designs Quasi-experimental designs	
Oct 24 Oct 26	Quasi-experimental designs Assignment 3: Ethics Submission and Review	APA Standards
Oct 31 & Nov 2	Student presentations	
Nov 7 & 9	Student presentations	
Nov 14 & 16	Student presentations	
Nov 21 & 23	Student presentations	
Nov 28 & 30	Student presentations	
Dec 5	Student presentations	
Dec 11	Proposal due at noon!	Bem + Sternberg