

**RESEARCH IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**  
**Psychology 395 (Section 01)**  
**Fall 2011**  
**10:30 – 11:50 AM Mon/Wed**  
**PAS 2086**

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**Instructor:** Dr. Martin Day

Office: PAS 3240E

Office Hours: Monday 12:00 – 1:00 or by appointment. Please contact me if this time does not fit with your schedule; I'm sure we can find a time to meet.

Email address: mvday@uwaterloo.ca

**TA:** Joanna Anderson

Office: PAS 3240H

Office Hours: Monday 9:15 – 10:15 AM

Email address: j23ander@uwaterloo.ca

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**Course Aims**

By the end of this course: (1) you should be competent consumers of social psychological research, able to evaluate empirical articles as well as media messages about research findings; (2) you should be prepared to conduct your own social psychological research.

**Course Components**

**Assignments and assignment presentations.** In small groups, students will work together to complete three assignments and to make short presentations to the class on these assignments. The goal of the assignments is to lead you through the basic steps of creating your own research projects.

The grades will be assigned as follows: Each group of 4-5 students will be given a grade out of 40 on their presentation. You will then evaluate yourself and each group member's contribution to the presentation by assigning each person a grade out of 10. The sum of all individual grades cannot exceed the total number of points that you were assigned (out of 40).

For example, say your group receives a mark of 36/40. You will then have 36 points to divide amongst the group members. For example, if everyone contributed equally, you may choose to assign each person an 8/10 (i.e., divide the points equally). If contributions were not equal, you may choose a different arrangement. For example, if you feel that someone else worked very hard on the presentation and you did not put as much effort into it, you may assign that person 10/10 and assign yourself a 6/10 (and then assign the remaining 16 points to your other group members accordingly for a total of 36 points).

You will submit these ratings after each presentation and they will be confidential. Your final grade for each assignment presentation will be determined by averaging the ratings that you received from your group members (including yourself).

**Article critiques.** You will evaluate 2 empirical articles. Please prepare a 1-1.5 page outline summarizing the article. Follow the example of the outline attached. Your papers must be typed, single-spaced, framed in 1-inch (2.5 cm) margins, and typed in 12-point font (i.e., the size of this font). Please turn in critiques online. Critiques will not be accepted after discussed in class.

**Theory groups.** Over the course of the term, students will develop a research proposal for an experimental study (to be described in more detail below). These research projects will be relevant to a theory prominent in social psychology. Students will select a theory to work on along with a small group of fellow students also interested in that theory. A table with references relevant to that theory will be provided to you. At a minimum, each group member should read the articles/chapters listed on that table. You will read several more papers as you prepare your research proposal.

**Research proposal.** Although students will work in theory groups, each student will create an independent research proposal. Your proposal may test a hypothesis drawn from the theory, extend the theory in a new direction, or challenge the theory. The hypothesis may either be (1) original *or* (2) the same as one already addressed empirically, but for which you propose a novel, superior method for addressing it. In the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> weeks of class, meet with the instructor or TA about your research proposal ideas (meet with the instructor one week and the TA the other week). Before the meeting in the 4<sup>th</sup> week, read a research proposal written by a previous student in this course (this will be available online).

You will submit your research proposal in two parts. First, in Week 9 or later, you will turn in a 3-4 page (before references) double-spaced paper concerning your hypothesis and theoretical rationale. By noon Dec 9th you will turn in a 5-6 page double-spaced paper concerning the method. I realize that the end of the term can be a busy time, so you may request an extension until noon Dec 14<sup>th</sup> (please e-mail me before the Dec 9<sup>th</sup>, no special comments necessary). These papers will be evaluated for soundness and clarity of the theoretical rationale, the care with which you selected your design, procedure, and measures, and clarity of the writing. Plagiarism on your research proposal will result in failure; please discuss any concerns about the originality of your work with me or the TA.

**Research proposal presentation.** In Weeks 8 – 13 of the term, students will present their research proposals to the class. Each presentation should be clear and engaging. Encourage your fellow students to give you candid, constructive feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of your project.

Opportunity: If you volunteer to present your proposal first (in Week 8), you will receive no lower than a 95% on your presentation. Your presentation will be critiqued in class, with strengths and weaknesses noted, so that the rest of the class can learn from your example.

**Ethics review.** You will complete a modified ethics application for your proposed research. Groups will serve as ethics review boards and will provide written feedback to the researchers they review. Your mark on this assignment will be based in part on the evaluations of the review board. To participate you must submit three printed copies of your ethics application at the beginning of this class. Failure to do so will result in a mark of 0% for this assignment.

### **Attendance and Participation**

The success of this course depends on the participation of everyone. You will be expected to play an active role in classroom activity. Classroom activity will revolve around small- and large-group discussions that will involve: assignments, preparing your research project, critiquing empirical articles, participating in the ethical review process, and commenting on other students' research proposal presentations. To encourage participation, 10% of your final grade will be awarded for class activity and group participation as determined by myself and the TA.

Given the importance of class participation, class attendance for each *entire* class session is mandatory. For every 10 minutes absent, you will be docked 5% off your class participation mark. There will be a sign-in sheet at each class. You will be allowed to miss 3 classes (excluding the first class) without penalty. Note: The ethics review class is mandatory and cannot be missed – please plan your schedule accordingly. For any absences, you are still responsible for contributing to any group work, and finding out what material was covered in class and any announcements. Any additional absences (beyond 3 classes) for entire class sessions will result in 20% off your class participation mark.

### **Weighting for Course Grades**

Class participation (in small groups and in whole class)	10%
Assignment presentations	20%
Article critiques	20%
Ethics review	5%
Research proposal presentation	5%
Research proposal paper—theory and hypothesis	20%
Research proposal paper—method	20%

**Late assignments will be docked 5% each day.**

### **Terms you will be expected to know, i.e., basic research concepts:**

internal validity	manipulation vs. measurement
threats to internal validity	interaction
external validity	reliability of measures
construct validity	-internal consistency
experiment	-test-retest
correlational study	independent variable
demand characteristics	dependent variable
experimenter bias	continuous vs. categorical variables
between-subjects designs	operational definition
within-subject designs (repeated measures designs)	confound
factorial design	error vs. bias
random assignment	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Week</u>	<u>In-Class Topic</u>	<u>Due dates</u>
Sept 12	1	Syllabus & Introductions	
Sept 14		Review and application of basic concepts	
Sept 19	2	Assignment 1 group work Choose theory group	
Sept 21		Practice critique Meet with theory group	Prepare practice article critique and be ready to discuss it in class.
Sept 26	3	Assignment 1 presentations	Critique#1 due Sept 27 <sup>th</sup> , 11pm.
Sept 28		Assignment 2 group work	
Oct 3	4	Go over Article Critique#1 Meet with theory group	Have min. 2 theory group articles read.
Oct 5		Assignment 2 presentations	Meet with instructor or TA this week to discuss your ideas for research proposal.
Oct 10	5	THANKSGIVING (no class)	Critique#2 due Oct 11 <sup>th</sup> , 11 pm.
Oct 12		Assignment 3 group work	
Oct 17	6	Go over Article Critique#2 Meet with theory group	Meet with instructor or TA this week to discuss your ideas for research proposal.
Oct 19		Assignment 3 presentations	
Oct 24	7	Activity Day	
Oct 26		Ethics Review	Ethics due in class
Oct 31 & Nov 2	8	Research proposal presentations	
Nov 7 & 9	9	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Oct 31 or Nov 2.
Nov 14 & 16	10	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Nov 7 or 9.
Nov 21 & 23	11	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Nov 14 or 16.
Nov 28 & 30	12	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Nov 21 or 23.
Dec 5	13	Research proposal presentations (if necessary)	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Nov 28 or 30.
Dec 9			Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Dec 5. Method papers due Dec 9.
Dec 14			Final extension for Method papers.

### **Message from Heather Smith**

It is your responsibility to check e-mail regularly for important and time sensitive messages. You should use your UW account for all e-mail correspondence to UW personnel for reasons such as identification, reliability, and security. Note that higher priority may be given to e-mail received from UW accounts versus other accounts such as hotmail, yahoo, etc. See "Official Student Email Address" for further details:

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocist/emailuse.html>

The home page for the psychology department: <http://www.psychology.uwaterloo.ca/>

### **Messages from the Department of Psychology and the Faculty of Arts**

#### **The Official Version of the Course Outline**

If there is a discrepancy between the hard copy outline (i.e., if students were provided with a hard copy at the first class) and the outline posted on UW-ACE, the outline on UW-ACE will be deemed the official version. Outlines on UW-ACE may change as instructors develop a course, but they become final as of the first class meeting for the term.

#### **Accommodations 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.

#### **Concerns About the Course or Instructor (Informal Stage)**

We in the Psychology Department take great pride in the high quality of our program and our instructors. Though infrequent, we know that students occasionally find themselves in situations of conflict with their instructors over course policies or grade assessments. If such a conflict arises, the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Affairs (Dr. Colin Ellard) is available for consultation and to mediate a resolution between the student and instructor. Dr. Ellard's contact information is as follows:

Email: [cellard@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:cellard@uwaterloo.ca)

Ph: 519-888-4567 ext 36852

A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. See Policy 70 and 71 below for further details.

#### **Academic Integrity, Academic Offenses, Grievance, and Appeals**

To protect course integrity, as well as to provide appropriate guidance to students, course outlines in the Faculty of Arts must include the following note on avoidance of academic offenses:

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check <http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/> for more information.]

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity [check <http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/>], to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about 'rules' for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm>

Academic Integrity website (Arts):  
[http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic\\_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)

Academic Integrity Office (UW): <http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/>

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's words or ideas as if they are one's own. It includes the use of quotations without proper referencing. All students must complete their assignments and papers on their own. Copying someone else's assignment (or portion thereof), or allowing someone to copy your assignment, are prohibited. Cheating on examinations or assignments and plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the course and will be reported to the Chair of the Department of Psychology and to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. Additional disciplinary action could include probation, suspension, or expulsion.

**How to Avoid Plagiarism and Other Written Offences: A Guide for Students and Instructors** (<http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sager/plagiarism.html>).

**Article Critique Outline** (if the article includes multiple studies, **summarize only the study that was assigned, e.g., study 1**)

Your ID code: \_\_\_\_\_

Article reference: (e.g., Rosenberg et al., 1995—you don't need to include the rest of reference)

Authors' main hypothesis:

Why this issue is important (e.g., theoretical contribution, practical implications):

**Main** independent or predictor variables (**brief** descriptions):

Conceptual level—

Operational level—

**Main** dependent or outcome variables (**brief** descriptions):

Conceptual level—

Operational level—

Most important finding (or two):

Strengths of the study: (use point form)

Weaknesses of the study: (use point form)

## Assignment #1

For this assignment, as a group, you are to come up with two variables that you are interested in understanding the relation between (a predictor variable and a dependent variable), and believe (based on experience or real-world observations) there to be a relation between. The relation between these two variables must be causal in nature (according to your hypothesis), and relevant to social psychology. You should think carefully when deciding which two variables you pick, since you will be dealing with these two variables for the remaining assignments.

For your presentation in the next class (10 minutes maximum), tell the class about the following:

1. What are your two variables at the conceptual level?
2. How do you think these two variables will relate? That is, what is your hypothesis?
3. Tell us how/why you developed your hypothesis. That is, what led you to believe your independent variable will be causally related to your dependent variable? (Hypotheses can come from anywhere; an existing theory, an example or story from your life, something you have observed, heard about, read, etc.)
4. What will understanding the relation between these two variables tell us, if anything, about the human mind, social functioning, or social problems?
5. Give the bare-bones outline of a *correlational* study to test this hypothesis. Don't go into any detail about your operationalizations—just say what you want to measure for the predictor and dependent variables. Also, for this exercise, please do not plan to use self-report measures to operationalize the predictor and dependent variables (i.e., do not ask participants questions). **Hints:** Capitalize on the best thing about correlational studies, namely that they allow one to capture processes as they naturally occur in the real world. So, for example, don't bring participants in the lab.

## Assignment 2

Use the same hypothesis that you used for Assignment 1, unless feedback from your presentation led you to realize that the hypothesis was flawed. Your task now is to operationalize both your independent and dependent variables in a true experimental design. That is, you need to decide how you can best manipulate your independent variable and measure your dependent variable. In doing so, you need to be precise. For your presentation—10 minutes maximum—please address the following questions:

1. How will you be manipulating your independent variable?
2. How will you measure your dependent variable? Why did you choose this particular measure?
3. What might potentially be confounded with your independent variable? That is, what might vary with your independent variable manipulation other than what you are interested in? If you don't think anything will vary between conditions other than what you are interested in say so, but, be warned, you're probably wrong.
4. Generally, we trust random assignment. But, if you could be sure that one individual difference variable was distributed equally between your conditions, what would it be? In other words, if not equally distributed between conditions, what individual difference variable might affect your dependent measure?

### Assignment 3

For your presentation (10 minutes maximum), please come up with a mediating variable. This is a mechanism through which your predictor variable affects your dependent variable—the link (or *a* link) in the causal chain between your predictor and dependent variable. Think of it as *why* your predictor variable has an effect on your dependent variable. (Or, at least as *part* of the reason why).

1. Describe why your original independent variable will affect your dependent variable.
2. In the experiment you described for Assignment 2 (or an improved version you created after class feedback), add a measure of your mediating variable.
3. Design a new experiment to test your mediating variable. That is, turn your proposed mediator into an independent variable and test its effects on your DV. You no longer have to worry about your original IV.