

## **Psychology 395 (Section 2) -- Research in Social Psychology**

Fall 2010

2:30 - 5:20 Thursdays

PAS 2086

**Instructor:** Dr. Joanne Wood

Office: PAS 3042

Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30 – 2:30 or by appointment. Please contact me if this time does not suit you; I'm sure we can find a time to meet.

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**TA:** Mandy Forest

Office: PAS 3045

Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30 – 2:30 or by appointment

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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**

**Quiz on Basic Concepts (or, *Memories of 291*).** During the second class session, we will have a quiz on basic research methods concepts. See the list of concepts. The quiz will involve applying the concepts to a short empirical article. These concepts are so crucial to your training in psychology that you must achieve a certain standard on the quiz. If you earn less than 80%, you will have to re-take the quiz with a new empirical article, and continue to re-take it up to 3 times. Your final quiz grade will be the average across your testings.

**Article critiques.** You will evaluate 3 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, and typed in no smaller than 12-point font (i.e., the size of this font). Please turn in critiques over ACE.

**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).

**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. Toward that end, 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 7<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 one of the good research proposals written by a previous student in this course (available on ACE page).

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. One week after the final day of class, you will turn in a 5-6 page double-spaced paper concerning the method. 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 – 12 of the term, students will present their research proposals to the class. Each presentation should be clear and engaging (see list of

suggestions). 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 7), 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.

**Class participation.** Classroom activity will revolve around small- and large-group discussions that will involve: assignments, preparing your research project, critiquing empirical articles, and commenting on other students' research proposals. Because the success of this course depends greatly on class participation, class participation will enter into your course grade. Your class participation mark will be based on the quantity and quality of your contributions.

Given the importance of class participation, class attendance for each *entire* class session is mandatory. For every 10 minutes absent, you will be docked 2% off your class participation mark. Unexcused absences for entire class sessions will result in 20% off your class participation mark. For excused and unexcused absences, you are responsible for finding out what material was covered in class and any announcements.

### **Weighting for Course Grades**

Class participation (in small groups and in whole class)	7%
Quiz on basic concepts	4%
3 Assignment presentations	21%
3 Article critiques	24%
Research proposal presentation	4%
Research proposal paper—theory and hypothesis	20%
Research proposal paper —method	20%

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

### **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 ACE, the outline on ACE will be deemed the official version. Outlines on 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 informaton.]

**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>).

**Terms you will be expected to know for the quiz on basic concepts:**

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

<u>Date</u>	<u>Week</u>	<u>In-Class Topic</u>	<u>Due dates</u>
Sept 16	1	Introduction to course	Sept 20, noon—submit your top 3 choices for theory. Students who submit late will be assigned to a theory group.
Sept 23	2	Quiz on basic concepts Assignment 1 group work	
Sept 30	3	Assignment 1 presentations Practice critique	Prepare practice article critique and be ready to discuss it in class.
Oct 7	4	PsycInfo and RefWorks demonstration by Tim Ireland  Assignment 2 group work	Article Critique#1 due 2 pm Oct 11  Read a research proposal of previous student in class—available on ACE.
Oct 14	5	Go over Article Critique#1 Assignment 2 presentations Assignment 3 group work	Meet with instructor or TA this week to discuss your ideas for research proposal.  Article Critique#2 due 2 pm Oct 18
Oct 21	6	Go over Article Critique#2  Assignment 3 presentations	Article Critique#3 due 2 p.m. on Oct 25
Oct 28	7	Go over Article Critique#3  Research proposal presentation by volunteer	Meet with instructor or TA this week to discuss your ideas for research proposal.
Nov 4	8	Research proposal presentations	
Nov 11	9	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Oct 28 or Nov 4.
Nov 18	10	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Nov 11.
Nov 25	11	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Nov 18.
Dec 2	12	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Nov 25.
Dec 9	FINAL EXAM PERIOD		Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Dec 2.
Dec 16			Method papers due Dec. 16

**Outline for article summaries** (if the article includes multiple studies, **summarize the first study only**)

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.