

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

Fall 2015

9:30 - 12:20 Fridays

PAS 4032

Instructor: Dr. Joanne Wood

Office: PAS 3051

Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-2:30pm, 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: Kassandra Cortes

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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 2 empirical articles that will be posted on Learn. Please prepare a 1-1.5 page outline summarizing/critiquing 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 Learn. Please name **your file name** so that it's like this: StudentID.fakenickname. e.g., 1234567.BOZO or 34567890.love395. Please also put that

file name at the top of your article critique on the first page. Use any nickname you want (except your real name). Following this procedure will make things **much** easier for me and the TA.

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 for assignments will be assigned as follows: Each group of 4 students will be given a grade out of 40 on their presentation; groups of 5 students will be given a grade out of 50. After receiving your group grade, 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 or 50, depending on group size).

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).

If you receive 40/40 (or 50/50) but you do not feel that all group members contributed equally, you may award some group members scores higher than 10/10 (e.g., 11/10) and other group members scores lower than 10/10 as long as the sum of all individual grades does not exceed the total number of points that you were assigned.

You will submit these ratings on LEARN after each presentation and they will be confidential. Peer ratings are due within one week of your presentation. Your final grade for each assignment presentation will be determined by averaging the ratings that you received from your group members (including yourself).

Theory.

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 have several theories to choose from, and will get to work on one of their top 3 choices. A table with references relevant to that theory appears on LEARN. At a minimum, students should read the articles/chapters listed on that table for their theory. You will no doubt read several more papers as you prepare your research proposal.

Research proposal.

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 5th and 7th 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 5th week, read one of the good research proposals written by a previous student in this course (available on Learn 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 be one of two students to present your proposal first (in Week 7), you will receive no lower than an 80% 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.

Research Participation:

Students may earn extra credit of up to 2 points (although the final course mark cannot exceed 100%) through participating in the REG/SONA Psychology Participant Pool. Extra credit will be awarded in this course only for participating in in-lab studies (not online studies). You can also earn extra credit in another way. Instructions appear near the end of this syllabus.

Weighting for Course Grades

Class participation	8%
Quiz on basic concepts	10%
3 Assignment presentations	18%
2 Article critiques	18%
Research proposal presentation	6%
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:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/information-systems-technology/about/policies-standards-and-guidelines/email/statement-official-student-email-address>

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 Learn, the outline on LEARN will be deemed the official version. Outlines on LEARN may change as instructors develop a course, but they become final as of the first class meeting for the term.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, 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](#).

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.

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](#).

Other sources of information for students:

[Academic Integrity website \(Arts\)](#)

[Academic Integrity Office \(UWaterloo\)](#)

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Note for students with disabilities: The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension, 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 AS office at the beginning of each academic term. **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>).

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 Studies (Richard Eibach from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016) is available for consultation and to mediate a resolution between the student and instructor. Contact information is as follows:
Richard Eibach Email: reibach@uwaterloo.ca; Ph 519-888-4567 ext 38790

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.

Students requesting accommodation for course requirements (assignments, midterm tests, final exams, etc.) due to illness should do the following:

- seek medical treatment as soon as possible and obtain a completed uWaterloo Verification of Illness Form: <https://uwaterloo.ca/health-services/student-medical-clinic/services/verification-illness>
- submit that form to the instructor within 48 hours.
- (preferably) inform the instructor by the due date for the course requirement that you will be unable to meet the deadline and that documentation will be forthcoming.

In the case of a missed final exam, the instructor and student will negotiate an extension for the final exam which will typically be written as soon as possible, but no later than the next offering of the course.

In the case of a missed assignment deadline or midterm test, the instructor will either:

1. waive the course component and re-weight remaining term work as he/she deems fit according to circumstances and the goals of the course, or
2. provide an extension.

In the case of bereavement, the instructor will provide similar accommodations to those for illness. Appropriate documentation to support the request will be required.

Students who are experiencing extenuating circumstances should also inform their academic advisors regarding their personal difficulties.

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 LEARN, the outline on LEARN will be deemed the official version. Outlines on LEARN may change as instructors develop a course, but they become final as of the first class meeting for the term.

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

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

Please let the instructor know at the beginning of the term if you wish to be excused for any religious observances during the term.

Date	Week	In-Class Topic	Due dates Unless otherwise noted, all work should be submitted to the LEARN page by noon.
Sept 18	1	Introduction to course	Sept 23 - submit your top 3 choices for theory. Students who submit late will be assigned to a theory. Work on practice quiz in preparation for next week's quiz
Sept 25	2	Quiz on basic concepts Assignment 1 group work	
Oct 2	3	Assignment 1 presentations Practice critique	Optional: Practice Critique due Oct 2. If you submit a practice critique to dropbox by 9am, bring a hard copy to class, and are ready to discuss it in class, you can stay for the discussion of it. Students who do not do so will not stay for this helpful discussion.
Oct 9	4	PsycInfo and RefWorks demonstration by Tim Ireland Assignment 2 group work	Read a research proposal of previous student in class—available on LEARN—prior to individual meetings next week Article Critique#1 due Oct 9
Oct 16	5	Assignment 2 presentations Go over Article Critique#1 Assignment 3 group work	Meet with instructor or TA this week to discuss your ideas for research proposal.
Oct 23	6	Assignment 3 presentations	Article Critique#2 due Oct 27
Oct 30	7	Go over Article Critique#2 Research proposal presentations by two volunteers	Meet with instructor or TA this week to discuss your ideas for research proposal.
Nov 6	8	Research proposal presentations	
Nov 13	9	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Oct 30 or Nov 6.
Nov 20	10	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Nov 13.
Nov 27	11	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Nov 20.
Dec 4	12	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Nov 27.
Dec 8 - Dec 22	FINAL EXAM PERIOD		Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Dec 4. Method papers due Dec. 11

Want to do well on your article critique? READ THE HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT ARTICLE CRITIQUES

Outline for article critiques (if the article includes multiple studies, **check the LEARN page to be sure you know what study to critique**) USE POINT FORM—NOT LONG FULL SENTENCES

Your ID code: _____ (StudentID.fakenickname, e.g., 34567890.love395)

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 mediator variable(s)-- This category is not always relevant)

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. Read those assignments before settling on two variables (for example, you have to be able to manipulate your PV in Assignment 2).

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 to the lab.

Assignment 2

Use the same hypothesis that you used for Assignment 1, unless feedback from your presentation led you to realize that your 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.

Please make sure your answer to this question involves a confound that's a product of your operationalization--not something else in the context that would create a confound for any operationalization.

Hint: Don't work so hard to rule out confounds that you can't identify a plausible one!

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 is likely to affect your dependent measure?
5. Now, identify a different individual difference variable. Choose one that may interact with your I.V. Show a graph of your predicted results. Use bar graphs or line graphs to depict your predicted interaction.

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. Review why your original independent variable will affect your dependent variable. Now explain your mediator, how your IV would lead to it, and how the mediator will lead to your DV.
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.

Research Experience Marks Information and Guidelines

Experiential learning is considered an integral part of the undergraduate program in Psychology. Research participation is one example of this, article review is another. A number of undergraduate courses have been expanded to include opportunities for Psychology students to earn grades while gaining research experience.

Since experiential learning is highly valued in the Department of Psychology, students may earn a **"bonus" grade of up to 2%** in this course through research experience. Course work will make up 100% of the final mark and a "bonus" of up to 2% may be earned and will be added to the final grade if/as needed to bring your final grade up to 100%.

The two options for earning research experience grades (participation in research and article review) are described below. Students may complete any combination of these options to earn research experience grades.

Option 1: Participation in Psychology Research

Research participation is coordinated by the Research Experiences Group (REG). Psychology students may volunteer as research participants in lab studies conducted by students and faculty in the Department of Psychology. Participation enables students to learn first-hand about psychology research and related concepts. Many students report that participation in research is both an educational and interesting experience. Please be assured that all Psychology studies have undergone prior ethics review and clearance through the Office of Research Ethics.

Educational focus of participation in research

To maximize the educational benefits of participating in research, students will receive feedback information following their participation in each study detailing the following elements:

- Purpose or objectives of the study
- Dependent and independent variables
- Expected results
- References for at least two related research articles
- Provisions to ensure confidentiality of data
- Contact information of the researcher should the student have further questions about the study
- Contact information for the Director of the Office of Research Ethics should the student wish to learn more about the general ethical issues surrounding research with human participants, or specific questions or concerns about the study in which s/he participated.

Participation in LAB studies has increment values of 0.5 participation credits (grade percentage points) for each 30-minutes of participation. Researchers will record student's participation, and at the end of the term the REG Coordinator will provide the course instructor with a credit report of the total credits earned by each student.

How to participate?

Study scheduling, participation and grade assignment is managed using the SONA online system. All students enrolled in this course have been set up with a SONA account. You must get started early in the term.

[Participating/SONA information: How to log in to Sona and sign up for studies](#)

**** Please do not ask the Course Instructor or REG Coordinator for information unless you have first thoroughly read the information provided on this website. ****

More information about the REG program is available at:

[REG Participants' Homepage](#)

Option 2: Article Review as an alternative to participation in research

Students are not required to participate in research, and not all students wish to do so. As an alternative, students may opt to gain research experience by writing short reviews (1½ to 2 pages) of research articles relevant to the course. The course instructor will specify a suitable source of articles for this course (i.e., scientific journals, newspapers, magazines, other printed media). *You must contact your TA to get approval for the article you have chosen before writing the review.* Each review article counts as one percentage point. To receive credit, you must follow specific guidelines. The article review must:

- **Be submitted before the [last day of lectures](#). Late submissions will NOT be accepted under ANY circumstances.**
- Be typed
- Fully identify the title, author(s), source and date of the article. A copy of the article must be attached.
- Identify the psychological concepts in the article and indicate the pages in the textbook that are applicable. Critically evaluate the application or treatment of those concepts in the article. If inappropriate or incorrect, identify the error and its implications for the validity of the article. You may find, for example, misleading headings, faulty research procedures, alternative explanations that are ignored, failures to distinguish factual findings from opinions, faulty statements of cause-effect relations, errors in reasoning, etc. Provide examples whenever possible.
- Clearly evaluate the application or treatment of those concepts in the article.
- Keep a copy of your review in the unlikely event we misplace the original.