

Psychology 397 -- Research Methods in Personality and Clinical Psychology

Fall 2004

2:30 - 5:20 Thursdays

PAS 4288

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Course Aims

This course will introduce students to issues involved in research design and the operationalization of variables in the domains of personality and clinical psychology. By the end of the course: (1) you should be more competent consumers of research—better able to evaluate empirical articles as well as media reports about research findings; and (2) you should be much more prepared to conduct your own research.

Course Requirements

Readings. You will be expected to read all of the material for each week thoroughly before class and to discuss it in class.

Text: Keeley, S.M. (1995). Asking the right questions in abnormal psychology. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Several journal articles will be assigned. They will be available over the web, in the Psych Society office (PAS 3080), or on reserve in the Dana Porter Library.

Article critiques. You will evaluate 6 empirical articles. The first will be practice; you will turn in the remaining 5. Please prepare a 1-1.5 page (single-spaced) outline summarizing and critiquing the article. Follow the example of the outline attached.

Topic presentation. Students will work in small groups on a construct in personality or clinical psychology (e.g., narcissism, extraversion, OCD). Each group will:

- **Present a one-hour presentation to the class** to introduce the class to the construct.
- **Select 2 possible empirical journal articles** from which I can choose one for the rest of the class to critique.
- **Prepare a reference list** (in APA format) of the best approximately 7-10 articles (theoretical and empirical; classic and recent) on the topic. Submit this list one week after your presentation.

More detailed instructions are attached.

Grading of topic presentations: About 60% of your mark will be based on your whole group's presentation; the same mark will be given to each student in your group. The remaining 40% will be based on ratings and rankings made by your fellow group members of your own contribution to the presentation preparation.

Research proposal: Class discussions, hypothesis paper, and method paper. Over the course of the term, students will develop a research proposal for an empirical study. Your proposal should concern the topic area covered in your group presentation, but you will not work in groups for your proposals; each student will create his/her proposal independently.

Class discussions. So that classmates can learn from and help each other as their projects unfold, you will discuss your research ideas in class in 3 "cycles."

- First, you will give a 10-15-minute presentation to the class concerning your ideas for your hypothesis and the theoretical rationale behind your hypothesis. Do not discuss your method in this first cycle.
- Second, you will give a 10-15-minute presentation to the class concerning any refinements to your hypothesis as well as your plan for a research design and method to test your hypothesis.
- The third cycle, which will occur on the final day of class, will involve short final updates about any changes in your proposals.

Encourage the other students to give you honest feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of your project.

Hypothesis paper. Although many hypotheses are worth testing that are not derived from theory (e.g., yoga improves mental health), in this class, we will emphasize theory-based research. Your hypothesis for your proposal must be based (1) on an existing theory in your topic area, or, less typically, (2) your own original theoretical rationale. In Week 9, you will turn in a 3-4 page (before references) double-spaced paper concerning the hypothesis and theoretical rationale. This paper will be read by every member of your group.

Method paper. One week after the final day of class, you will turn in a 5-6 page double-spaced paper concerning your proposed method.

More detailed instructions concerning these papers are attached.

Class participation. Classroom activity will revolve around small- and large-group discussions that will involve: class exercises, critiquing empirical articles, and commenting on others' 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 quality of your contributions in both small group discussions and whole classroom discussions.

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 (i.e., 20% off of the 5% that class participation contributes to the course grade). Please notify Dr. Wood as soon as possible in case of illness or emergency and present documentation at our next meeting. 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)	5%
Topic presentation	25%
Article critiques	30%
Research proposal—theory and hypothesis	20%
Research proposal—method	20%

Late assignments will be docked 5% each day.

For all written assignments, your papers must be typed in a font size no smaller than the size of this font. Article critiques and topic presentation reference lists should be single-spaced, but research proposal papers should be double-spaced. Turn in a hard copy; do not send over email. When you turn in an assignment on a Monday, please do so in Dr. Wood's mailbox in PAS 3021a between 8:30 and 4 p.m. The door is locked at 4:00. Do not type your name or student number on assignments; please use a consistent 7-digit code throughout the term:

First 2 places	your mother's initials (of her original name, if she changed it)
3 rd place	D, C, or L – Do you prefer dogs, cats, or lizards as house pets?
4 th place	Number of people who live in your house
5 th place	C, S, or P – Which do you like the most—chocolate, strawberries, or pecans?
6 th & 7 th place	Day of month of your birthday (e.g., April 9 = 09; November 16 = 16).

Example: If your mother's name is Jean Padoodle, you prefer dogs, you live with one other person, you like chocolate, and your birthday is the 4th of the month, your code would be: JPD2C04

Academic Offenses

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 another to copy your assignment, is prohibited. Cheating on examinations or assignments and plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the course and will be reported to the Chairman of the Department of Psychology and to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. Additional disciplinary action could include probation, suspension, or expulsion. If you run into difficulties with deadlines or course material, talk with the instructor or TA. Additionally, we suggest you read, carefully, Academic Policy #71 which can be found on the university's web site at the following address: <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.html>.

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 which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (p. 1:11). 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, ask your course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.

Message from Heather Smith

Psychology majors should check the Psychology Undergraduate Web Site (<http://www.psychology.uwaterloo.ca/ugradprog/>) regularly for important notices, postings for research positions, course information for the coming year, etc.

All students should activate their UW computer accounts each term. The accounts give students access to applications such as word processing, statistical and graphics packages, and electronic email as well as access to the Internet. For those who are not planning to use their UW email addresses, please do one of the following things:

- change your email address on QUEST to the one that you want posted on the University Directory, or
- activate your UW account and forward your email from your UW account to your alternate email address.

Terms you will be expected to know before beginning this course:

internal validity	random sampling
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
random assignment	error vs. bias

<u>Date</u>	<u>Wk</u>	<u>Topic in Class Session</u>	<u>Readings and Items Due</u>
Sept. 16	1	Introduction	
Sept. 23	2	Quiz on 291 terms Therapy outcome studies Therapy outcome article critique	Keeley, Chapters 1 – 5 & Chapter 13 Practice critique: Therapy outcome article
Sept. 30	3	Analogue studies Correlational studies	Keeley, Chapter 9 Analogue study article critique
Oct. 7	4	Analogue study article critique Correlational studies, continued	Keeley, Chapters 8 & 10 Correlational study article critique
Oct. 14	5	Topic presentations, Groups 1 & 2 Correlational study article critique	Groups 1 & 2: reference lists & 2 suggested articles due Oct 18
Oct. 21	6	Topic presentations, Groups 3 & 4	Groups 3 & 4: reference lists & 2 suggested articles due Oct 25
Oct. 28	7	Experience sampling studies Research Planning	Read experience sampling article Article critique assigned by Group 1
Nov. 4	8	Article critique assigned by Group 1 Cycle 1: Theory and hypothesis, Groups 1 & 2	Article critique assigned by Group 2 due Nov. 8
Nov. 11	9	Article critique assigned by Group 2 Cycle 1: Theory and hypothesis, Groups 3 & 4	Theory and hypothesis papers
Nov. 18	10	Cycle 2: Method, Groups 1 & 2	Article critique assigned by Group 3 due Nov. 22
Nov. 25	11	Article critique assigned by Group 3 Cycle 2: Method, Groups 3 & 4	Article critique assigned by Group 4 due Nov. 29
Dec. 2	12	Article critique assigned by Group 4 Cycle 3: Students will update each other on any changes to proposals.	
Dec. 9	Exam period		Method papers

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

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

Authors' hypothesis:

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

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

Conceptual level—	Operational level--

Example:

Conceptual level—	Operational level--
Self-esteem	Rosenberg self-esteem scale (self-report)
Success/failure	False feedback on bogus test of "social intelligence"

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

Conceptual level—	Operational level--

Example:

Conceptual level—	Operational level--
depressive symptoms	-Beck Depression Inventory (self-report) -Ratings of P's happiness by significant others

Most important finding (or two):

Strengths of the study: (use point form, but be complete. e.g., don't say, "included comparison group;" explain why that comparison group was useful in this study)

Weaknesses of the study: (use point form, but be complete. e.g., don't simply say, "lack of random assignment;" explain why lack of random assignment is a problem for this study.)

Instructions and Tips for Article Critiques

- critique the first study in the article, unless otherwise instructed.
- confine your comments to the one study
- Stick to the most important points. Leave out details such as numbers of Ss and manipulation checks unless they are important to the strengths and weaknesses.
- Describe only the operationalizations that are most important, or that you want to critique, or that are central to the conclusions the authors want to draw.
- You need not go into great detail about the operationalizations. Name the measure, if there is a name, and say what the type of measure was (e.g., observational, peer ratings). e.g., for the conceptual variable of self-esteem, you could list, as the operationalization: “Rosenberg self-esteem scale–self-report measure.” For a less well-known measure, describe very briefly (e.g., you could give an item as an example). Do not list reliability information, that response scale was 7-point, etc.
- For strengths and weaknesses, you need not list every teeny tiny merit or flaw. We will be looking for the most important strengths and weaknesses.
- For weaknesses, don’t describe problems that would have merely obscured the results. That is, do not describe problems that would have made it more difficult for the researchers to have obtained the effects; if they obtained the effect despite those obscuring factors, you cannot make a strong case that the problem really is a problem. Instead, make sure that you mention problems that introduce alternative explanations for the findings, and make it clear how your alternative explanation could have accounted for the results obtained.
- For weaknesses, do not identify all possible problems. Focus on plausible problems.
- You may include points the authors have made (especially if they have pointed out a major strength or weakness), but try to include original points as well.
- You’ll get more points for strengths and weaknesses the more your points are:
 - Plausible
 - Important
 - Different from one another
- Use your own words, rather than the author’s. Do not quote the authors.
- There is not just one way to do this task. For example, two people may answer the question, “Why is this issue important?” differently, but still get graded equally highly.

Instructions for Topic Presentations

In the topic presentation, cover the key theoretical issues being addressed in that research area and the most frequently-used or cutting edge research designs and operationalizations.

Introduce the topic; don't overwhelm the audience with detail. Try to be informative, clear, organized, and engaging. Make use of overheads or PowerPoint, demonstrations, etc.

Depending on how much research has been conducted on your topic, you may need to narrow the focus to one aspect of the construct. The TA and I can help you to narrow your focus; speak to us after you have started your research.

To review the literature on your topic efficiently in preparation for your presentation, I suggest that you:

- Read the section concerning your topic in an up-to-date personality or abnormal textbook
- meet with a faculty member and/or graduate student in the department who has studied that topic and ask him/her to point you to the best references
- do a literature search (obtaining titles, authors, sources, and abstracts) and meet with the TA or me so that we can help you identify the best articles from that search
- read the most recent review of the topic
- read approximately 10-15 empirical articles published in high-quality outlets (again, the TA and I can help you identify them).

Suggested outline for class presentation (adjust the timing to suit your topic, but be sure to cover these matters):

Define the construct	10 minutes
Prominent theories in the area e.g., what are the current burning theoretical controversies?	20 minutes
Frequently-used methods in the area e.g., how is your construct operationalized? What designs are used? What flaws do you see in frequently-used methods? What strengths?	25 minutes
Best study on topic	5 minutes

Selecting 2 possible empirical journal articles -- Please submit two articles to me by the Monday following your presentation. Try to choose articles available on the web, and provide instructions for how to obtain them. After I select one, the rest of the class will critique the article. Students will not critique the article assigned by their own group.

Further instructions for Hypothesis Paper and Method Paper

Hypothesis paper. These papers will be evaluated for soundness and clarity of the theoretical rationale and clarity of the writing. Be clear about the theory on which your hypothesis is based. State your hypothesis in conceptual terms (e.g., depressed people are less self-revealing than nondepressed people) rather than in operational terms (e.g., people with scores above 12 on the BDI will have lower scores on the Self-Revealingness Scale than people with higher scores on the BDI). Review the relevant literature briefly and be sure to cite references using APA style (e.g., Logel & Wood, 2004). In your reference list, however, you do not need to follow APA style strictly. Do not describe your plan for your method.

Method paper. These papers will be evaluated for:

- the care with which you selected your design, procedure, and measures
- whether your method truly tests your hypothesis
- clarity of the writing

You need not follow APA style strictly.

The papers should include:

- your hypothesis, phrased at the conceptual level
- a typical method section, including sections for participants, procedure, etc. Whether you include a separate measure section is up to you.
- reliability and validity information regarding your measures. At the same time, it's perfectly acceptable for you to create a new measure, if you explain why it is preferable to existing measures
- measures/manipulations that are free of confounds
- multiple operationalizations of your variables, if possible
- Phrase the method in future tense (e.g., "Participants will undergo a mood induction.")
- End with the hypothesis restated in operational terms--e.g., "I predict that the sad mood-induction group will be rated by observers as higher in social skills than the happy mood-induction group."