University of Waterloo
Department of Psychology
Psych 397, Section 3
Research Methods in Personality and Clinical Psychology
Fall 2014
Thursdays 2:30-5:20 PAS 4032

Instructor and T.A. Information

Instructor: Megan McCarthy
Office: PAS 3240H
Office Hours: Mondays 1-2pm
Email: m5mccart@uwaterloo.ca
Please contact me if this time does not suit you. I'm sure that we can find a time to meet.

T.A.	Jeff Hughes
Email	j4hughes@uwaterloo.ca
Office	PAS 3240D
Office Hours	Wednesdays 10:30-11:30

Course Description

Current research methods and procedures employed in personality and clinical psychology research will be covered. Activities include research proposals, group projects, critiques of published and proposed research, and both individual and group presentations.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

This course will introduce students to issues involved in research design and the operationalization of variables in the domains of personality and clinical psychology

Upon completion of this course, students should be:

A. More competent consumers of psychological research
    - Able to evaluate empirical articles
    - Able to evaluate media reports about research findings
B. Better prepared to conduct their own research

Readings Available on LEARN

- Theoretical and empirical articles for assignment and research proposal topics
- Finger & Rand (2003) – Chapter on validity
- Bem (2003) – Writing an empirical journal article
- Hypothesis paper example
- Method paper example

Course Requirements and Assessment

Assessment	Weighting
Class participation (in small groups and in whole class)	10%
2 Article critiques	25%
3 Assignment presentations	20%
Research proposal presentation	5%
Research proposal paper – theory and hypothesis	20%
Research proposal paper – method	20%
Total	100%

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.

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 to this syllabus. Your papers must be typed, single-spaced, framed in 1 inch (2.5 cm) margins, and typed in no smaller than 12-point font. Please turn in critiques over Learn. Critiques will not be accepted after discussed in class. Please name your file name so that it's like this: StudentID.fakenickname. e.g., 1234567.JPINKMAN or 34567890.FUNKE. 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.

Topic Groups

At the beginning of the term you will select a topic/theory to work on along with a small group of fellow students also interested in that topic. You will have the opportunity to work on one of your top 3 choices, or may be assigned to a topic depend on the amount of interest in each topic. References relevant to each topic will be provided to you on LEARN. *You will be working on this topic for both your group assignments/presentations, and your individual research proposals.* At a minimum, you should read the articles provided for each topic on LEARN. You will read several more papers as you prepare your research proposal.

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. Detailed instructions and expectations for each assignment are provided later in the syllabus.

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. 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).

Research Proposal

Each student will create an independent research proposal. Your proposal may test a hypothesis drawn from a 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 4th 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 4th week, read one of the good research proposals written by a previous student in a research methods course (available on LEARN).

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

December 9th 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 a 90% 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.

Course Outline

Week	Date	Topic	Due Dates
1	September 11	Introduction to course Review	Sept 12-15 – Submit your top 3 choices for topic/theory by Sep 15. Students who submit late will be assigned a topic/theory
2	September 18	Quiz on basic concepts Assignment 1 group work	Prepare practice critique for next week
3	September 25	Take up practice critique Assignment 1 presentations Assignment 2 group work	Read a sample research proposal-available on LEARN Article critique #1 due September 30
4	October 2	Take up article critique #1 Assignment 2 presentations Assignment 3 group work	Meet with your instructor or TA this week to discuss your ideas for research proposal (first meeting)
5	October 9	Assignment 3 presentations	
6	October 16	PsychINFO and Refworks demonstration by Tim Ireland	Article critique #2 due October 21
7	October 23	Take up article critique #2 Research proposal presentations by 2 volunteers	Meet with your instructor or TA this week to discuss your ideas for research proposal (second meeting)
8	October 30	Research proposal presentations	
9	November 6	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on October 23 or October 30
10	November 13	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for studetns who presented on November 6
11	November 20	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis paper for students who presented on Nov 13
12	November 27	Research proposal presentations	Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Nov 20
Final exam period	December 4-19		Hypothesis papers for students who presented on Nov 27 due Dec 4 Methods papers due Dec 9

Electronic Device Policy

Electronic devices are permitted for note-taking so long as they do not detract from the learning experience of other students.

Late Work

Unless otherwise noted, all work should be submitted to LEARN by 2pm. Late assignments will be docked 5% each day.

Attendance Policy

Attendance 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.

Students requesting accommodation for course requirements due to illness should do the following:

- seek medical treatment as soon as possible and obtain a completed uWaterloo Verification of Illness Form
- 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 assignment, 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.

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 (Arts) Academic Integrity Office (uWaterloo)

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Note for students with disabilities: The AccessAbility Services office, 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 AS office 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 Studies 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.

QUIZ 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	reliability - internal consistency
experiment	Reliability - test-retest
correlational study	independent variable
demand characteristics	dependent variable
experimenter bias	continuous vs. categorical variables
between-subjects designs	operational definition
within-subject / repeated measures designs	confound
factorial design	error vs. bias
random assignment	

Article Critique Outline

Your ID code: _____ (StudentID.fakenickname, e.g., 1234567.JPINKMAN)

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

As a group, you are to come up with two variables (a predictor variable and a dependent variable) that you believe (based on experience or real-world observations) there to be a relation between, and are interested in understanding the relation between. The relation between these two variables must be causal in nature (according to your hypothesis), and relevant to personality or clinical 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, personality, or psychopathology?

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.
   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 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. 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.