

RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY (PSY4700)

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DESCRIPTION

This is a multi-faceted experiential learning course designed to provide students with knowledge about research and the research process in experimental social psychology. The field of experimental social psychology seeks to answer varied research questions by utilizing the experimental method of manipulating variables and measuring their influence. One goal of this advanced research methodology course is for students to learn about theoretical, empirical, and statistical issues relevant to experimental social psychology. A second goal is for students to gain a deeper understanding of the decisions involved in conducting experimental social psychology research. A final goal is to provide a hands-on learning experience about the research process in an experimental social psychology laboratory.

MEETING TIMES/DAYS

We will meet as a class on Fridays at noon in UH5150F. Students will also schedule individualized times throughout each week where they will complete experiential learning tasks in a laboratory setting (described below).

PREREQUISITES

Students are expected to have previously taken Principles of Psychology (PSY1010) and Statistical Methods (PSY2100).

READINGS & MATERIAL

1. Primary source empirical research articles on the topic of experimental social psychology. Readings will be provided on-line on the course Black Board page.

2. Research Methods in Social Psychology (2nd Edition). Aronson, Ellsworth, Carlsmith, & Hope Gonzales (McGraw-Hill; ISBN-10: 0070024669). This text provides a guide for the process of experimentation: focusing on asking the right questions, translating questions into a workable ethical design, setting up data collection, designing reliable and valid dependent variables, avoiding bias, conducting the post-experimental interviews, and writing up research results. Readings from this book will be provided on-line on the course Black Board page.

WEBSITE

We will use Blackboard to post grades and reading material.
<https://blackboard.utdl.edu/webapps/login/>

OBJECTIVES

- Be trained and certified in ethical psychological research practices
- Be able to conduct a literature search on social psychological topics
- Be able to develop social psychological research hypotheses
- Be able to develop experimental protocols that test research hypotheses
- Be able to evaluate social psychological research study designs
- Be able to conduct experimental research sessions
- Be able to use software for psychological research, such as SONA Systems, MediaLab, Qualtrics, and PsychData
- Be able to code and enter research data into SPSS
- Be able to conduct preliminary descriptive and inferential statistical analyses in SPSS
- Be able to interpret the results of studies and plan follow-up research
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RESPONSIBILITIES

Throughout the semester, students will take on a number of important duties. As such, student schedules should be open and flexible to accommodate a commitment to this course. Students with tight schedules or who cannot attend our weekly meetings should NOT register for this course. Also, as this is a variable credit hour course, the responsibilities will vary slightly depending upon whether the student signs up for 2-4 credit hours (noted below). These are the major components of the course:

- **1. Attend and participate in weekly class meetings.** We will hold class each Friday throughout the semester. During class meetings, students will participate in discussions of book chapters and empirical research articles, and be introduced to new research ideas, methodologies, statistics, etc. Moreover, students will be expected to update the group on the progress of ongoing efforts for experiential learning tasks (see below). Issues relevant to the careers of undergraduate students (e.g., graduate school preparation), as well as topics covering the technological and methodological demands of the field will also be covered. It is expected that students attend EVERY meeting and contribute to discussion. If a student must miss a meeting due to illness or some other university-appropriate excuse, please let the instructor know in a timely manner. All students in the course (regardless of whether they sign up for 2, 3, or 4 credit hours) are expected to complete this component of the course.
- **2. Compose weekly reaction papers.** Students will write a 1-page (double-spaced) reaction paper (due by the following Wednesday). The reaction papers should briefly summarize the topic of the meeting (1 paragraph), indicate what was learned from the meeting (1 paragraph), and provide thoughtful questions that you would want to ask about the topic (1 paragraph). Students will hand in 7 reaction papers during the semester and can choose which weeks they want to submit these. All students in the course (regardless of whether they sign up for 2, 3, or 4 credit hours) are expected to complete this component of the course. These papers should be submitted in Blackboard.
- **3. Read assigned journal articles and textbook chapters.** Depending on the week, students may have chapters from our textbook or journal articles to read. These readings will be used to facilitate our discussion of research in our weekly class meetings. All readings

will be indicated on the syllabus and posted on Blackboard. All students in the course (regardless of whether they sign up for 2, 3, or 4 credit hours) are expected to complete this component of the course.

- **4. Complete experiential learning tasks.** As part of the experiential learning component of the course, students will be assigned to specific research-related tasks involving experiments in social psychology. To facilitate this, students will be assigned times during the semester where they will complete these tasks. Students who sign up for 4 credit hours will complete a minimum of 8 hours of experiential learning tasks per week, students who sign up for 3 credit hours will complete a minimum of 6 hours of experiential learning tasks per week, and students who sign up for 2 credit hours will complete a minimum of 4 hours of experiential learning tasks per week (2 hours per credit hour taken). These tasks will include a combination of the following:
 - Data Collection. Data collection is a vital responsibility of every student in the course and significant time will be spent covering research ethics, experiment training, and how to successfully implement experimental protocols. If data is not collected correctly, the research project dies there. It is important to remember that the success or failure of any social psychological research project has a significant impact on the professional lives for all people in the lab (faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students) and the direction of the research field as a whole. As such, the data collection stage of the research process deserves great attention and we always appreciate student efforts to make data collection a success for the team. Data collection can involve:
 - Being an experimenter (in charge of a research session)
 - Playing the role of a confederate (someone who pretends to be a participant)As an experimenter (or confederate), it is imperative that the study be ready to go when participants arrive. To ensure that everything is set up *before* the study start time, please arrive early so that you have time to set up and prepare the necessary materials. Also, when running studies, keep an eye out for problems and be pro-active in finding solutions. Finally, experimenters are expected to dress professionally when running participants.
 - Help design/implement studies. Every study starts with an idea, but it must eventually be polished into a workable study. Students will contribute to this process by doing pilot testing, developing stimuli, creating IRB protocols, designing surveys, creating Medialab programs, and so on (note that the specific task will depend upon the nature of the project in a semester and a student's role in the project)
 - Enter/code data. An important step in the research process is correctly entering and coding data. Basically, research participants will provide us with their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Afterwards, we need to translate this information into numbers for data analysis. Thus, data entry/coding helps social psychologists make the transition from a heap of raw data collected in the research room to the condensed findings that reported to other researchers at conferences and in research articles. This step requires great care, vigilance, and training. This is the “not-so-glamorous” step in the research process—but—it is also one of the most critical. At some point in the semester, all students will be involved in the data entry and coding process.

GRADING

You will earn points in the class as follows:

Assignment	Possible Points
Attendance and Participation in Meetings	130 points
Weekly Reaction Papers (10 points each)	70 points
Experiential Learning Task Completion	200 points
Total	400 points

93 – 100% A	80 – 82% B-	67 – 69% D+
90 – 92% A-	77 – 79% C+	63 – 66% D
87 – 89% B+	73 – 76% C	60 – 62% D-
83 – 86% B	70 – 72% C-	less than 60% F

As indicated above, there are a number of components to this course. **First**, students should attend and participate in meetings. We will take attendance during these meetings and monitor participation. Students can earn up to 10 points for each meeting based on their attendance and degree of participation/engagement as determined by the instructor (130 points total). **Second**, students should submit a 1-page reaction paper on 7 occasions during the semester. These should be submitted to the instructor by the Wednesday following the class meeting. Students can choose which of the 7 weeks they want to submit reaction papers. Students can earn up to 10 points for each reaction paper (70 points total). **Third**, students should complete their experiential learning tasks each week. In total, each student will complete approximately a minimum of 4 hours of experiential learning tasks each week when signed up for 2 credit hours, a minimum of 6 hours per week when signed up for 3 credit hours, and a minimum of 8 hours per week when signed up for 4 credit hours (2 hours per credit hour). Earning all the points assumes that the student has been reliable, responsible, and productive in his/her lab tasks and with his/her contributions to the research. More specifically, this means demonstrating good attendance for experiential sessions (e.g., showing up on time), following experimental procedures, completing tasks in a timely manner (e.g., allocating research credit daily), and showing care with tasks (e.g., not making data entry errors). Points will be deducted from this score as issues arise. Moreover, if students do not follow the procedures laid out in the syllabus they may be asked to drop the course. When students are not following the syllabus, the instructor may also remove the student from the course (resulting in an IW) or assign the student the grade of “F”. Students will be given written and oral warnings before being given a forced withdrawal from the course.

COLLEGIATE POLICIES

We will adhere to the following Collegiate Policies set out by the University of Toledo:

Academic integrity: <http://www.utoledo.edu/dl/students/dishonesty.html>

Student accommodations: <http://www.utoledo.edu/offices/student-disability-services/>

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

Below is a schedule of topics for the class meetings throughout the semester. For the “Readings/Preparation” column, this indicates the outside work that you should be doing *before* coming to class that day.

Date	Topic	Reading/Preparation
8/30	Orientation to Research in Experimental Social Psychology; Training and Logistics	Read Aronson Ch. 1
9/6	Variables in Social Psychology; Empirical Article Discussion	Article TBA
9/13	Research Ideas; Research Project Elaborations (2)	Read Aronson Ch. 4
9/20	Developing Research Hypotheses and Designs	Read Aronson Ch. 6
9/27	Introduction to Data Collection Programs	
10/4	Presenting Research; Empirical Research Presentations (2)	Read Aronson Ch. 7
10/11	No class meeting – Fall Break	
10/18	Introduction to Data Analysis Programs (SPSS, R, etc.)	Read Aronson Ch. 8
10/25	Ethical issues in Psychology; Ethics Discussion	Read Aronson Ch. 3; Article TBA
11/1	Graduate Education in Social (and other) Psychology Programs Day 1	
11/8	Graduate Education in Social (and other) Psychology Programs Day 2	Bring 3 questions you had from Graduate Education Day 1
11/15	Research Project Elaborations (3)	
11/22	Empirical Research Presentations (3)	Read Aronson Ch. 11
11/29	No class meeting - Thanksgiving Break	
12/6	Research Project Wrap-up & Course Review	

*Please note that the schedule and procedures in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances and when the instructor needs to do so.

Resources Related to Sexual or Gender-based Violence and Harassment

The University of Toledo cares greatly about the health and well-being of our students, staff, and faculty, and takes all sexual or gender-based violence and harassment very seriously. If you have experienced sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and/or stalking and want a confidential place to obtain support and information, please contact the Center for Student Advocacy and Wellness on the main campus in Health and Human Services Room 3017. You can call 419.530.2497 during regular business hours and 419.530.3431 for 24-hour assistance from a trained advocate. In-person, walk-in appointments are also available Monday-Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Center for Student Advocacy and Wellness provides free and confidential advocacy and counseling services to students, faculty and staff. The YWCA H.O.P.E. Center also can be accessed as an off-campus confidential resource at 419.241.7273. Faculty, teaching assistants, and other university employees are mandated reporters of any incidents of sexual or gender-based violence or harassment. Thus, any disclosures of sexual or gender-based violence or harassment on or off campus made to faculty or teaching assistants, or other university employees must be forwarded to the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Office will then contact you regarding your rights, your option to participate in the investigation, interim safety measures and/or academic accommodations, and the need to proceed with an investigation (even if none is requested). Your participation in the process is voluntary. You may call 419.530.3152 to file a complaint or visit the following website for more information and resources: <http://www.utoledo.edu/title-ix/>. Policies relating to Title IX can be found at: <http://www.utoledo.edu/title-ix/policies.html>.