

Psychology 242: Introduction to Research in Psychology Spring 2008

Lecture: Mondays & Wednesdays 2:00 – 2:50pm, LC C3
Discussions: Fridays, 8:00-8:50, 9:00-9:50, 10:00-10:50,
12:00-12:50, 1:00-1:50, 2:00-2:50

Instructor: Evelyn Behar, Ph.D.
BSB, Room 1050B
Phone: (312) 413-5564
Email: behar@uic.edu (this is your best bet for getting in touch with me)

Office Hours: Mondays 3:00 – 4:00pm or by appointment

Note: we may not adhere strictly to this schedule. I reserve the right to speed up or slow down based on the class's performance.

Course Objectives

The primary goal of this course is to teach you the basics of conducting and consuming research in psychology. The planning, conducting, analyzing, and writing-up of research is one of the most important, most exciting aspects of being in the field of psychology. It also tends to be the most challenging and unfortunately it has even been called “boring.” My goal is to share with you the skills and knowledge you will need in order to enjoy the research process and be good, skeptical thinkers when you come across research in psychology. I am also committed to making it an enjoyable experience for you. However, **be warned: you will work hard! This is a difficult course that will require substantial dedication on your part.**

To this end, we will spend our semester engaged in the following activities:

- (1) learning how to design and conduct experiments in psychology
- (2) learning how to locate, read, and evaluate psychological literature
- (3) developing critical thinking skills
- (4) developing good communication skills
- (5) learning how to evaluate & interpret data
- (6) learning how to write research reports in a clear, scientific manner

This course is structured around the belief that one of the best ways to obtain these objectives is through active participation in the research process. Accordingly, the course is comprised of both lectures and laboratory/discussion sections. In other words, basic information and knowledge will be presented in the assigned readings and lectures. You are then encouraged to build on this knowledge and are introduced to some of the intricacies of psychological research in the laboratory section where you will be exposed to the research of others. You will also have the opportunity to choose a topic that is interesting to you, plan a research project on that topic, and write a research proposal for it. In the end, you will be able to communicate and think critically about research, and will thus be prepared for more advanced psychology courses.

Required Text:

Gravetter, F.J., & Forzano, L-A.B. *Research methods for the behavioral science* (2nd Edition).

Grading

Grades in this course will be based on **exams (30%), papers (50%), assignments (14%), and participation (6%)**. Exams will be mostly multiple-choice, with a combination of objective and problem solving formats. I reserve the right to include some short-answer questions on these exams. Exams are non-cumulative. You are responsible for all material covered in assigned readings, lectures, and laboratory sections. Material not covered in the text is often discussed in lecture

Assignment	Maximum Points	Number of Points Earned
Exam 1	100	_____
Exam 2	100	_____
Exam 3	100	_____
Final Exam	100	_____
Paper 1	50	_____
Paper 2	100	_____
Paper 3	150	_____
Assignment #1	20	_____
Assignment #2	30	_____
Assignment #3	50	_____
Assignment #4	40	_____
Assignment #5	40	_____
Assignment #6	60	_____
Class participation	60	_____

Total	1000 points	Total: _____ (Divide by 1000 to yield final percentage)

Grade	Percent	Points Needed
A	90-100%	900 - 1000
B	80-89.9%	800 - 899
C	70-79.9%	700 - 799
D	60-69.9%	600 - 699
F	below 60%	below 600

Extra Credit

Students may also earn up to 30 points of out-of-class extra credit in a variety of ways:

1. Critique of Research. You may write papers in which you critique a published research article. This does NOT mean that you should give me a synopsis of what was done in the study. Rather, I encourage you to look at the study you are analyzing from a skeptical point of view. Tell me what could have been improved about the study, what faulty conclusions the researchers may have drawn, how else you might explain their results, etc. The emphasis here is that you be a critical consumer of research. Never (ever!) simply accept what you read as indisputable fact. I want you to leave this course with the critical thinking skills necessary to make you a good scientist, and part of that involves being able to analyze another person’s research and pick out what was wrong with the experiment. Additionally, I’d like you to tell me how the investigation could be improved. When you hand in your paper (which should be about 3-5 pages), you must also hand in the study you are critiquing so that I can read it. All studies must be approved by me *before* you write your paper. Each critique you write will be worth 10 points.

2. Literature review. Alternatively, you may locate three or four published articles on a topic of interest, which *must be pre-approved by me and different from your Paper topic*. You may then write a paper reviewing the main points and findings of the three or four published pieces of research. *Copies of each reviewed article must be turned in with your paper. And papers on topics that were not pre-approved by me will not be accepted.* The literature review should be about 10-15 pages in length and is worth 30 extra credit points.

General Policies

Attendance: Attendance is important. Material will be presented in lecture and lab that is not covered in the book and you will be held responsible for that information. Additionally, you will seriously jeopardize your grade if you chose to miss discussion meetings or lectures; you will lose participation points, as well as missing assignments and exercises. Opportunities to make up lab activities will not be available. Missing class will also mean missing important discussions of assignments and papers, as well as review of difficult test material. You may also miss announcements about scheduling changes and extra credit opportunities.

You are responsible for all announcements made in lecture and lab sections regardless of whether or not you attend class. Finally, if you miss labs and lectures you may miss opportunities to earn in-class extra credit points. Attendance will be taken in discussion sections. If you choose to not come to class, please do not ask me to make special accommodations for you. Also, keep in mind that I will be most flexible and sympathetic to those students who show up to class, show an active interest and commitment to doing well, and who are generally making an effort to excel. I have little sympathy for students who are not willing to put in hard work and then want special treatment.

Late work: In-class exercises and other papers/assignments will **not** be accepted late (i.e., will receive a zero). Non-penalty extensions may be granted in the case of a family or medical emergency, but only if discussed with me prior to the due date and with documentation.

Make-up policy: Make-up exams will be given only in the case of a documented hospitalization, debilitating illness, death in the family, or other emergency. Prior approval should be obtained if circumstances allow. Please note that oversleeping, experiencing a case of runny nose syndrome, and general forgetfulness are not emergencies.

Accommodation for special needs: UIC encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please talk to me *as soon as possible*. Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access and participation in this course must be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Please contact ODS at 312.413.2103 (voice) or 312.413.0123 (TTY).

Office hours: I hold office hours every week. I also am usually in my office and am happy to chat with you anytime you stop by. If life has become too stressful and I am buried under piles of books and papers, I will simply put a sign up on my office door alerting others to that fact. Please do not disturb if you see such a sign. Otherwise, please disturb. ☺

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity refers to honest and ethical behavior in all aspects of academic activity. This includes: not cheating on exams or homework assignments (e.g., copying the work of others or using cheat sheets), not passing off someone else's ideas as your own (plagiarism), and not engaging in dishonesty of any kind with regard to your class participation and assignments. You may need a calculator for the exams. However, you may not use a graphing calculator. Cheating is not a difficult issue: if you do it, you will receive an F in the class and I will take the case to the university level. You will also receive a grade of zero on any exam on which you choose to use a graphing calculator. If finances prohibit you from

purchasing a second calculator, speak to me prior to the exam date and you will be provided with a calculator to use.

Plagiarism is a more difficult issue. Of course, turning in a paper or exam written by someone else is a violation of academic integrity: it's cheating. If caught cheating the stiffest penalties allowed by University policy will be imposed upon you. There are, however, other behaviors that fall under the rubric of plagiarism. We'll discuss in class what this means. However, the basic idea is that any work you present must be your own. A general guideline is that you should acknowledge the source of ideas you use; we'll talk in class and labs about how to do this.

Course Schedule: A tentative course schedule appears on the final pages. The schedule outlines the assigned readings and major assignments. There may be additional assignments administered in the laboratory sections that are not listed on the schedule. Additionally, the following schedule is provided so that you can plan your semester while thinking about the major assignments you need to complete. However, it is important to remember that it is a tentative schedule, meaning that there may be changes in the dates of exams, due dates for various assignments, or content of assigned readings. Any changes will be announced in class. *You are responsible for any changes announced in class or laboratory sections whether or not you are present.*

***** I am well aware of the substantial amount of work I am asking you to do for this course. Because this is a work-intensive class, I strongly encourage you to pace yourself and resist the urge to procrastinate. The papers I have assigned are not meant to be written in one night, as they require extensive thought and revising. Although it may not seem like it at first glance, I have planned the course in such a way as to prevent you from becoming overwhelmed towards the end of the summer session; I have done this by assigning papers that build on each other.**