

PSCH 242: Introduction to Research in Psychology

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Office Hours: **Wednesdays 11:05 AM to 1:00 PM** via Blackboard Collaborate

Course is fully online and fully asynchronous!

Teaching Assistants (office hours held via Blackboard Collaborate)

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Welcome to PSCH 242, Introduction to Research in Psychology! I'm looking forward to working with all of you this semester. These days, it can feel like we're constantly bombarded with a barrage of contradictory information, and knowing how to make sense of it may be more important than ever. This class will help you learn how to think like a producer of research – how to ask meaningful questions, design effective studies, and understand the limitations of research. Just as importantly, understanding how research is produced will equip you with the tools and knowledge to critically evaluate the claims you encounter in your daily life. Virtually every area of our lives is shaped by research – from the way our neighborhoods look, to the medical care we receive, to the way we interface with our electronic devices. Whether or not you plan to pursue a research-based career, this course is designed to prepare you to be both critical consumers and capable producers of knowledge in your professional and personal lives. By the end of the course, each of you will...

1. Recognize the importance of research in diverse professions and in your daily life.
2. Understand ethical concerns in research with human subjects.
3. Be able to access and interpret peer-reviewed research articles related to your interests.
4. Understand the basic components of empirical studies, including research questions, hypotheses, research design, measurement, and basic statistics.
5. Critically evaluate research claims, particularly those reported in mainstream and alternative media outlets
6. Gain confidence in your ability to answer your own questions using empirical research.

Note on online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic:

We've probably all grown a little tired of seeing the word *unprecedented* over the last few months, but it's as good a word as any to describe the times we're living in. After all, this new

semester is starting amidst an ongoing global pandemic that's reshaped many areas of our lives, mostly for the worse. Many of us are feeling isolated, cut off from friends, family, and our daily routines. Some of us have been personally affected by a loved one's COVID-related illness or death. Probably all of us have experienced the weirdness of trying to proceed with "business as usual" amidst everything that's been going on.

I share these thoughts for two reasons. First, I want to acknowledge that things are not normal right now, and that I understand if you aren't feeling normal either. One of my goals as an instructor is to be understanding and supportive of students, and I want to make sure this comes across even though we won't be in the same physical space. If you experience issues that hinder your ability to succeed in this class – or even if you just want to say hi – I encourage you to check in with me over email, in office hours, or by scheduling a time to talk. By the same token, don't be surprised if your TA or I reach out to you to check in! I believe that without face-to-face class meetings, maintaining communication becomes even more important – it helps keep everyone connected, motivated, and on-track.

Second, I want to briefly consider how the current circumstances affect this class – namely, the shift to an online, asynchronous format. Those of you who have been in college throughout the pandemic may have experienced a range of online teaching: the unexpected Spring 2020 interruption had instructors scrambling to shift lesson plans and materials online (not always a smooth transition), whereas the Fall 2020 semester was (hopefully) an improvement as instructors had time to plan their courses around an online format. This class was designed from the ground up as an online, asynchronous course. Drawing from research on effective online course design, I planned this course with the goal of meeting the learning objectives while taking advantage of the benefits – and mitigating the drawbacks – of an online asynchronous format. I've also made several improvements based on feedback I've received from teaching this class last semester. I know that in an ideal world, many of you would prefer that your college education take place in-person, and I take seriously the responsibility of providing an online learning experience that matches the quality you expect from a traditional course.

I look forward to working with all of you and learning from your feedback this semester.

COURSE MATERIALS

- **Required Text:** Morling, B. (2015). *Research Methods in Psychology: Evaluating a World of Information (2nd Ed)*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company
The textbook is **required** –please get a copy of the 2nd edition or newer. I realize that textbooks can add up to be serious expenses, so I am ok with you using used/older editions for this course. Used 2nd edition copies are available for under \$15 at online retailers, and pdf (digital) copies can be found online for the same price or less. *Note: please don't skip on getting a textbook – it's important to your success in this class, especially in an online format. Please contact me if you have any issues obtaining a copy.*
- **Additional Readings:** Additional readings will be posted on the Blackboard course page.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING POLICIES

Overview: You will be evaluated based on exams, quizzes, assignments, and discussion posts. These will be weighted as follows:

Grade Item	Points	%	Total Points/ % of Final Grade
Exams (Best 3 out of 4)	120 (x3)	12 (x3)	360 / 36%
Retrieval Practice (Quizzes)	20 (x5)	2 (x5)	100 / 10%
Assignments	50 (x4)	5 (x4)	200 / 20%
Final paper	200 (x1)	20 (x 1)	200 / 20%
Discussion Forum and Activities	10 (x14)	1 (x14)	140 / 14%
Total			1000 / 100%

Course Grading

Final grades will be based on the following scale.

Grade	Percent
A	89.5 – 100
B	79.5 – 89.4
C	69.5 – 79.4
D	59.5 – 69.4
F	0 – 59.4

Grade Components Overview

Exams

Four exams will be given during the course; three exams during the semester and a final exam. **Your lowest grade of the four will be dropped – only your best 3 exams will count toward your final grade.** Each exam is worth 12% of your final grade, for a total of 36%. The first 3 exams will be non-cumulative. A cumulative final exam (Exam 4) will be offered during the week of finals.

All exams will be offered for a 48-hour period on the exam dates indicated on the course schedule (subject to change with advance notice). Information on exam timing and other details will be provided ahead of time. **This course requires the use of LockDown Browser.** More information on LockDown Browser will be provided prior to the first exam.

Retrieval Practice – Online Quizzes (10%)

There will be six online quizzes (taken via Blackboard) during the course. **Your lowest quiz score will be dropped.** Each quiz will consist of ~10 multiple-choice questions, which you will have 20 minutes to answer. I encourage you to view these quizzes as practice for the exams – hence, it's a good idea to take them in similar conditions (i.e., don't rely much on the book or notes for the quizzes, as you can't use these resources on the exams). Quizzes will be made available by 5PM on Thursday the week they are due, and must be completed by 11:59 PM on the Sunday due date.

Why have these quizzes? Research on cognition and memory (e.g., Roediger & Butler, 2011) has identified a phenomenon known as the *testing effect* – essentially, testing your knowledge of a set of material improves your long-term ability to recall that material! The quizzes in this class function as a form of retrieval practice, leveraging the power of the testing effect to boost your long-term learning. Quizzes are worth a relatively small number of points for this reason – they serve as mini-assessments, but more importantly, they provide practice and feedback for the exams.

Assignments and Final Paper

Your final paper for this class, worth 200 points, is an APA-style research proposal, which will provide a chance to apply the concepts you're learning to a research idea of your choice. To help you along the way, each of the four smaller papers for this class (worth 50 points each) will be a draft of one section of the final proposal. Detailed descriptions and rubrics for each paper will be available several weeks prior to their respective due dates. Below is a summary:

Assignment 1: Research Idea and Annotated Bibliography

For Assignment 1, you will write brief description of your tentative topic for your research proposal and an annotated bibliography. For the annotated bibliography, you will find 5 empirical journal articles related to your topic and write an APA-style citation and short summary of each.

Assignment 2: Introduction Section draft

For Assignment 2, you will be writing the Introduction section of your proposal. This section will introduce your research question, review relevant studies on your topic, and present your hypotheses. Your annotated bibliography should be very helpful here, as you can use the article summaries you've already written (with any necessary modifications) in your Introduction.

Assignment 3: Method and Results section draft

For Assignment 3, you will be writing the Method and Results sections of your proposal. In these sections, you will tell the reader how you would carry out a study to test your hypotheses and describe your predicted pattern of results and how you would analyze them.

Assignment 4: Discussion section draft

For Assignment 4, you will be writing the Discussion section of your proposal. Here, you will discuss the implications of your predicted findings and provide an overall evaluation of your proposed study.

By completing these four assignments, you will have written and received feedback on all sections of the research proposal. All that's left for the final paper is to implement the feedback you receive and put all the sections together! This is also a strong incentive to do your best on the 4 assignments – this ensures that you not only earn a good grade, but also receive more useful feedback and have less work to do for the final paper.

Your TA will be your primary resource for your assignments and final paper, and I encourage you to check in with them if you have questions or get stuck at any point.

Assignment Submission

Assignments 1-4 and the Final Paper are submitted via the course Blackboard site. You must submit files that can be read by Blackboard/processed through SafeAssign. Word documents are highly preferred, but PDFs are acceptable if you are unable to submit a Word document. Documents cannot be submitted in the .pages format as it is not readable by Blackboard (you may use a free online converter to convert .pages documents to Word documents).

Weekly Discussion Forum Posts

To get you thinking about course concepts and discussing them with your peers, you will write weekly discussion forum posts for this class. Specifically, you will write one longer initial post and two shorter response posts (responses to other students' posts) each week:

Initial Post | DUE each week by Thursday, 11:59 PM CST

Initial posts are your first post of the week in which you answer specific short essay questions or prompts (usually 2-3). You must answer all questions unless otherwise instructed by the prompt. The initial post should be a minimum of 300 words (unless otherwise noted) and is due each Thursday at 11:59 PM CST. The prompts will often ask you to reflect on a reading or other material, so make sure to give yourself enough time to complete that *and* the initial post before the deadline.

Response Posts (2) | DUE each week by Sunday, 11:59 PM CST

Because the discussion forum is intended as a space for students to read each other's thoughts and interact, you will also write 2 response posts each week (in addition to your initial post). Response posts should extend the discussion by adding information and asking quality questions. This is an opportunity to comment on the posts made by peers, share knowledge, and explore topics in more depth. Please note that simply agreeing with your peer (e.g. "I agree" or "That's great!") is not a substantive response. Response posts should be at least 100 words each and are due each Sunday by 11:59 PM CST.

OTHER GUIDELINES

Late Work

Assignments and Discussion Posts can be turned in late for a **10% penalty per day late**. You also have a **one-time free late pass**: you can turn in one (1) Assignment (or Discussion Post) up to 2 days late without incurring a late penalty (10% penalty per additional day late). This will not be applied automatically; rather, to take advantage of this you must let me **and** your TA know (via email) that you want to use your one-time free late pass for that assignment.

Electronic Communication

I am happy to answer your questions over email, and I will generally respond within 24 - 48 hours. To ensure that I can answer questions quickly and thoroughly, these are some guidelines I would like you to follow when writing emails:

1. In the subject line, include the course number (242) and a brief description of your question or issue.
2. Begin with a greeting and my name and/or your TA's name.

3. Describe your question or issue in the email **as clearly as possible**. I encourage you to write in a **courteous** and **professional** manner because this is how you will be expected to communicate in future professional contexts.
4. If you are writing an email that concerns both me **and** your TA, **please include us both on the same email.**

Accessibility

All course activities, materials, and lectures are designed with accessibility considerations in mind (e.g., captions for lectures, use of accessible colors, etc.). If any aspect of the course is not accessible to you, please let me know so that I can fix it.

UIC's Academic Integrity Policy

As an academic community, UIC is committed to providing an environment in which research, learning, and scholarship can flourish and in which all endeavors are guided by academic and professional integrity. All members of the campus community—students, staff, faculty, and administrators—share the responsibility of insuring that these standards are upheld so that such an environment exists. Instances of academic misconduct by students will be handled pursuant to the Student Disciplinary Policy: <http://dos.uic.edu/docs/Student%20Disciplinary%20Policy.pdf>

STUDENT RESOURCES

The Writing Center offers one-on-one consultation with student writers who need help developing ideas, or need advice, guidance or additional instruction on any aspects of writing in any class (<https://writingcenter.uic.edu/>). This fall, tutors are prepared to help students synchronously and asynchronously depending on student preference, and there is no limit to the number of tutoring sessions you can have each semester. To make an appointment, go to uic.mywconline.com, login, and click on an available white square. All appointments will be online.

The Academic Center for Excellence can help you if you need more support in reading, writing, or study skills like time management, test preparation, etc. The academic center for excellence will provide services virtually. To make an appointment, go to <https://ace.uic.edu/>.

Counseling Services are available for all UIC students. You may seek free and confidential services from the Counseling Center (<https://counseling.uic.edu/>). The Counseling Center is operating virtually; you may contact them at (312) 996-3490. In addition to offering counseling services, the Counseling Center also operates the InTouch Crisis Hotline at (312) 996-5535 from 6:00 p.m.-10:30 p.m. They offer support and referrals to callers, as well as telephone crisis intervention.