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PSYX 320.01: Research Methods III

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Instructor Information

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Required Textbooks

320 Manual (UM Bookstore), and APA Publication Manual—6th Edition

Course Description

Tests: None
Assignments: Plenty

This course is intended to give you an appreciation for conducting research and to better prepare you for graduate work in Psychology. I have two general objectives that I hope you will be able to achieve upon completing this course. I hope that you will become better consumers of psychological research and that you will learn the basics of how to conduct psychological research. In order to accomplish these general objectives, you will be required to engage in every aspect of conducting research, from the library use to final writing or research reports. In addition, this is an Upper Division Writing Course; it is designed to train you to write in the discipline-specific APA style.

Specific Objectives

1. Learn how to use research resources in the library
2. Learn how to evaluate and synthesize published research reports
3. Learn how to use published works to better design your own experiment
4. Learn how to conduct experiments, collect the data, and analyze them
5. Learn how to write, in APA style, research reports, and research proposals
6. Learn how to design your own research proposal

In other to accomplish these specific objectives, you will have to learn how to think as a researcher. This skill can best be learned by actually engaging in the enterprise itself, as opposed to reading about it. Therefore, you will be asked to do some homework, to conduct experiments in class and to write the “articles” describing them and, finally, to provide a prospectus for an experiment of your own design. Each assignment will be discussed in class before it is made. I will also explain how each assignment meets one or more of these objectives.

Course Guidelines, Assignments, and Expectations

Homework Assignments—20 points each

There will be a number of assignments in this course. They will cover library work, journal exposure, ethics, etc. These will be handed out to you at monthly intervals. Each will have a deadline which must be met. Late papers will cost you 10% of the grade for every day you're late. You will have at least a week to turn in each assignment. Therefore, no excuses for late work will be acceptable.

In-class Experiments—40 points each

We will conduct a minimum of three experiments in class. Some will be designed ahead of time for you. Others will be the product of a class effort. In all cases, you will collect data, analyze it and write a research article on that experiment. The article must conform to the APA format. Every step of this process will be fully explained in class before you embark on it and every step will be related back to the objectives listed above. For example, before the written paper is assigned, a minimum of two class periods will be spent on instructions on how to write in APA style and on exercises designed to illustrate such writing. Each article will be graded on a 40-point scale. After grading the first article, we will hold a writing workshop in class and go over your product. You will have an opportunity to learn from your own mistakes and to rewrite the article, if you wish. The higher grade will count for your grade in the course. After that, each write-up will be final, no workshop will be held, and you will be responsible for seeking individual help when needed. Your TAs and I are ready to go over your initial drafts and to help you with them. Please make good use of our office hours.

The 40 points will be assigned according to the following factors:

1. Appropriate English usage 10 points
2. Development of ideas 10 points
3. APA format 10 points
4. Accuracy 10 points

These factors will be addressed in class and during the workshop; we will define the criteria for grading each factor. The assignments listed earlier are designed to help you write better reports—as in the workshop. If you take them seriously and if you start reading research articles that you are personally interested in, you should perform well.

Prospectus—80 points

You are required to submit a proposed study at the end of the quarter. The topic can be derived from any psychological area of study. However, the study must be an experiment. It cannot be a correlational study or survey. To aid you in designing an experiment, see the “proposal” section in the manual. It includes the following:

- a) Problem identification and hypothesis testing
- b) Independent and dependent variables

You will be required to fill out the proposal's worksheets and turn them in. You will also make an appointment to discuss your work on the project up to that time. No student will be allowed to turn in the final project without first accomplishing these preliminary tasks. I believe, strongly, that a structured approach to designing your experiment will benefit you more than worrying, panicking, procrastinating, and attempting to get it down on paper at the last minute.

Finally, you will be assigned a time (15 minutes) during the last two weeks of the semester to present your proposal orally to the class as a whole. The proposal may be altered depending on the feedback you receive at that time from your colleagues in class. The final version will be due at noon of the second day of FINALS WEEK.

Like all other assignments in this course, the deadline must be adhered to. Assignments and papers that are handed in late will be penalized at the rate of 10 percentage points per day of delay.

Grading Policy

A = 90% - 100%

B = 80% - 89%

C = 70% - 79%

D = 60% - 69%

F = 0 – 59%

Incompletes

Incompletes will be given in documentable emergency situations wherein the student cannot finish the course due to unforeseen and unavoidable situations beyond the student's control. Poor performance is not an acceptable reason for an Incomplete.

Disability Modifications

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and [Disability Services for Students](#). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or call (406) 243-2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.