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### PSYX 120.01: Introduction to Psychological Research Methods

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## Introduction to Psychology Research Methods (Research Methods I)

### PSYX 120

#### Course Location and Time

T/TR, 11:00 AM-12:20 AM  
Social Science | Room 352

#### Instructor Information

Instructor: Ashlyn Kincaid  
Email: [ashlyn.kincaid@umontana.edu](mailto:ashlyn.kincaid@umontana.edu)  
Office Hours: Make an appointment through email

#### Course Goals and Objectives

One of the goals of the course is to help students understand how psychology fits into the larger enterprise of science. We will start with an examination of some of the important characteristics of science: induction and deduction, the importance of theories, the necessity for empirical observations, and the social aspect of science.

We will consider the main methods that psychologists use to gain information about psychological concerns. We will discuss the experimental method, the correlational (relational) method, and some quasi-experimental methods. You will be expected to know the advantages and disadvantages of each method. A technical vocabulary goes with each, and you will be expected to be very well acquainted with the meaning of these terms. Concepts such as internal and external validity, independent and dependent variables, and confounding variables, are used all the time in psychological research, and an understanding of the meaning of the words and *how they are applied* is essential.

Three widely used experimental designs will be discussed; the between-subjects, the within subjects, and mixed designs. The course will also cover “complex” (multi-factorial) designs as well as Randomized Control Trials or RCTs. You will be expected to be familiar with the characteristics of each and their advantages and disadvantages. You will be expected to be able to construct graphs that represent data in a meaningful way and to know how to interpret graphs of data from both single variable and factorial experiments.

Statistics are an integral part of the research process and you will be exposed to the very basics of descriptive and inferential statistics. Since this is not a course in statistics, you will not be required to memorize formulae or computed values. But you will be expected to know what these statistical tools do for us and how they help us make rational decisions about data.

Most of the course will be devoted to how to do psychological research, but an equally important question is whether to do the research. Is this research ethical? We will consider ethical issues in research throughout the semester. This is an essential aspect of becoming a critical consumer of research. In addition to ethical considerations, this course aims to enable you to understand and assess

the value of psychological research. In order to develop these skills, the course will present ample examples of current psychological research and we will engage this research with a critical eye. Your mastery of the topics described above will be assessed on tests using a multiple-choice and short-answer format, as well as on the basis of class participation in daily discussions of methodological topics. The questions will tap your knowledge of the meaning of technical terms and your ability to apply these terms in particular situations.

## **Recommended Text**

Shaughnessy, J. J., Zechmeister, E. B., & Zechmeister, J. S. (2015). *Research Methods in Psychology* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw Hill Education.

The text will serve as a reference for most of the topics covered in class. It will also serve as a resource for definitions for some of the key terms tested in the quizzes. Definitions will be provided explicitly in class.

There may be supplemental readings as well, all of which will be provided on Moodle.

## **Course Guidelines and Policies**

### **Attendance**

Attendance in class is expected. Regular participation in class discussions and engagement in lecture material is necessary to do well in this class. You are responsible for all announcements made in class, including changes in assignment due dates and opportunities for extra credit.

### **Cell Phones and Related Technology**

Students are expected to practice cell phone and computer etiquette in class. Make sure cell phones and notifications are turned off (or set to silent) during class. Please do not engage in texting or online messaging activity during lectures. If you chose to take notes on your computer, please do not engage in other activities that may distract others. Use of cell phones, tablets, mp3 players, etc. is not permitted during in-class exams. If your technology use becomes a distraction to the instructor or other students, you may be asked to leave the class.

### **Schedule Changes**

This schedule is subject to change. Students are responsible for knowing about changes in assignments and schedules that may be announced in class, on Moodle, or via e-mail.

### **Disability Modifications**

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Office for Disability Equality. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with the Office for Disability Equality (ODE), please contact them in Lommasson Center 154 or call 406.243.2243. I will work you and ODE to provide an appropriate modification.

All materials in this course are intended to be accessible. If you have any trouble with accessing any course material, please let me know, or you can contact [Office for Disability Equality](#).

### **Add/Drop**

Through the first fifteen (15) instructional days of the semester, students may use [CyberBear](#) to drop courses. For courses dropped by the fifteenth instructional day, no fees are charged and courses are not recorded. Friday, January 25<sup>th</sup> is the last day to drop, change a section, or change grading options without a drop/add form. After this date, a grade of “WP” or “WF” will appear on the transcript. Petitions to drop will be granted only in documentable emergency cases. Note that course failure, in and of itself, does not constitute an emergency. Please plan accordingly.

### **Incompletes**

Departmental and University policies regarding Incompletes do not allow changing “Incomplete” grades after one year after an “I” has been granted.

### **Academic Honesty**

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University.

Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is stealing or passing off the ideas or words of another as one's own without properly crediting the source. This behavior is unethical and a violation of the [Student Conduct Code](#). Evidence of either plagiarism or cheating may result in an automatic “F” for that assignment and a deduction of 40 points from the final grade. The instructor also reserves the right to assign an “F” as a final grade if either cheating or plagiarism occurs.

### **Student Conduct Code**

All students need to be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](#).

### **Psychology Department Information**

The website for the [Department of Psychology](#) has important information pertaining to psychology major and minor requirements, admission requirements, Psyx 100, supervised research, etc. If you are a psychology major, or are thinking about becoming one, this is important information for you to review. In addition, the website provides links to sites with information on graduate school admissions, graduate programs, and careers in psychology. If you are at all interested in pursuing graduate study or employment in psychology, you can use these links as a starting place for your research on programs.

### **Moodle Online System**

Course announcements, class materials, and discussion forums will be on the [Moodle](#) site. There you will find a copy of this syllabus, additional materials, quizzes, and portals for uploading homework assignments. I will also post suggestions for optional readings if you are interested in further information about a particular topic, as well as relevant websites and other resources. [IT Central Help Desk](#): 243-4357 (8am-5pm).

Please note, that if you are experiencing difficulties with Moodle, that it is your responsibility to contact IT and come to a solution. Extensions will not be made for technical difficulties. If Moodle is not working, you may email me your homework assignments; however, they still must be submitted to me on time to receive credit.

Be sure to use your official UM e-mail address with Moodle. You will need to have and use a university e-mail address and to check it regularly; students must use a university e-mail address in electronic correspondence for this course.

## Grading

Your grade in this course is based on a total of 330 points.

Your grade is made up of **3 exams**, worth 50 points each and an optional comprehensive final (the highest three exam grades will count towards your final grade); **5 Moodle Quizzes**, each worth 20 points; **3 Homework Assignments**, each worth 10 points; **5 In-Class Assignments**, worth 10 points each. Extra credit may also be earned through participating in psychology research studies through SONA (or requesting an alternative extra credit assignment). See below for more details on enrolling in SONA.

Criteria	Points
<b>In-Class Assignments (5)</b> (10 points each)	50pts
<b>Exam (3)</b> (50 points each)	150pts
<b>Moodle Quizzes (5)</b> (20 points each)	100pts
<b>Homework Assignments (3)</b> (10 points each)	30pts
<b>Total</b>	330pts

## Grade Scale

The grade scale in this class uses “plus” and “minus” grades. Note that a grade of C or better is needed for required Psychology courses. However, be sure to ask your specific academic advisor what is grade is required to be considered passing, as this varies by department and degree plan.

Grade	Percentage $\geq$	Course Total Points Required
A	93	330 – 307
A-	90	306 - 297
B+	87	296 – 287
B	83	286 - 274
B-	80	273 - 264
C+	77	263 - 254
C	70	253 - 231
D	60	230 – 198
F	59 or lower	197 - 0

## Attendance

Attendance is essential to learning new material, and therefore will be taken randomly throughout the semester through the use of random in-class assignments. These assignments cannot be made up, students must be present to receive credit. \* Exceptions will be made for University approved reasons \*

### **In-Class Assignments**

Several lectures will include time to complete an in-class assignment with a small group (5-6 students). These in-class assignments are designed to test your ability to apply what has been learned during lectures and allow you to test and develop your knowledge of the material with your fellow classmates. In-class assignments are graded based on the thoughtfulness and thoroughness of the responses, not necessarily on whether the assignment is completed.

### **Homework Assignments**

A key aspect of this course is learning how to apply lecture material to real-world examples. Therefore, a portion of points for this course will be earned from thoughtfully completing homework assignments. Although points will not be deducted for incorrect answers, points will be deducted for incomplete assignments or assignments that demonstrate carelessness (i.e., spelling, grammar errors). Homework assignments will be posted to Moodle. Homework assignments are to be turned into the appropriate Moodle portal on time. **No late homework assignments will be accepted.** All due dates will be announced in class and posted to Moodle. Please check the course schedule for assignment dates as well as due dates for homework assignments.

### **Moodle Quizzes**

There will be five Moodle quizzes covering key terms and concepts from previous lectures. Each quiz will be worth twenty points. These quizzes will always open at the beginning of a new topic and close the day before that topic's cumulative exam. Each submission is limited to 1 hour. Be sure to study and understand all concepts discussed in the lectures in order to be successful in these quizzes.

### **Exams**

There will be 3 exams, and one optional, comprehensive final exam. All of the exams are worth 50 points and could consist of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank questions, and short answer essay questions. The information tested on exams will draw heavily from lectures, homework assignments, quizzes, and in-class assignments.

There are ***no make-up examinations*** for individual exams except in cases of ***documentable emergencies***. Examples of emergencies include traveling due to the death of a loved one, or having a contagious or debilitating illness. If you need to make-up an exam, the instructor must be notified BEFORE the exam is missed, and documentation must be provided before you will be allowed to take the make-up. Arrangements to miss an exam must be made before the time of the exam.

### **Extra Credit**

**Up to 20 extra credit** points can be earned by participating in psychology research through SONA. Each SONA credit is worth 10 extra credit points. Be sure to assign SONA credits to Psyx 120 in order to receive extra credit. Additionally, make yourself aware of SONA deadlines, as the website closes prior to the end of the semester.

### Alternative Assignment

If you do not want to sign up for SONA and participate in research, you can complete an alternative assignment worth up to 20 extra credit points. Ask your instructor for more details about the alternative assignment.

### SONA Sign-Up

#### How to Create a SONA Account

1. Signing up for studies occurs via SONA (an online sign-up system). To sign up, you will need to create an account online.
2. Visit [Psychology Research Sign-Up System](#)
  - a. When creating a SONA account, be sure you use your umontana e-mail address as your username (if your umontana e-mail address is jane.doe@umontana.edu, you would enter jane.doe); *if you do not do this properly, then you will not get the account information*. As a result, your research credits will not be counted.
    - i. EXAMPLE:

Email: jane.doe@umontana.edu

Username: jane.doe

- b. Be sure you enter the right course section number (01), or else you may not be properly credited.

#### How to Sign Up for SONA Studies

3. Signing up and checking studies is easy; simply check the Department of Psychology's SONA page. Each experiment has a different name. Once you have participated in a specific experiment, you may not sign up for any other experiment with the same name. If you do, you will only receive credit for the first experiment.
  - a. Your credit will be tracked via the online system – you will be awarded credit for participation within 72 hours of participating by the researcher who was in charge of the study. If you check your credit and it has not been awarded in a timely fashion, contact the experimenter listed as the contact on the study to resolve this conflict. At the end of the term, your instructor will automatically get your credits from the online system.

### Course Schedule

Date	DOW	Lecture Topic	Assignments
1/18	T	Syllabus and Moodle overview	
1/20	TR	<b>Topic 1:</b> General Issues	<b>Quizzes 1 &amp; 2 Open</b> <b>HW 1 Open</b>
1/25	T	<b>Topic 1:</b> General Issues	
1/27	TR	<b>Topic 1:</b> General Issues	
2/1	T	<b>Topic 1:</b> General Issues	
2/3	TR	<b>Topic 2:</b> Descriptive Methods	

<b>Date</b>	<b>DOW</b>	<b>Lecture Topic</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
2/8	T	<b>Topic 2: Descriptive Methods</b>	
2/10	TR	<b>Topic 2: Descriptive Methods</b>	
2/15	T	<b>Topic 2: Descriptive Methods</b>	<b>Quizzes 1 &amp; 2 Due HW 1 Due</b>
2/17	TR	<b>Exam 1 (Topics 1 &amp; 2)</b>	
2/22	T	<b>Topic 3 (Experimental Methods) &amp; 4 (Applied Research)</b>	<b>Quiz 3 &amp; 4 Open HW 2 Open</b>
2/24	TR	<b>Topic 3 &amp; 4</b>	
3/1	T	<b>Topic 3 &amp; 4</b>	
3/3	TR	<b>Topic 3 &amp; 4</b>	
3/8	T	<b>Topic 3 &amp; 4</b>	
3/10	TR	<b>Topic 3 &amp; 4</b>	
3/15	T	<b>Topic 3 &amp; 4</b>	
3/17	TR	<b>Topic 3 &amp; 4</b>	
3/22	T	<b>NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)</b>	
3/24	TR	<b>NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)</b>	
3/29	T	<b>Review Day (Topics 3 &amp; 4)</b>	<b>Quizzes 3 &amp; 4 Due HW 2 Due</b>
3/31	TR	<b>Exam 2 (Topics 3 &amp; 4)</b>	
4/5	T	<b>Topic 5: Analyze &amp; Report Research</b>	<b>Quiz 5 Open HW 3 Open</b>
4/7	TR	<b>Topic 5</b>	
4/12	T	<b>Topic 5</b>	
4/14	TR	<b>Topic 5</b>	
4/19	T	<b>Topic 5</b>	



<b>Date</b>	<b>DOW</b>	<b>Lecture Topic</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
4/21	TR	<b>Topic 5</b>	
4/26	T	<b>Review day (Topic 5)</b>	<b>Quiz 5 DUE</b> <b>HW 3 DUE</b>
4/28	TR	<b>Exam 3 (Topic 5)</b>	
5/3	T	<b>Review Day (Topics 1-5)</b>	
5/5	TR	<b>NO CLASS</b>	
5/9 - 5/13		<b>Optional Comprehensive Final Exam</b>	Date TBD