

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

University of Montana Course Syllabi, 2021-2025

Spring 2-1-2022

PSYX 120.50: Introduction to Psychological Research Methods

Jennifer Villa

University of Montana, Missoula, jennifer.villa@umontana.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi2021-2025>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Villa, Jennifer, "PSYX 120.50: Introduction to Psychological Research Methods" (2022). *University of Montana Course Syllabi, 2021-2025*. 743.

<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi2021-2025/743>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana Course Syllabi, 2021-2025 by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

Psyx 120: Introduction to Research Methods

Spring 2022

Instructor Information

Instructor: Jennifer Villa

Email: jennifer.villa@umontana.edu

Office hours: by appointment

[Psychology Department URL](#)

Required Text

Research Methods in Psychology (10th ed) – Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, & Zechmeister

*You might find the 9th edition in some bookstores and online. I still recommend getting the newest edition because the updated information. It's fine with me if you want to use the 9th version, but **do not use an earlier edition than 9** because it will be too out of date.

Course Description

Psychology is the science of human and non-human animal behavior as well as mental, perceptual, and biological processes. As a survey course, Introduction to Research Methods provides an overview of the scientific approach to studying those various topics. By understanding basic research methods of psychology, you will learn to approach the world in a more systemic and scientific manner. The course primarily employs an online discussion format. Throughout the course of the semester, you will be asked discussion questions, and it is expected that you will interact with your instructor and classmates by responding to the questions posed. Furthermore, at various points in the semester you will be asked to use your understanding of research methods to critique and comment upon actual published research studies. It is anticipated that by the end of the semester you will have a basic understanding of research methodology that will enable you to consume psychological literature.

Course Objectives

There are three primary goals for this course: 1) provide an introduction/re-familiarization with the basic tenets of the scientific method, 2) introduce common research methods as they relate to behavioral research, and 3) provide the tools to become a "critical" consumer of Psychological research whether it is published in a referred journal or your hometown newspaper. Major topics will include an introduction to the scientific method, searching scientific literature, research ethics, various methods (observational, relational, experimental, small-n, & quasi-experimental), validity and reliability, and interpretation of results.

Course Assignments & Grading Criteria

Quizzes

Over the course of the semester we will have a total of 14 quizzes that will cover material from the week's reading. Each quiz will be worth 20 points and have 20 questions with each question being worth 1 point. Quizzes will be multiple choice.

Each quiz will be open to take from 7 AM on Saturday until 11:59 PM on Friday (you will have 7 days to complete the quiz) and cannot be made-up after this time. You will have a time limit of 30 minutes to complete the quiz once you open it.

Quizzes are administered using the adaptive mode that allows multiple attempts at each question before moving on to the next question but subtracts a penalty for each wrong attempt (except for T/F questions). For example, choosing the correct answer on the first attempt would earn 1 point, second attempt would earn 0.75 points, third attempt would earn .5 points, and fourth attempt would earn 0.25 points. **Please read the assigned readings before attempting the quizzes.**

Lab Assignments

There will be three lab assignments throughout the course of the semester. They will ask you to apply the material that you have learned to critiquing and commenting original research articles, as well as identifying and responding to methodological scenarios. They are described in full detail under "Labs" and are available for review before the week that they are due.

There are **THREE lab assignments** across the semester, and they are worth **40 points each**. See course schedule for due dates.

Discussion Forums

Every three weeks throughout the duration of the semester, **one discussion forum** will be created based on previous weeks' readings. **Discussion forums will be opened from 7 AM on Saturday and will close on Friday at 11:59 PM.**

Students will be expected to make 1 original post and 3 replies (to other student's posts) in each discussion forum during that allotted time. In other words, don't wait for the end of the semester to make all posts and replies; **you must submit one post and three replies every week if you want the credit.** Please attend to the quality of your discussion post because the instructor reserves the right to not give you credit for unsatisfactory posts. For example, simply stating "I agree" or some variation is not a satisfactory reply to another student's post.

Responses to discussion posts are expected to help you explain, analyze, synthesize and evaluate basic concepts in psychological research methods. Additionally, through interacting with your peers it is anticipated that you will develop a better understanding of the material covered. Each discussion is worth 40 points.

Grades are based on (1) **attendance** and (2) **quality of posts** and do not include any posts made in the "Q & A" or "Welcome" Discussions. Full credit requires high quality and maximum frequency posts. The two charts below explain how your discussion posts are graded.

<u>ATTENDANCE GRADING FOR ONLINE POSTS(40 points possible)</u>		
Students must post (respond) a <u>minimum of three separate days per week</u> . You can post more than three days, and post more than three times, but at a minimum, you must post on three separate days.	3 days	40 points
	2 days	30 points
	1 day	20 points
	0 days	0 points

Once the number of days is calculated, students are then graded based on their contributions to the discussion. The following points are deducted, not added, from the points earned above, to yield a final weekly "attendance" score. (Students cannot earn negative points. The lowest possible score is zero.)

Students must make a post to the discussion question in the weekly discussion forum. Each weekly discussion question post will be due by Monday at 11:59 pm	Each day late	2 pts lost
Students must post (respond) to a <u>minimum of three of their peers</u> . You can post to more than three, but at a minimum, you must reply to three of your peers. This promotes student engagement with each other, rather than just responding to the discussion questions posted by the instructor	3 peers	0 pts lost
	2 peers	5 pts lost
	1 peer	10 pts lost
	0 peers	15 pts lost

Once I have calculated your final weekly "attendance" score, then I grade the quality of your posts, as explained below. Again, the following points are deducted, not added, from the final weekly "attendance" score, to yield a final weekly "Discussion" score. (Students cannot earn negative points. The lowest score is a zero.)

<u>POST QUALITY GRADING</u>		
Students must to make detailed and thoughtful posts that reflect an appropriate application of emerging knowledge and vocabulary in the topic area. Each post must add value to the discussion and be related to the required readings for the week. Below are additional details of how I grade the quality of your posts.	Superior	0 pts lost
	Above Average	5 pts lost
	Average	10 pts lost
	Below Average	15 pts lost
	Unacceptable	20 pts lost

Superior: Your contributions demonstrate a complete mastery of the materials assigned. Your responses might integrate multiple views and/or show strong analysis and reflection on topics and other student's posts. You provide evidence that you are reading the assigned materials and other student postings and are responding accordingly, bringing out interesting interpretations. You know the facts and are able to analyze them, apply them to real life scenarios and handle conceptual ideas. It is highly unlikely that you could get full credit in less than two paragraphs.

Above Average: Your responses build on the ideas of other participants and dig deeper into assignment questions or issues. When you make intelligent posts during the week, including some good critique of the course material, then you have demonstrated you have an understanding of the material, are reading posts of your colleagues, and are contributing to the class. Your posts demonstrate confidence with the materials, but may be just a bit off target in one area or another.

Average: You have meaningful interaction with other participants' postings. Posts that state, "I agree" or "I disagree" and include a detailed explanation of what is disagreed or agreed upon and why, or introduce a perspective or concept that adds to the discussion. However, you may have rambling, lengthy posts with no clear point, your writing has a lack of clarity and comprehension, or there are considerable typos and grammatical errors.

Below Average: You answer questions asked by me or other students but do not expand upon your response or you answer questions based only on your opinion, rather than on research or proper evidence. Your posts are unusually short (one paragraph or less) and you fail to demonstrate a clear working knowledge of the material covered for the week.

Unacceptable: You will receive little credit in the week's discussion by just showing up and making trivial comments, without adding any new thought to the discussion. At the low end of the spectrum, no participation gets a "0." If you are not in the discussion, you do not earn any points. Comments such as "I agree" or other one-sentence responses will result in zero points. Copying and pasting from a website without providing your own substantial insight is also an unacceptable post- even if you have properly cited your sources. This assignment is an assessment of your understanding of the information covered in this class. Copying and pasting from websites does not demonstrate a working knowledge of the material.

Special Note: I check very carefully for plagiarism in the discussion posts. If you have plagiarized, you will get a zero for the entire assignment. If you plagiarize a second time, you will fail the course. If you engage in flaming behavior in the posts, you will get a zero for the entire assignment.

Course Grading

Your final grade for the course will consist of scores on weekly quizzes, discussion posts, and lab exercises. Your final grade is the percentage of the total points earned divided by total possible points. There is no course curve in this class.

The following chart breaks down the points for each assignment type.

Criteria	Points possible
Discussion Posts (5, at 40 pts each)	200 points possible
Quizzes (14, at 20 pts each)	280 points possible
Lab Exercises (3, at 40 points each)	120 points possible
Total Points	600 points possible

The following chart shows the Grade scale for the Final Course grade.

Final Course Grade	# Points	Percentage
A	528-600	88% - 100%
B	456 - 528	76% – 88%
C	390 - 456	65% – 76%
D	318 - 390	53% – 65%
F	0-318	< 53%

Course Guidelines and Policies

Contacting me

Please email me with questions/concerns. I will do my best to respond to you as quickly as possible, but please allow up to, but no later than, 48 hours for me to respond.

Announcements

Students are responsible for all announcements made in class. These may include changes in policy, due dates, or assignments requirements. Announcements are posted in the announcements section of the course or are directly emailed to the students.

Technology Policies

Please contact UM Online if you experience technical difficulties. Though I would love to be able to help, I am not qualified to do so. *Critical note: I do not allow technical issues for not having the proper software as reasons for late or incomplete work.* To ensure your protection, please keep technical support contact information available offline and please do not wait until the last minute to complete

your work each week! To access technical support (and save their contact information offline) please click on the “Tech Support” link to the left of the page.

Technical Alternatives

Also, keep in mind your technical alternative if you have computer difficulties. If you live near the University, campus computers are an option. Otherwise, consider the public library, an internet café, a computer at work, or a friend or family member’s computer. Have a plan of action in mind so that you can complete the required work each week if an issue arises.

Assignment Due Dates, Late Work, and Make-up Work

Discussions and quizzes close on Fridays, and lab assignments are due on Fridays by 11:59 pm MST. Please be sure to start your assignments early enough to complete them by the time the week closes.

As a rule, I do not accept late work or allow make-up work, except for one “freebie.” No reason is required to take advantage of this opportunity, and it is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor to make this happen. Students have 24 hours to make up the work from the time I send the make-up assignment email, and students are not permitted to use the “freebie” at any time during finals week. Aside from this one freebie, no extra points will be given and no extra credit will be assigned.

Students cannot, under any circumstance, make up the discussion posts assignment. Due to the interactive nature of this assignment, students must be engaged in this process throughout the week each week in order to receive credit.

To make up other missed assignments it is mandatory that you 1) notify your instructor before the time of the assignment and 2) provide proper documentation verifying the reason for your absence. Examples of proper documentation include a medical note or a death or family emergency. Remember, prior notification and documentation is mandatory! You can provide documentation by 1) scanning and emailing documents, 2) mailing the documents, or 3) bringing them by my office during office hours. I do not allow students to make up work until I have received the proper documents. I do not allow make up work during the week of final exams.

Grades of Incomplete

Departmental and university policies regarding incompletes do not allow changing “incomplete” grades after one year has passed since the “I” was granted. Please see [academic policy](#) for more information on the conditions that must be met to receive a grade of “incomplete.”

Academic Misconduct

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

Plagiarism

The Student Conduct Code discusses plagiarism. However, it is a serious offense worth re-mentioning. This course requires students to adhere to APA format when citing, paraphrasing, or referencing sources. If you have plagiarized, either intentionally or accidentally, you will receive a zero on the entire assignment. If you plagiarize a second time, you will fail the course.

Netiquette

Students must engage in proper “netiquette.” Netiquette or “network etiquette” is a professional and mannerly way of communicating with others in the online medium. Failure to engage in proper netiquette will result in earning a zero for each assignment where an incident has occurred.

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, please contact ODE in Lommasson Center 154 or call 406-243-2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

Dropping/Adding/Changing grade option

Please refer to the [Registrar’s Office webpage](#) for information and policies.

Mandatory Employee Reporting of Sex-bases Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Involving Student

In order to enable the University to respond effectively and to stop instances of sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct involving students at the University proactively, all University employees must, within 24 hours of receiving the information, report information they have about reported sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct involving students to the EO. The information given to the EO must include all relevant details needed to determine what occurred and to resolve the situation. This includes the names of the respondent (if known), the complainant, other students involved in the incident, as well as relevant facts, including the date, time, and location.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week + Units	Readings	Quizzes	Discussions	Lab Assignments
Week 1 (1/17-1/21) How to be an Online Student	Netiquette Guidelines Washull, 2005	Week 1 Quiz	Welcome Discussion (extra credit)	
Week 2 (1/24- 1/28) General Issues	Introduction, Chapter 1	Week 2 Quiz		Lab#1 Available Online
Week 3 (1/31-2/4) General Issues	The Scientific Method Chapter 2	Week 3 Quiz	Discussion #1	
Week 4 (2/7- 2/11) General Issues	Ethical Issues in the Conduct of Psychological Research Chapter 3	Week 4 Quiz		Lab #1 due Friday at 11:59 pm
Week 5 (2/14- 2/18) Descriptive Methods	Observation, Chapter 4	Week 5 Quiz		
Week 6 (2/21- 2/25) Descriptive Methods	Survey Research, Chapter 5	Week 6 Quiz	Discussion #2	Lab#2 Available Online
Week 7 (2/28- 3/4) Experimental Methods	Independent Group Designs Chapter 6	Week 7 Quiz		
Week 8 (3/7- 3/11) Experimental Methods	Repeated Measures Designs Chapter 7	Week 8 Quiz		Lab #2 due Friday at 11:59 pm
Week 9 (3/14- 3/18) Experimental Methods	Complex Designs Chapter 8	Week 9 Quiz	Discussion #3	
Week 10 (3/21 - 3/25) Spring Break		No Quiz		
Week 11 (3/28-4/1) Applied Research	Single-Case Research Designs Chapter 9	Week 11 Quiz		
Week 12 (4/4- 4/8) Applied Research	Quasi-Experimental Designs and Program Evaluation, Chapter 10	Week 12 Quiz		
Week 13 (4/11- 4/15) Analyzing and Reporting Research	Data Analysis and Interpretation: Chapter 11	Week 13 Quiz	Discussion #4	Lab#3 Available Online
Week 14 (4/18- 4/22) Analyzing and Reporting Research	Data Analysis and Interpretation: Chapter 12	Week 14 Quiz		
Week 15 (4/25- 4/29) Review	Data Analysis and Interpretation: Chapter 12	Week 15 Quiz		Lab # 3 due Friday at 11:59 pm
Week 16 (5/2- 5/6) Review	none	none	Discussion #5	none
Finals Week (5/9- 5/13) Finals Week	none	none	none	none

