

Psychology 485**Senior Seminar**

Professor:	Dr. Marsha Walton	121 Clough	
Office hours:	Mondays Wednesdays and Fridays	10:00-12:00	drop-in (no appointments) by appointment
Seminars:	Tuesdays	12:30 – 1:45	Barret 214
Research Sessions:	Thursdays	12:30 – 1:45	Clough 100

Course Description

This course is designed to give students the opportunity to apply and enhance the skills that are at the core of being a psychology major. Students will collaborate on a major research project, seeking to integrate work they have done in understanding psychological theory, in using research methods, and in applying psychological theory and research to contemporary issues.

Course Objectives

Knowledge Objectives: Students will review a body of literature pertinent to a research project they will undertake. Each student will become fully conversant with the research and theory that is relevant to his or her project. The level of expertise students gain by the completion of their senior papers should prepare them to communicate effectively with professionals in their area of study.

Personal Values/Commitment/Application Objectives: It is my hope that this course will make students more aware of both the value of well-conducted research for informing social and educational policy, and of the serious responsibilities of the researchers who undertake such projects. We will see how much people who make decisions that shape our institutions need the information that can be provided by psychological research that is (1) well-conceived, (2) carefully conducted, (3) thoughtfully analyzed, and (4) sensitively communicated. At the same time we will become more keenly aware of our responsibility as researchers to be attentive to the questions posed by those who will use research findings, and to be respectful of the voices and perspectives of the participants whose understanding of the world provides us with data.

Student Skills Objectives: The student work and the use of class time in Senior Seminar focus on exercising and improving a set of skills used by professionals in psychology and in many other related fields. Most notably, these will include:

- ◆ **research skills:** students will put together the research skills they have developed in their work as a psychology major. They will conduct literature reviews, manage a data set, conduct data analyses, write a research report in APA format, and disseminate results of their study to appropriate audiences.
- ◆ **collaboration skills:** almost all psychological research is done in a collaboration model. Students will have an opportunity to gain experience working as part of a research team and to gain experience providing and receiving critical peer feedback on all aspects of the work.
- ◆ **professional communication skills:** students will have opportunities to enhance communication skills in two areas:
 - the ability to make formal presentations to professional audiences.
 - the ability to contribute to conversations (in-class, and in out-of-class informal meetings) that encourage the thoughtful expression of different points of view and that deepen our mutual understanding of the work we are doing.

Required Texts

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory, 2nd Edition*. New York: Sage.

Other readings will be selected as students define their projects. Each student should consult with me to select an article that will be assigned to the entire class. I will add other articles and put them on reserve.

Course Requirements

Preparation for Class Discussion (10% of final course grade)

For each discussion of course readings, two or three students will be assigned to prepare four to five discussion points for class. These discussion points should provide brief background information and should raise issues or questions to help facilitate discussion. Each discussion point should be approximately a paragraph in length. Students should email their discussion items to the entire class by 9:00 am on the day the readings are due. All students should make a copy of these before class, so that we will have them to aid discussion and note-keeping for the course.

Each student will be responsible for assigning one reading to the class. This article should be carefully selected to facilitate discussion about critical issues and interesting findings in the area of the student's research paper. Students will create discussion points for the reading they assign.

The discussion preparation grade will be based on the quality of the student's discussion points, and the student's ability to facilitate classroom discussion about those points. If a student should have to miss a class for which he or she was assigned to be a discussion leader, we will try to assign him or her another class session.

Participation and Collaboration (15% of final course grade)

Your participation in class discussions and your feedback to your peers will be critical to the success of the class. My assessment of your participation in discussion classes will be based not only on how clearly you express your own ideas, but also on how well you elicit, encourage, and help develop the ideas of your classmates. Be attentive to opportunities to ask follow-up questions, and to respond to or elaborate on the ideas expressed by others in class.

We will often be discussing controversial issues of considerable importance to us all. Please remember that a good discussion is not necessarily an argument. We certainly will have arguments in class, but our overriding goal is to increase our mutual understanding of the issues, not to prove one another right or wrong.

Needless to say, good class participation will always require that you have done the assigned reading for the course thoughtfully.

If a student must miss a class session because of illness, graduate school interviews, or for other good reasons, that student should create discussion points for the discussion he or she missed, and distribute these to the class as soon as possible. If a student must miss one of the research team meetings on the schedule, he or she must provide a written report to both the professor and other team members describing the reading and the data work he or she accomplished that week. (In other words, prepare in writing what you would have been able to contribute if you had been able to attend the session.)

There will be three equal components to the participation/collaboration grade:

- my assessment of your contributions to our class discussions, including your ability to express your ideas about the readings, your ability to encourage and facilitate the thinking of your classmates, and my assessment of your oral feedback given to classmates on their presentations and in discussing their projects.
- my assessment of the written feedback you provide on drafts of your classmates' work.
- the assessment of the other members of your research team of your contributions to the project.

Final Senior Research Paper (50% of final course grade)

Each student or student research group will conduct a research project and submit a final paper based on their work. Papers must be written according to APA style (5th edition of the Publication Manual).¹ Students will be assigned research projects in consultation with me. Those students already involved with a research department under the supervision of a department faculty member are encouraged to bring that work to fruition as a senior project. I will consult with the supervising faculty member in the evaluation of the student's work, but the student must adjust to meet all deadlines and assignments for this course.

Those students who are completing year-long senior projects (all honors students and some directed inquiry students) should work with me to make special arrangements for completing the assignments for this course by the end of the semester.

Late papers will be penalized by ½ letter grade for each day that they are late. Most work in our discipline is collaborative, and in accordance with this standard practice, most senior research papers will be co-authored. Each member of the team will be expected to edit and revise each section of the paper, although different individuals will make the first draft of various sections. All members of the team will receive the same grade for this part of the course, based on the quality of the final, co-authored work.

Draft of Research Paper (15% of final course grade)

Students will be expected to submit an initial draft of their part of their team's literature review, along with a clear statement of the research question and a description of the plan for data analysis. These papers should include a reference section, and they should be written in strict accordance with APA style guidelines.

These drafts will be due first to selected classmates, (at least one from your research team and at least one from another research team). Students will give written feedback to one another, and that feedback, along with a revised paper will be turned in to me.

Late papers will receive a 3-point per day penalty. This part of the final project will represent individual team members' contributions to the final project, and will be individually graded, even though students are strongly encouraged (and some are required) to assist one another on these drafts.

Professional Presentation of Research Project (10% of final course grade)

Each student or student research group will be required to present their work to a public professional audience. Examples of ways to satisfy this component of the course include presenting at a professional conference, presenting at an on-campus poster session, or at an undergraduate research conference on another campus, or giving a professional power point presentation to people who have sponsored the research or who may use the research results to inform policy decisions.

Honor Code

All work in this course should be pledged. Students are encouraged to collaborate and to help each other as much as possible on all assignments. Sources used should be cited in accordance with APA style, and the assistance of classmates who edit and provide useful feedback should be acknowledged in a note to the final paper.

¹ Although the copies you print for your classmates should STRICTLY follow APA style, the copy you turn in to me must be printed, double spaced, in a font no smaller than Times New Roman 14. (This syllabus is in font size 10, and size 12 is typical for academic papers. Indeed, ALL work turned in to me must meet this specification. Any assignment turned in with smaller fonts, or single-spaced, will be returned and will suffer a late penalty.

In this course, we replace the standard college pledge (that I have neither given nor received help) with the following: “I pledge that this work reflects my own ideas and my current understanding of this material.”

For all co-authored work, students should additionally sign the following pledge: “I pledge that I have done my fair share or this work, and that I have provided assistance to my collaborators as I have been able to do so.”

If a student should feel unable to sign either of the above pledges, he or she should attach a brief explanation.

Tentative Class Schedule and Assignments:

Date	Reading	Topic	Assignment Due
8/25		Introductions/Orientation	
8/30	SC1-3	Working with Qualitative Data	DPs SC1: MW, EC, JB SC2: AW, PE, KY, SC3: LH, SS, JO
			Schedule team or individual meetings with me.
9/1	SC4	Description of Data Sets: Racial Bias in Evaluation Racial Slur Campus Climate	
9/6	SC5-14	Review of Qualitative Research Procedures Discussion of how we might use each.	SC5: LH; SC6: SS; SC7: JO; SC8: KY; SC9: PE; SC10: AW; SC11: JB; SC12: EC; SC13: MW; SC14: MDW
9/8		Preliminary Project Descriptions (research questions, approach to data work, plan for dividing lit review)	EC; MW; Evaluation Bias Group
9/13	TBA	Preliminary Project Description (team members have read through data, propose questions, approaches to coding data; discussion of ethical issues)	Campus Climate Group
9/15		Campus Climate Project Description (research questions, approach to data work, plan for dividing lit review)	
9/20	TBA	Feedback to each other on research questions.	Written research questions (brief background, clear description of question). To class by 9 a.m.
9/22		Research Teams Meeting separately	EC, KY, and AW assign reading for class
9/27	EC KY AW	Discussion of Student assigned readings	DPs to class by 9 a.m.
9/29		Research Teams Meeting separately	Preliminary Bibliographies (indicate which articles you HAVE, which you have READ, and which you are seeking. Mw, SS, JB assign reading for class.
10/4	MW, SS, JB	Discussion of student assigned readings	DPs to class by 9 a.m.

10/6	SC15-16	Research teams meeting separately	(Scan SC17 to find your own questions.) Students exchange lit review drafts. PE, JO, LH assign reading for class
Date	Reading	Topic	Assignment Due
10/11	PE JO LH	Discussion of student assigned readings	Lit review feedback to each other DPs to class by 9 a.m.
10/13			Lit review feedback to me.
	recess		
10/20		Research team meetings separately	
10/25		Research team meetings separately	Lit Review, Research Questions, and Analysis Plan due to me by 5 p.m.
10/27		Research team meetings to be scheduled	
11/1		Research team meetings to be scheduled	
11/3		Research team meetings to be scheduled	
11/8		Research team meetings to be scheduled	
11/10		Research team meetings to be scheduled	
11/15		Research team meetings to be scheduled	
11/17		Research team meetings to be scheduled	
11/22			Draft of final paper to me if you desire feedback
	Thanks- giving		
11/29	T7-8	The Gender Act/What to do about gender? Service Learning observations of gender.	
12/1		Practice presentations and class feedback	
12/6		Practice presentations and class feedback	
12/9		Reading day	Public Presentations
12/13			Final Paper Due, 1 p.m.