

Psychology 485

Senior Seminar

Dr. Bette Ackerman
843-3650 (office)
725-5354 (home, before 10 pm)

Office: 117 Clough Hall
Office Hours: MTh 2:30-4:00, Tu 1:00-3:00
or by appt

Course Description

This course is designed to give students the opportunity to apply and enhance the analytical and research 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

Senior Seminar is intended to be a “capstone” experience for students at Rhodes, and is meant to review and extend their research skills. 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.

Student Skills

1. To expose students to various aspects of the research process including conducting literature reviews, managing a data set, conducting data analysis, writing up research results in APA format, and disseminating results.
2. To enhance students oral communication and presentation skills by giving them the opportunity to make presentations of their work and additional readings throughout the semester.
3. To expose students to a research-collaboration model in which they gain experience working as part of a research team and gain experience providing critical feedback to their peers on their work.

Institutional Goals

1. To support the College’s need for data on which to base institutional programs and program improvements.
2. To support the College’s incipient re-affirmation of accreditation under the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) through evaluation of the Vision Statement.

Personal Objectives:

It is my hope that this course will make students more aware of both the value of research for informing social and educational policy, and of the serious responsibilities of the researchers who undertake such projects. 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.

Course Requirements

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

Team members will be responsible for assigning readings to the class. Articles should be carefully selected to facilitate discussion about critical issues and interesting findings in the area of the student’s research paper..

For each discussion of course readings, the relevant team members 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 e-mail 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.

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)

Good class participation will always require that you have done the assigned reading for the course thoughtfully.

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 may discuss controversial issues. 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.

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). Students will be assigned research projects in consultation with me.

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, which is generally accomplished by presenting to the psychology faculty and invited students.

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.

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 on 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: Will depend on the number of research teams, thus will be finalized after team projects and members have been identified.

Rhodes College aspires to graduate students with a lifelong passion for learning, a compassion for others, and the ability to translate academic study and personal concern into effective leadership and action in their communities and the world. We will achieve our aspiration through four strategic imperatives:

1. **Student Access**
To attract and retain a talented, diverse student body and engage these students in a challenging, inclusive and culturally-broadening college experience.
2. **Student Learning**
To ensure our faculty and staff have the talent, the time and the resources to inspire and involve our students in meaningful study, research and service.
3. **Student Engagement**
To enhance student opportunities for learning in Memphis.
4. **Student Inspiration**
To provide a residential place of learning that inspires integrity and high achievement through its beauty, its emphasis on values, its Presbyterian history, and its heritage as a leader in the liberal arts and sciences

	Date	Topic	Assignment Due
W	August 23	Introductions/Orientation	
F	25	Working with Qualitative Data	
M	28		Schedule team or individual meetings with me.
W	30	Review of Qualitative Research Procedures Discussion of how we might use each.	
F	September 1	Preliminary Project Descriptions (research questions, approach to data work, plan for dividing lit review)	
M	4	Preliminary Project Description (team members have read through data, propose questions, approaches to coding data; discussion of ethical issues)	
W	6		
F	8	Feedback to each other on research questions.	Written research questions (brief background, clear description of question). To class by 9 a.m.
M	11	Research Teams Meeting separately	
W	13	Discussion of Student assigned readings	DPs to class by 9 a.m.
F	15	Research Teams Meeting separately	Preliminary Bibliographies (indicate which articles you HAVE, which you have READ, and which you are seeking. Assign reading for class.
M	18	Discussion of student assigned readings	
W	20	Research teams meeting separately	
F	22	Discussion of student assigned readings	Lit review feedback to each other DPs to class by 9 a.m.
M	25		Lit review feedback to me.
W	27	Research team meetings separately	
F	29	Research team meetings separately	Lit Review, Research Questions, and Analysis Plan due to me by 5 p.m.
M	October 2	Research team meetings to be scheduled	
W	4	Research team meetings to be scheduled	
F	6	Research team meetings to be scheduled	
M	9	Research team meetings to be scheduled	
W	11	Research team meetings to be scheduled	
F	13	Research team meetings to be scheduled	
M	16	Research team meetings to be scheduled	
W	18		Draft of final paper to me if you desire feedback
F	20		
M	23	Practice presentations and class feedback	
W	25	Practice presentations and class feedback	
F	27	Reading day	Public Presentations
M	30		Final Paper Due, 1 p.m.
W	November 1		