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PSYC 485-01, Senior Seminar, Spring 2007

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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/ Thursdays	3:30 – 4:45	Clough 123

Course Description

This course is designed to give students the opportunity to integrate skills and understanding critical to the discipline of psychology. Students will complete a major research project which will require the application of work they have done in methods and content area courses in psychology. We will work in teams, consistent with a collaborative model that dominates contemporary psychological research. Class discussions will regularly focus on the implications of our work for psychological theory, for broader interdisciplinary questions, and for 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 Reading

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. Readings must not exceed 100 pages, and the assigning students will be responsible for making the reading available to classmates electronically or on reserve in the library.

Course Requirements

Reading Guides and Discussion Facilitation (10% of final course grade)

Each student will prepare a Reading Guide for the reading he or she assigns to the class. This may include brief background information about the context in which the article appeared, or about the impact it has had on the field. It may include suggestions for orienting the reader to the text, or initial questions that will help them read text thoughtfully. Reading Guides must be posted electronically for the class at least one week before the reading is to be discussed in class.

On the day the reading is to be discussed, the student who assigned the reading will be responsible for leading class discussion. (We will spend half a class session on each reading.) Discussion leaders should:

- ◆ elicit from the class a summary or exposition of the main ideas and findings in the readings, to ascertain that the reading was understood.
- ◆ work with the Engaged Reading Questions submitted by classmates (see below). The discussion leader should organize these so that similar questions are taken up together. We will not have time to address all of the questions, so it will be the responsibility of the discussion leader to select those most fruitful for discussion. If there is misunderstanding or confusion revealed in the ERQ's, those should be addressed.
- ◆ prepare an activity or topic for discussion that will engage classmates deeply with the ideas in the reading. This may involve applying the ideas or findings from the article to a particular research problem or contemporary issue. It may involve relating the reading to classmates' research projects or to ideas raised in other disciplines. Students are encouraged to be creative and integrative in leading this part of the discussion.

Engaged Reading Questions and Discussion Participation (10% of final course grade)

For each assigned reading, students will formulate one or two ERQ's to be posted for the class no later than midnight before the reading is to be discussed in class.

Good reading involves being in an imaginary conversation with the author. Being part of a community of readers means that as we read, we are also in an imaginary conversation with one another. The Engaged Reading Questions assignment should help us bring some of that imaginary conversation to life.

Engaged reading requires an active and thoughtful approach to the material. Intellectual engagement involved one or more of the following:

- ◆ evaluating the author's arguments, questioning the methods, searching for underlying assumptions, and considering the validity of the ideas. Critical Evaluation questions arise from this kind of engagement.
- ◆ considering the implications of the author's ideas for of the research findings for social policy, for further research or theory, for your personal life. Implication/Application questions arise from this kind of engagement.
- ◆ relating the ideas presented to other material you have encountered in this course or to ideas you have been exposed to in other courses or in other readings, thinking about conflicts between different approaches, trying to resolve them. This kind of reading provokes Integration/Synthesis questions.

Over the course of the term, make an effort to do all three of these kinds of intellectual work. Monitor your own intellectual development, and make sure that you challenge yourself to create all three kinds of engaged reading questions:

Your participation in class discussions 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 sometimes be discussing controversial issues of considerable importance to us all. Please remember that a good discussion is not necessarily an argument. We certainly may 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.

Collaboration and Feedback to Classmates (10% of final course grade)

Students will work on research teams and will be expected to give feedback to one another at every step of the research process. This will involve sharing sources with one another, editing one another's written work, and asking the kind of critical questions that helps others clarify their thinking. Collaboration may also involve assistance with data collection, data management, coding and reliability assessment, and data analysis. We will enter this process with different skills, and an important part of this course will be teaching one another.

There will be three components of the collaboration grade:

- my assessment of your oral feedback given to classmates during class discussions of their projects and during our practice sessions for the oral presentations.
- 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 projects.

Missing Classes or Research Team Meetings

If a student must miss a class session because of illness, graduate school interviews, or for other good reasons, that student must post their contributions to the class in a 500-word essay.

- For missed discussion classes, students should select a question posed in the Reading Guide or in one of their classmates' ERQ's, and formulate a response to the question.
- 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.)

Missed class essays should be posted to the class as soon as possible. (For scheduled absences, these should be distributed before class. For illness, they should be completed as soon as you have recovered.)

Literature Review and Draft of Research Paper (15% of final course grade)

Students will be expected to submit 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 papers 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 to assist one another on these drafts.

Final Senior Research Paper (45% 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 All students selected for this section of senior seminar are already participants of a research team in the department and will be completing a research project already begun as part of that team. 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 honors projects should work with me to make arrangements that will honor the deadlines established for the honors work.

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, many senior research papers are 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.

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.

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 of 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.

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 this footnote (Times New Roman 14). 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.

Tentative Class Schedule and Assignments:

Date	Reading	Topic	Assignment Due
1/10w			Student Information Surveys, 10 a.m.
1/11th	Class surveys	Introductions/Orientation/Scheduling Readings	
1/16 t		Presentations describing Projects	15-min presentations: Janna, Anna, Katherine, Tom
			Schedule team or individual meetings with me.
1/18th		Presentations describing Projects	15-min presentations: Laura, Brian, Kristina, Lindsay, Grayson Reading Assignment and Reading Guides: Janna, Anna. Post by classtime.
1/22m			Written research question (brief background, clear description of question) and preliminary bibliographies in apa style. Post to class by 9 a.m.
1/23 t	Class-mates' res. Q	Workshopping classmates' research questions. (10 minutes per paper – plan to stay for 90 minutes)	Reading Assignment and Reading Guides: Laura, Brian. Post by classtime.
1/24w			ERQs for Janna & Anna readings. Post by midnight.
1/25th	Janna Anna	Discussion led by Janna. Discussion led by Anna.	Reading Assignment and Reading Guides: Kristina & Lindsay. Post by classtime.
1/29m			ERQs for Laura & Brian readings. Post by midnight.
1/30 t	Laura Brian	Discussion led by Laura Discussion led by Brian	Reading Assignment and Reading Guides: Grayson & Katherine. Post by classtime
1/31w			ERQs for Kristina & Lindsay readings. Post by midnight.
2/1 th	Kristina Lindsay	Discussion led by Kristina Discussion led by Lindsay	Reading Assignment and Reading Guides: Tom. Post by classtime
2/5 m			ERQs for Grayson & Katherine readings. Post by midnight.
2/6 t	Grayson Katherin	Discussion led by Grayson Discussion led by Katherine	
2/7 w			ERQs for Tom reading. Post by midnight
2/8 th	Tom	Discussion led by Tom Project updates	5-min presentation – project update
2/13 t		Research Teams Meeting separately	Preliminary Bibliography in apa style. Indicate which articles you HAVE, which you have READ, and which you are seeking.
2/15th		Research Teams Meeting separately	
2/20 t		Research Teams Meeting separately	

2/22th		Research Teams Meeting separately	Lit Review and Paper Draft to classmates
Date	Reading	Topic	Assignment Due
2/27t		Pairings to discuss lit review feedback	Lit review feedback to each other, copied to me
3/1 th		Individual meetings with me to discuss lit review: Tom, Katherine, Anna, Grayson, Janna	
3/6 t		Individual meetings with me to discuss lit review: Lindsay, Kristina, Brian Laura	
3/8 th		Individual meetings with me, as requested	Literature Review, Research Question, Analysis Plan due by 5
3/12 – 3/16		recess	
3/20t		15-min presentations of preliminary results:	
3/22th		15-min presentations of preliminary results	
3/27 t		Individual or team meetings to be scheduled	
3/29th		Individual or team meetings to be scheduled	
4/3 t		Individual or team meetings to be scheduled	Draft of final paper to me if you desire feedback
4/5 th		Easter recess	
4/10 t		Practice presentations and class feedback	
4/12th		Practice presentations and class feedback	
4/17t		Practice presentations and class feedback	
4/19th		Practice presentations and class feedback	
4/24t		Practice presentations and class feedback	
4/26th		Individual or team meetings to be scheduled	
4/27 f		URCAS	Public Presentations
5/1			Final Paper Due, 5: 30 p.m.