Psychology 280 – Research Methods in Psychology
Fall 2017

Mon Wed 8:00 – 9:50 am
Stevenson 2091

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Office Hours: 12 – 1, Thursday, 9 – 11, alternate Wednesdays and by appointment
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Website: http://www.sonoma.edu/users/s/smithh/psy380/default.htm

Course Goal:
Upon completing this course, students should be able to understand and critically evaluate major research methods in psychology and the social sciences.

Course Objectives:
• Articulate the value of empirical social science research.
• Explain different research methods used by psychologists and other social scientists.
• Describe how various research designs address different types of questions and hypotheses.
• Evaluate the appropriateness of conclusions derived from empirical research.
• Interpret basic statistical conclusions.
• Distinguish between statistical significance and practical significance.
• Evaluate the validity of conclusions presented in research reports.
• Recognize that theoretical and sociocultural contexts as well as personal biases may shape research questions, design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation.
• Generalize research conclusions appropriately based on the limitations of particular research methods.
• Recognize the limitations of applying normative conclusions to individuals.
• Acknowledge that research results may have unanticipated societal consequences.
• Recognize that individual differences and sociocultural contexts may influence the applicability of research findings.

Course Requirements and Grades:
• Take three closed book, non-cumulative in-class exams. You will be asked to identify terms and solve brief research problems discussed in lecture and the textbook. Each exam will be worth 30 points. All exams, including the final exam, will be non-cumulative (covering only the lectures and chapters assigned for each section). Questions will be drawn from the lectures and the text. It is your responsibility to get notes form a classmate for any classes that you miss. I recommend exchanging contact information with other students in the class so you will be able to borrow any notes that you miss from them. If you loan your notes to someone, be sure to get that person’s name and contact information. Approximately one week before the exam, I will provide you with a study guide that includes a list of sample questions and terms. The best way to study for the exams is to work with other people in the class. If you cannot explain the concepts, principles, theories and research to someone else, then you do not really understand them as fully as you thought you did.
• Turn in three “three questions and three comments exercises” about relevant course content. The third set of questions should be about the research paper that you plan to review for the final paper. This assignment is explained more fully in a separate handout posted on the web site.
• Complete three course projects: 1) develop and pilot test an attitude scale, 2) analyze the content of television programs and 3) design an experiment. For each project, you will be asked to write a
two to three page summary of your experience. The paper should include a precise description of the methods you used, present the information that you collect and offer your interpretation of the information. All the course projects are more fully described in separate handouts posted on the web site. Co-authored papers will not be accepted.

- Complete in-class exercises including: 1) locating empirical journal articles, 2) exploring data from the SSU psychology alumni survey and 3) interpreting experimental data. All the assignments will be explained more fully during the relevant class period.
- Select a psychological question that interests you, and locate three empirical studies that report research related to the issue. You will select one of these three references to review in the research review paper. Your review of this research study should be summarized in a research review paper due the day of the final. The final paper is more fully described in a separate handout posted on the web site.

The final grade will be based on the following:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Three identification exams</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three course projects</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Randomly selected) In-class exercises</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three sets of “three questions”</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research review paper</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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I will assign final grades on the basis of the total possible points that you could receive in the course. I will use the following formula: 90-100% (A- to A), 80-89% (B- through B+), 70-79% (C- through C+), 60-69% (D), <60% (F). There will be no restriction on the number of students falling into any particular grade category. There also will be opportunities for 20 points of extra credit based on participation in research projects, attendance at selected lectures or other opportunities. To learn more about extra credit opportunities, check the web site.

Access for students with disabilities: If you are a student with a documented disability and believe you may need academic accommodations for this course, please see me during the first two weeks of the semester. Note that you must be registered each semester with the DISABLED STUDENT SERVICES office in Salazar 1049, ex. 664-2677 to receive accommodation considerations. Also, if you think that you may require assistance for evacuating a building in the event of a disaster, please let me know the type of assistance you may require. We should discuss your specific needs and the type of precautions that should be made before the emergency (i.e. assigning a buddy to guide you down the stairway). Please contact the Disability Services for Students office if other classroom accommodations are needed.

Missed Examinations: There will be no make-up examinations for any reason, other than serious illness, overwhelming personal crisis, or the rare event that you have three examinations on the same day. You must provide written documentation from the appropriate authority before the make-up exam will be scheduled.

Academic Integrity: I am committed to a code of values that honors academic and personal integrity, honesty, and ethical standards. I expect students to complete their own work. When a student refers to ideas of another person, I expect students to acknowledge this work by appropriate citation. Examples of academic dishonesty are listed in the Psychology Department’s policy (http://www.sonoma.edu/psychology/AcademicHonestyPolicy.html). In this class, any incident of academic dishonesty will immediately result in a failing grade for that particular assignment for all the individuals involved, and may, at my discretion, involve additional university disciplinary action.
Attendance and Participation: Attending and participating in class is the best way to learn the course material and to succeed in this course. Class activities can facilitate learning by encouraging you to use, apply and integrate the concepts and methods that we discuss. Written notes from in-class assignments (which I will ask you to hand into me) represent one way that I reward regular attendance. I also will consider attendance, punctuality, behavior (the degree to which responsibilities are carried out in a professional manner), and class participation when deciding whether to tip a borderline grade one way or another.

Classroom environment: The class will be run as a combination lecture/discussion format, so student participation is crucial to the success of the course. Constructive and appropriate contributions to classroom discussion are welcome. Given the sensitive nature of some course topics, I request that you work to be respectful of other students’ perspectives and experiences during discussions. I will endeavor to do the same. Also, please refrain from engaging in behaviors that are disrespectful and distracting to me and your peers. These behaviors include (but are not limited to): text messaging, using cell phones, reading newspapers, checking email, surfing the internet, sleeping, arriving late or leaving early.


Other resources:
University Policies: http://www.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/policies/studentinfo.shtml
Disability Services for Students (DSS): http://www.sonoma.edu/dss/ (Salazar 1049)
Writing Center Resource: Free consultation; http://www.sonoma.edu/programs/writingcenter/ (Schulz 1103)
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): http://www.sonoma.edu/counselingctr/ (Stevenson 1088)

Course schedule is posted on the website: http://www.sonoma.edu/users/s/smithh/psy380/toc/sched.htm