

“Psychological Detective” Team Project*

Project Coordinator: Radostina Purvanova (purva002@umn.edu)

Purpose:

The purpose of this project is to introduce students to the research process and to increase their understanding about how psychological research is conducted. The project will ask students to engage in four sequential activities which correspond to basic stages of real psychological research – idea generation, hypothesis development, data collection, and data interpretation.

An additional objective for this project is to inform decision makers at the Department of Psychology about teamwork in student teams. Hence, an integral element of the project is a series of surveys students will be required to take. These data, which will reflect student experiences in teams, will be used to improve future student team projects at our department.

The Project at a Glance:

The Psychological Detective is a team project – you will work with 3 other team members. The project consists of four phases. Your team’s TA will provide developmental feedback to your team at the end of each phase. Only the Final Paper, which you will turn in after Phase 4, will be graded. The four project phases as are follows:

1. Phase One: Formulate a Research Question

Your team will meet to decide on a research question of mutual interest. You will not be limited in your choices, as long as your topic relates to psychology. The purpose of this meeting is to write a one-page paper, describing your research question. Specific guidelines will be made available to you in advance of your 1st team meeting.

Within a few days of turning your paper in, your TA will provide feedback to your team regarding the breadth of your research question – e.g., is it specific enough, is it doable within one semester.

Once you hear back from your team’s TA, you will need to start preparing for Phase Two, as described below.

2. Phase Two: Conduct a Literature Review & State a Hypothesis

Each team member is responsible for finding one empirical article related to the team’s research question, and summarizing it following pre-specified guidelines.

* The Psychological Detective project meets new requirements set by the University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts and by the Department of Psychology for increased emphasis on research in our undergraduate classes. It also meets the Psychology Department goal of increasing the consistency between the evening Psy 1001 sections.

Your team will then meet, and you will all share your article summaries with each other. The purpose is to write a 1-to-2 page paper, describing what you have learned about your research question from previous published research, and stating a specific hypothesis that makes sense given what you've learned from prior research. Specific guidelines will be made available to you in advance of your 2nd team meeting.

Within a few days of turning your paper in, your TA will provide feedback to your team regarding whether you've correctly summarized prior research findings, as well as whether your hypothesis makes sense.

Once you hear back from your team's TA, you will need to start preparing for Phase Three, as described below.

3. Phase Three: Design Case Study

Each team member is responsible for generating some ideas about how your team can collect data to (hopefully) support your team's hypothesis.

When your team meets, you will all share your data collection ideas. The purpose is to write a 1-to-2 page paper, describing your team's plan for data collection. Specific guidelines will be made available to you in advance of your 3rd team meeting.

Within a few days of turning your paper in, your TA will provide feedback to your team regarding your study design.

Once you hear back from your team's TA, you will need to start preparing for Phase Four, as described below.

4. Phase Four: Data Collection and Final Write-Up

Each team member is responsible for carrying out their part of the data collection process, and for jotting down their findings.

When your team meets, you will share what you found with each other. The purpose is to write the Final Paper. This paper will consist of the revised short papers your teams wrote for Phases One, Two and Three, as well as of a new section describing your team's findings. The paper also will have a conclusion, which will reflect on the similarities and differences between your team's findings and the findings of the articles you read for phase two. Specific guidelines will be made available to you in advance of your 4th team meeting.

Within a week of turning your Final Paper in, your team's TA will grade your team's Final Paper.

Examples of Student Projects from Past Years:

Home Schooling – Investigated whether home schooled kids are socially or academically disadvantaged compared to public and private schooled kids. For data collection, teams interviewed 2 students from each category (home schooled, public schooled, private schooled), as well as some of these students' parents and teachers.

Mood in Bad Weather – Investigated whether people are less happy when the weather is bad. For data collection, teams observed passer-by's on a cold and a warm day, and inconspicuously recorded whether people engaged in a pre-determined set of nonverbal behaviors associated with happy and sad mood, respectively.

Race and Body Image – Investigated whether white and black teenagers of both sexes have different standards of healthy versus obese body shapes. For data collection, teams presented a series of stylistic images to a small team of white teenage girls, white teenage boys, black teenage girls and black teenage boys, and asked them to pick a female and a male body that looked healthy and to pick one that looked obese.

Grading:

This project is worth 15% of your class grade (i.e., as much as one test). Note that only the Final Paper (which you write during the last team meeting) is graded. Your TA will provide detailed, developmental feedback for all intermediate work – i.e., the short papers turned in after the first three team meetings. You are strongly encouraged to take that feedback into consideration and revise those short papers to the best of your abilities. This way, when you merge those short papers together, your overall Final Paper should be of the highest quality.

Important: Even though only the Final Paper is graded, teams will lose 5% of their final team grade for each intermediate paper that was turned in late. For example, team #16 turned in their Phase One assignment after the deadline – their TA reflects that in his/her file, and then takes away 5% of the Final Paper grade for being late with one assignment. If the team has been late with all 4 assignments, it will automatically lose 20% of the Final Paper grade.

Further, all students must fill out all surveys related to the project in order for the Department of Psychology to gain an empirically grounded understanding of student teamwork and team processes. Teams whose members fail to fill out surveys will lose another 5% of their final project grade.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. How will teams be formed?

Teams will be formed by random assignment. You will be notified of who your team members are within 1 – 1 ½ weeks of today.

2. How do I know who is my team's TA?

When you are notified of your other team members, you will be also notified of who your TA is, and their contact info.

3. How will I get in touch with my teammates?

When you receive notification of who your teammates are, you will also receive their email address. You are 100% responsible for emailing your fellow team members to set up your team's meetings. Alternatively, you can talk to them before or after class.

4. When and where will I meet with my team?

When: For team meeting times, refer to the Psychological Detective project timelines listed below.

Where: Your team is free to decide on a meeting location – whatever works for all team members.

Important: Arrange for at least one team member to bring a laptop (or meet at a University computer lab), so that you can write the assignments as you are meeting.

5. Would there be any additional meetings, other than the four required meetings for each Project Phase?

In general, no other team meetings will be required. However, if you need to talk to your teammates about something related to the project, we encourage you to do that. In other words, teams are free to set up additional meetings, if they consider this to be necessary.

6. What if I need help with any of the individual tasks I need to do to prepare for a team meeting? For example, what if I can't find a good research article prior to Phase Two?

When in need of help, always email/talk to your team's TA. You can also email the project coordinator (contact info above). Lastly, do not forget that your teammates should be a good resource for you as well – you all have a vested interest in helping each other out.

7. Can I get help from my class instructor?

You are advised to ask your TA, the project coordinator and/or your fellow team members. Your instructor may be able to provide help to you, but they are not directly involved with the specifics of the project, and may end up directing you to your TA or the project coordinator anyways.

8. How will I know what feedback our team has received from our TA?

Your TA will distribute your papers in class.

9. How busy should I expect to be with this project?

Good question. Here is the break down for all major project activities:

- 4 team meetings X 1 – 1 ½ hours per meeting = 4-6 hours for the semester.
- Prep time for Phase One = 0 hours.
- Prep time for Phase Two = 5 hours.

- Prep time for Phase Three = 2 hours.
- Prep time for Phase Four = 5 hours.
 - i. Total prep time = 12 hours for the semester.
- Coordination (e.g., setting up a time to meet) = 1 hour total for the semester.
- **Grand total** = 17-19 hours (20 at the most).

10. How many surveys will I take, and how long will they be?

There will be 5 surveys –baseline, T1, T2, T3 and T4. On the average, surveys should take about 20 minutes. However, some will be longer and some shorter – this is an average across the 5 surveys. The grand total on surveys is therefore about 2 hours.

11. What if a certain team member consistently forgets to fill out his/her surveys? Will the whole team be penalized?

Yes, unless the circumstances have been truly inordinate, even if only one team member fails to complete their surveys, the whole team will lose 5% of your final paper grade.

12. Will the data I provide in these surveys remain anonymous? Will it affect my grade in any way?

The data you provide will be confidential and anonymous. No matter what your responses to these surveys are, your grade will not be affected. As a matter of fact, your class instructor, your TA or the project coordinator will never be able to know what data you provided. There will be a staff person in charge of handling all data, and de-identifying it. This staff person will only report anonymous results to the instructional team and the Psychology Department. *However, the staff person will inform your instructor if you have not completed your surveys, which will result in your entire team losing 5% of their final project grade.*

Project Schedule

Week	Dates:	Relevant Psychological Detective Team Project Activity:
1	Sept. 4 – Sept. 7	Learn about Psychological Detective team project.
2	Sept. 10 – Sept. 14	Learn who your teammates are.
3	Sept. 17 – Sept. 21	Complete baseline survey (10-15 minutes).
4	Sept. 24 – Sept. 28	1st team meeting. Decide on a research question. Write up a 1-page description. Assignment due on Friday, Sept. 28th, 6pm.
5	Oct. 1 – Oct. 5	Complete Survey #1 (25-30 minutes). Begin preparing for your 2 nd team meeting – find and summarize a research article related to your team’s research question.
6	Oct. 8 – Oct. 12	Continue preparing for your 2 nd team meeting – find and summarize a research article related to your team’s research question.
7	Oct. 15 – Oct. 19	2nd team meeting. Write a 1-to-2 page paper, summarizing the findings of the articles each team member read, and stating a specific hypothesis your team wants to test. Assignment due on Friday, Oct. 19th, 6pm.
8	Oct. 22 – Oct. 26	Complete Survey #2 (10-15 minutes).
9	Oct. 29 – Nov. 2	3rd team meeting. Write a 1-to-2 page paper describing your data collection plan. Assignment due on Friday, Nov. 2nd, 6pm.

Week	Date:	Relevant Psychological Detective Team Project Activity:
10	Nov. 5 – Nov. 9	Complete Survey #3 (25-30 minutes). Begin collecting data as agreed-upon during your 3 rd meeting.
11	Nov. 12 – Nov. 16	Continue collecting data, if needed.
12	Nov. 21 – Nov. 23	Continue collecting data, if needed. <i>Note – Nov 22nd and 23rd are Thanksgiving break.</i>
13	Nov. 26 – Nov. 30	4th team meeting. Write Final Paper. <u>Revise</u> your research question assignment, hypothesis assignment, and data collection assignment. To that, add a description of your team’s findings. Also add a conclusion. Paper due on Friday, Nov. 30th, 6pm.
14	Dec. 3 – Dec. 7	Complete Survey #4 (10-15 minutes).