

**Psychology 4994V: Honors Research Practicum
(A Writing Intensive Course)
Syllabus for Fall, 2009**

Class Meetings:

TuTh 11:15 – 12:30
N227 Elliott

Instructor:

Randy Fletcher
Office Hour: Thursday 1:30 and by appointment
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Teaching Assistant:

Chris Miller
Office Hour: Monday 3:00 and by appointment
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Goals:

The major goals of this course are to familiarize you (as a Psychology Department honors major) with research opportunities available in the University of Minnesota Psychology Department, provide you with practical experience conducting psychological research, and prepare you to write an honors thesis in psychology. To achieve these goals you will be required to work approximately nine hours each week on a research project designed and supervised by a faculty member or graduate student, make a formal in-class presentation, and write a 10 - 15 page research report. You will also be required to attend class each week and complete the required readings and assignments before each class.

Mentors:

You will be assigned a research mentor from among the Psychology Department's regular faculty, adjunct faculty, or graduate students. This mentor will be responsible for designing and supervising your research experience and assisting you with the preparation of your research report and presentation. In return you will contribute approximately nine hours per week to the research project. The instructor will be responsible for finding you a suitable mentor.

Presentations:

You will be required to make a formal 25-minute presentation to the class. This presentation must cover the specific hypothesis tested in your research project, the methods used to evaluate this hypothesis, and the results (if they are available at the time of the presentation).

Research Reports:

You will be required to turn in a 10 - 15 page report describing your research project (due Dec 11). This paper must be in APA format and include a title page, abstract, introduction, method section, discussion, and reference list. Where appropriate it should also include tables, figures, and an appendix. The 10 - 15 page limit applies only to the required portions of the paper.

In addition to the final paper, you must turn in three preliminary drafts of your research report. The first draft (due Oct 8) will include only the title page and method section. The second draft (due Nov 5) will include the title page, introduction, method section, and reference list. The third draft (due Dec 3) will include a title page, abstract, introduction, method section, a section entitled "anticipated results and discussion" in which you describe the different possible outcomes of your study and how each outcome would be interpreted, and the reference list.

Research reports will be evaluated on the following criteria: (1) Does it explain and motivate the research hypothesis? (2) Does it explain the methods used to evaluate the hypothesis? (3) Does it make appropriate use of tables, figures, and statistical tests to convey the results? (4) Does it describe the implications of the results for the original hypothesis? (5) Is it coherent and well written? (6) Does it follow the conventions laid out in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA format)?

Peer Reviews

After preliminary drafts of research reports are turned in, you will be asked to write formal reviews of the reports submitted by two other students. You will be asked to evaluate these reports for both content and exposition. We will discuss how to do this in class. Reviews will be due one week after the papers are turned in. They will be returned to the authors along with comments from one of the teaching assistants. Authors will be expected to revise their reports in a manner consistent with this feedback. This review process is modeled after the peer review process used by psychological journals, and like a journal reviewer you will have the option to remain anonymous to the authors whose reports you review.

Grading:

Your final grade will be based on participation, your in-class presentation of your research project, and your final research report. You will begin with 25 points for class participation. Each time you miss a class without prior approval from the instructor, you will lose two points. If you turn in an assignment late, you will lose two points per day up to two days. Assignments more than two days late will not be accepted. Up to four participation points will be deducted for incomplete or incorrect assignments, including reviews that do not follow the guidelines described in class or paper drafts which do not incorporate recommendations made on earlier drafts. The instructor will assign up to 25 points for your in-class presentation and up to 50 points for your final research report. At the end of the course these points will be converted to letter grades as follows:

- "A" requires a minimum of 92 points.
- "A-" requires a minimum of 90 points.
- "B+" requires a minimum of 88 points.
- "B" requires a minimum of 82 points.
- "B-" requires a minimum of 80 points.
- "C+" requires a minimum of 78 points.
- "C" requires a minimum of 72 points.
- "C-" requires a minimum of 70 points.
- "D+" requires a minimum of 68 points.
- "D" requires a minimum of 62 points.
- "D-" requires a minimum of 60 points.

Readings (Available at the Bookstore):

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. (Recommended)

Sternberg, R. J. (2003). *The Psychologists Companion: A Guide to Scientific Writing for Students and Researchers*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. (Required)

Course Outline:

Week 1 (Sept 8 & 10): Introduction

Overview of course content and grading procedures.

Each student will complete a background questionnaire in class that will be used to match him or her with a mentor.

Week 2 (Sept 15 & 17): The U of M Psychology Department

Slide show illustrating the history of the U of M Psychology Department.

Current research in the department.

Students will receive mentor assignments this weekend.

Week 3 (Sept 22 & 24): The Role of Research in Psychological Science

Discussion of the relationship between psychological theory and research.

Introduction to critical thinking skills.

Week 4 (Sept 29 & Oct 1): Research Reports and APA Format

The structure and content of research reports.

Reading: Sternberg, Ch. 1, 3-8.

Week 5 (Oct 6 & 8): Writing, Reviewing and Revising Research Reports

Practical advice on writing and revising research reports. Submission and review procedures used by psychological journals. How to write a peer review.

Reading: Sternberg, Ch. 9 - 11.

Recommended Activity: Ask your mentor if you can read the reviews of one of his or her journal submissions.

First drafts of research reports due (title page and method section).

Week 6 (Oct 13 & 15): Careers in Psychological Research

An overview of academic and non-academic career options for psychological researchers. Finding a job.

Reviews of first drafts due.

Week 7 (Oct 20 & 22): The Ethics of Psychological Research

Protecting the rights of human and animal subjects. Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures. The Psychology Department's Research Experience Program (REP) procedures. Analyzing, reporting and sharing data.

Recommended Activity: Ask your mentor for a copy of the IRB application for your study. Read it!

Week 8 (Oct 27 & 29): Graduate School

How to choose a graduate program. How to apply. How to get accepted. Guest

Speaker: Holly Hatch-Surisook, Psychology Department Undergraduate Advisor.

Week 9 (Nov 3 & 5): Honors Thesis Panel Discussion

Several students who have already completed their honors theses, or who are currently working on them, will describe their experiences, offer advice, and answer students' questions.

Recommended Activity: Go to the CLA Honors office in 20 Nicholson Hall and check out one or two psychology theses. Read them!

Second drafts of research reports due (title page, introduction, method section and references).

Week 10 (Nov 10 & 12): Making Presentations

How to make a research presentation. Using PowerPoint.

Reviews of second drafts due.

Week 11 (Nov 17 & 19): Student Presentations

Presentations of student research projects.

Reading: Sternberg, Ch. 14.

Week 12 (Nov 24): Student Presentations

Presentations of student research projects.

Reading: Sternberg, Ch. 14.

(No class on Nov 26 – Thanksgiving Break)

Week 13 (Dec 1 & 3): Student Presentations

Presentations of student research projects.

Reading: Sternberg, Ch. 14.

Third drafts of research reports due (title page, abstract, introduction, method section, anticipated results and discussion, references).

Week 14 (Dec 8 & 10): Student Presentations

Presentations of student research projects.

Reading: Sternberg, Ch. 14.

Reviews of third drafts due.

Week 15 (Dec 15): Student Presentations

Presentations of student research projects.

Reading: Sternberg, Ch. 14.

Dec 21: Final Papers Due by 12:00 noon