

## Experimental Personality and Social Psychology – Spring 2012

PSY 418 sections P, 5Q

Lecture: Tuesday & Thursday, 11:00-12:15pm, Flipse 301

Lab: Thursday, 12:30-3:00, Flipse 535

Professor: Dr. Debra Lieberman

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Office: Flipse 463

Office hours: Tues & Thurs: 9:30-11:00

**Text (Optional):** *Conducting Research in Psychology: Measuring the Weight of Smoke*, by Brett Pelham and Hart Blanton, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.

### **Goals of this Course:**

*In this course, you will learn to conduct experimental and quasi-experimental research in psychology.* I realize that most of you are not planning to make a career in psychology research. However, all of you, psychologists or not, are going to be bombarded with research claims, and are going to seek out answers to questions that can be answered with research, for the rest of your life. Some of those claims may not matter much to you (e.g., do people really look like their dogs?). Others will matter to you a little bit (e.g., which of these vacuums is best?). Others will matter to you a lot (e.g., if my child is missing, will putting his or her face on a milk carton help? Is there a link between vaccines and autism?). Therefore, an important goal of this course will be to teach you to how to *critically evaluate research claims*. This will be a skill that I hope will serve you well no matter what field you decide to enter after graduation.

*As a secondary goal of this course, we will discuss how to convey your ideas and research findings in clear, straightforward, and interesting ways.* One of the most important goals of research and science is to gain new information and convey that information to others. Although it may not always seem like research is supposed to be interesting or easy to understand (since it can often seem dull or complex), it is important for researchers to be able to explain their findings in straightforward ways that make sense to people and that, hopefully, interest them and teach them something new. If one cannot convey research in a way that is clear and compelling, one's research may have very little impact. The ability to convey your ideas in clear and appealing ways is a skill that is essential for many different fields (e.g., teaching, advertising, entertainment, law, journalism, etc.) and thus we will focus on it in this course. Even if this is the only concept that you take with you from this class, I will be very happy!

### **Organization of this Course:**

You will learn about experimental research methods in social psychology through lectures, reading assignments, and research projects. There are 2 lectures and 1 lab meeting each week. During the lecture portion of the class, we will discuss concepts relating to experimental research methods and how to translate abstract ideas into testable hypotheses.

The laboratory portion of each class meeting will be devoted to completing hands-on exercises that will improve your understanding of experimental research methods. It will also be devoted to planning and conducting your own research study. Both lecture and lab sessions are an essential part of the course and attendance is necessary for completing course requirements.

## **Requirements:**

Your grade in this class will be based on a combination of 4 areas of participation and assessment:

1. **Group Project (25%).** The primary activity in the course will be the development, conduct, and presentation of a group project. Because it's much more fun to collect data on questions that interest you than on topics that your instructor forces upon you, you will do a research project in an area that is of interest to you. For the project, you will work in groups of 3-4 people. You will need to come up with a hypothesis and a research design (and get the instructor's approval on it), and then collect and analyze some data on the topic. Your project must be an original true experiment *with two fully crossed independent variables*.

Although it is a lot of work to plan and conduct a study within one semester, we will be spending a lot of time in class helping you plan and conduct your study. We will try to make sure to give you the time that you need to complete this task. During the last week of the semester, each group will present its findings to the class in a poster session. Your grade on the project will be based on *creativity, rigor of the experimental methods, theoretical significance, and the presentation itself*. You will be graded by your group as well as by your instructor. The breakdown of your Group Project Grade is as follows:

Creativity and theoretical significance of research: 5%

Experimental methods: 5%

Poster presentation: 5%

Individual investment in project: 10%

2. **Writing Exercises (25%)**

Prior to turning in your final research report, you will be asked to turn in your "Introduction"—an initial presentation of your background and hypotheses in an APA style research paper. This paper will form the basis of your final paper and each member of your group will write their *own independent paper*. It must be concise – no longer than 2-3 pages double-spaced using APA style. In this paper, you will be able to practice: 1) conveying the justification for your study and your research hypotheses in a clear and straightforward manner and 2) presenting your research ideas in a way that is compelling for your reader. *It will also give you a chance to start working on your full research report before the very last minute!!*

You will also be asked to turn in drafts of your methods, results, and discussion before your final paper is due.

As mentioned earlier, one of the primary goals of this course is to foster good communication skills both in writing and in oral presentations. One way to improve our ability to communicate clearly and effectively is to spend some time thinking about what makes for clear, good writing. In order to practice this, you will be asked to write a critique of a paper given to you and to provide feedback about what was good as well as what needs improvement. You will focus on whether the ideas were conveyed in a clear way, such that you were able to understand the background and goals for the research project. You will be graded on how well you are able to point

out what needs to be improved in the paper. Other critical thinking exercises might include reviewing previously published manuscripts.

3. **Research Report (40%).** Your final paper will be an APA-style research report based on the findings of your group project. Although you did the project as a group, you will each write an *independent* paper on the project. You will prepare a concise (no longer than 7-pages of text—not including title page, abstract, references, graphs—double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins) report based on the findings of your study.
4. **Class Participation in Discussions and Attendance (10%).** Throughout the quarter, we will do many activities and have many discussions as a class, as well as in smaller groups. Enthusiastic and creative participation is encouraged, and attendance is required. We will take attendance every day. Your grade will include any in-class or take-home assignments.

**Grading:** Your final grade breakdown looks like this:

Group Project	25%
Writing Exercises	25%
Research Report	40%
Class Participation and Attendance	10%

**Course Website:**

You will be able to access any on-line materials for this course at the following URL:

<http://www.debralieberman.com/html/courses/418.html>

**Course Policies:**

1. **Academic honesty:** Your writing should come from *you*. While you may draw from other sources to help formulate or support your work, you **must always cite these sources** and tie them into your own ideas and theses. Plagiarism is a serious offense, and may result in students failing the course or being expelled from the university. Guidelines on citing references will be provided in class.
2. **Complete and submit your assignments on time.** It is your responsibility to make sure you are in class to complete and hand in assignments, and to hear any and all information and announcements. Not being in class the day an assignment is explained or due does not grant you extra time to complete it.
3. **Stay current with class materials.** This syllabus is provided for your information and may change during the course of the semester at my discretion. You are responsible for the material in the syllabus as well as anything that may be added during the semester.

**Experimental Personality and Social Psychology**  
**Tentative COURSE SCHEDULE**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Discussion Topic</b>	<b>Assignments &amp; Notes</b>
1	1-17	Course Overview & Introductions	Handout: Seed articles
1	1-19	Selecting a topic	Assignment: Read over topics and seed articles for class on 8/30 In class: Rank preferences for group projects.
1-Lab	1-19	Developing a research topic	In class: Meet your group members and discuss ideas with group.
2	1-24	Causality versus correlation	
2	1-26	Quasi experiments and factorial designs: In class experiment (ice)	Assignment: Collect data from 2 people: due 9/8;
2-Lab	1-26		
3	1-31	Experimental designs	In class: Langer and Abelson study
3	2-2	Meet with groups to discuss research projects and hypotheses.	Due beginning of class: Ice data Due at end of lab: Notes from 1 <sup>st</sup> group meeting, Q & H worksheet. Due in class: 2 articles per person
3-Lab	2-2		
4	2-7	Manipulating psychological phenomena	Due in class: worksheet on interactions and main effects
4	2-9	Within subjects and mixed designs	In class: Continue literature search with group. Due: 2 more articles
4-Lab	2-9		
5	2-14	Measurement	Due: 2 articles per person
5	2-16	Data from ice-experiment	Due: hypotheses, measures, etc.
5-Lab	2-16		
6	2-21	Writing an Introduction	Handout: Article review worksheet, due: 10/4
6	2-23	Statistics	Work in groups. Finalize design and materials. Due in class: Statistics worksheet for group projects
6-Lab	2-23		
7	2-28	Writing an Abstract	Due: Collect article review worksheet, Abstract draft in class.
7	3-1	Writing the Methods	Hand back article review worksheet. Assignment: get more references if needed.
7-Lab	3-1		
8	3-6	Setting up a database	Due: Introductions
8	3-8		Handout: Critique assignment
8-Lab	3-8		
NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK 3/12 – 3/16			

9	3-20	Data collection	Hand back abstract, introductions and critiques.
9	3-22	Data collection	
9-Lab	3-22		
10	3-27	Data collection	Due: Abstract & 2 <sup>nd</sup> draft of Intro
10	3-29	Data collection	
10-Lab	3-29		
11	4-3	In class: Data analyses and Results section write-up	
11	4-5		
11-Lab	4-5		
12	4-10	In class: Data analyses and Results section write-up	
12	4-12		
12-lab	4-12		
13	4-17	Writing a Discussion	Due: Methods and Results Draft
13	4-19	In class: preparation of APA formatted figures and tables	
13-lab	4-19		
14	4-24	Wrap-Up	Hand back Methods and Results
14	4-26	Poster presentations	
14-lab	4-26		
PAPERS DUE: MONDAY April 30 <sup>th</sup> BY 5 PM IN MAILBOX			