

## **SOCY 491: Experimental Research Design**

Spring 2018 • TR 12:30–1:45PM • ASY 1101

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**OVERVIEW:** This course is the second course in a two-course sequence designed to help you design and execute your own research project under the supervision of faculty and graduate students in the lab. Last semester, we covered the various methods sociologists use to evaluate causal claims. This semester, we will take your extension projects and help you in the design, execution, analysis, and writing stages of the research process. Over the course of the semester, my goals for this course are to:

- Develop your skill to link theory and empirical research
- Guide you in furthering your own research ideas
- Introduce you to fundamental issues that arise in executing an experiment
- Develop your skill to clearly and concisely present empirical results

There are two major outputs in this course. The first is a lab practicum. Most of the practicum will take place outside of class time and provide you with opportunities to conduct research in the lab. The second is a continuation of your extension project from last semester. You will be expected to collect data and present results for your study through the course of the semester. In addition, you will be expected to provide commentary and responses, and to actively participate in class discussions about the readings.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** Aronson, Elliot, Phoebe C. Ellsworth, J. Merrill Carlsmith, Marti Hope Gonzales. *Methods of Research in Social Psychology* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Each week, there will be orienting readings that will lead into lecture and discussion. Other than the first week, you will each be assigned to lead discussions on one of the readings. Other than readings from Aronson et al., all required readings will be posted on ELMS.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** Students are expected to attend class, actively participate in class discussions, carry out duties as part of the research practicum, and work on a research team to execute the research project designed from the fall. Readings and assignments for each day should be completed **before** class. Late submissions are not allowed. If exceptional circumstances should arise, you must consult with me at least one class period

before a due date so that we can make alternative arrangements. Final grades will be based on the following components:

**Student-Led Discussions (20%).** Active participation is, of course, required. We will begin each class with student-led discussions of the readings. One student will be primarily responsible for leading the discussion. The discussion leader should prepare a short summary of the readings. The discussion leaders should also prepare a few open-ended discussion questions on the readings. "Open-ended" means that the answer is not obvious and reasonable people might disagree. For example, "what did the authors find?" is not open-ended, while "are their alternative explanations for the findings?" or "does the design adequately capture the concepts of interest?" are. Other students should contribute to the discussion and raise follow-up questions and interpretations.

**Lab Practicum (30%).** The bulk of your class grade will be based on a lab practicum. You will each be a research assistant in the Group Processes Lab. As an RA in the lab, you will work with me and graduate students to learn how to conduct experiments, and be trained on running one or more studies in the lab. You are expected to run 3-4 experimental sessions a week.

**Research Project (30%).** The second major portion of your class grade will be based on a final course paper where you report on your findings from the extension project you designed last semester. This paper is broken up into several parts to aid you toward the final product. You should have IRB approval for your study completed **before** the beginning of the semester. A one-page data collection plan is due **January 30**. A plan for your data analysis is due **February 20**. You are expected to complete data collection **before** the end of spring break. In rare cases, you will be allowed to continue data collection into April, but you are required to clear these plans with me first. Regardless of when you are finished with data collection, some preliminary patterns are due **March 27**. A final draft of your study results is due **May 18** by **5PM**. All requirements for the course paper should be uploaded to the course ELMS site.

**Project Presentation (10%).** From **April 24** to **May 8**, you will be expected to present your preliminary findings and interpretation of these findings to the class. The presentations should be about 20 minutes each and cover your theoretical arguments, potential contributions, design, results, and how the results speak to your theory.

**Project Discussant (10%).** You will be asked to write reviews of other teams' presentations. The reviews should comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the project and interpretation of findings. In doing so, you should make constructive (and feasible) suggestions for revisions. Authors of course

papers should attempt to incorporate these suggestions to the best of their ability in their final project draft.

### **COURSE POLICIES:**

**Attendance:** You are expected to attend every class. If you miss class, you are responsible for all materials covered and announcements made in class. If class is cancelled for any reason, that day's scheduled activities will occur the next time the class meets. I will inform you of changes made to the schedule if this were to occur.

In addition, you are required to show up for scheduled lab sessions at least 20 minutes before the session to set up. Being late to lab sessions reflect poorly on the lab as a whole. Participants should be able to count on RAs to be ready for their appointments. If you are unable to make a scheduled lab time, it is your responsibility to find someone to cover your session.

**Academic Integrity & Other Policies:** Please review the Code of Academic Integrity at <http://president.umd.edu/sites/president.umd.edu/files/documents/policies/III-100A.pdf>. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Violations of the Code will result in a course grade of F. I will report these cases to the Office of Student Conduct. All other student policies can be found here: <https://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

**Accommodations:** Students with needs that might impact their ability to complete the requirements for this course in any way should inform me as soon as possible and provide any required documentation. I will do my best to accommodate these requests. All requests for accommodations should be made by **February 6**.

**Office Hours:** I use an online booking system for scheduling office hours. This ensures that everyone is on the same page about meetings and prevents situations where you come when another student is already meeting with me. You can book an appointment at [ter.ps/DoanOH](http://ter.ps/DoanOH). When booking your meeting, please include a brief summary of the purpose of the meeting. This helps me prepare for our meeting and keeps us on task. Meeting slots are 20 minutes, but feel free to book two consecutive slots if you think it will take us more than 20 minutes to discuss a particular issue. Longer meetings should be scheduled over email as to not impact availability for other students. If my posted timeslots do not work for your schedule, please send me an email to schedule a mutually convenient time.

**COURSE OUTLINE:** Note that this outline is subject to change based on everyone's interests. I will announce any deviations in class. Readings under

each week's topic are to be completed **before** class on Thursday. Assignments due each week are due on Thursday **before** class to ELMS.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic/Readings</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
<b>1/25</b>	Introduction to the course	
	Aronson et al. Introduction	
<b>1/30</b>	Designing experiments	Data collection plan due
	Aronson et al. Ch. 4	
<b>2/6</b>	Avoiding and detecting bias	
	Aronson et al. Ch. 9	
<b>2/13</b>	Sampling and recruitment	
	Barrera, Davide, and Brent Simpson. 2012. "Much ado about deception: Consequences of deceiving research participants in the social sciences." <i>Sociological Methods &amp; Research</i> 41:383–413.	
<b>2/20</b>	Crowdsourcing data	Data analysis plan due
	Shank, Daniel. 2015. "Using Crowdsourcing Websites for Sociological Research: The Case of Amazon Mechanical Turk." <i>The American Sociologist</i> 47.	
<b>2/27</b>	Participant heterogeneity	
	Henrich, Joseph, Steven J. Heine, Ara Norenzayan. 2011. "The Weirdest People in the World?" <i>Behavioral and Brain Sciences</i> 33:61–83.	
<b>3/6</b>	Common issues	
	Kuiper, Kathy J., and Stuart J. Hysom. 2007. "Common Problems and Solutions." In <i>Laboratory Experiments in the Social Sciences</i> edited by M. Webster and J. Sell.	
<b>3/13</b>	Thinking and writing about data	
	Aronson et al. Ch. 11	
<b>3/20</b>	• Spring break • No class •	
<b>3/27</b>	Analyzing experimental data	Preliminary patterns due
	Benjamin, Daniel J et al. 2017. "Redefine Statistical Significance." <i>PsyArXiv</i> : <a href="https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/MKY9J">dx.doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/MKY9J</a>	
<b>4/3</b>	Presenting results	
	Spellman et al. 2007. "Making Claims in Papers and in Talks." In <i>Critical Thinking in Psychology</i> edited by R. J. Sternberg, H. L. Roediger, and D. Halpern.	
<b>4/10</b>	Discussing results and linking to theory	Preliminary results due
	Kerr, Norbert. 1998. "HARKing: Hypothesizing After the Results are Known." <i>Personality and Social Psychology Review</i> 2:196–217.	
<b>4/17</b>	Next steps and where to	
	Sell, Jane. 2018. "Cooley-Mead Address." <i>Social Psychology Quarterly</i> .	

<b>4/24</b>	• Project presentations •
<b>5/1</b>	• Project presentations •
<b>5/8</b>	• Project presentations •
<b>5/18</b>	• Final Project Due by 5PM •