

Psychology 401  
Directed Research in Psychology  
Fall 2018

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**Office hours:** Wednesdays, 2:30-4:30 p.m., and by appointment

**Course overview**

The purpose of this course is to provide you with a chance to conduct psychological research. Over the course of the semester, you will plan, design, carry out, and write up your very own empirical research project. This is a great opportunity that will introduce you to aspects of the field that you might previously have heard or read about, and with which you will now have first-hand experience. This is a very labor-intensive course, so expect to spend a lot of time on it, especially doing things that you often don't think of as part of your school work (recruiting participants for your study, building an online survey, analyzing data). That is, of course, in addition to **writing**... You'll write and re-write a lot in this class, and should be proficient in APA-style (the editorial style of pretty much any psychology journal article you've ever read) by the end of the semester. This class is both hard and fun! Hopefully, the course will be set up so that you get plenty of help with the hard parts, and lots of company and lots of satisfaction from the fun parts. By the end of the course, you will (hopefully!) have developed:

- an understanding of the decisions and responsibilities associated with research in psychology
- proficiency in developing a testable and well-grounded research question
- proficiency in collecting and analyzing data
- proficiency in communicating (orally and in written form) in the language of psychology

**Public presentations.** Public presentation of your work in Directed Research is part of the capstone requirement. You will have two (required) opportunities for public presentation of your work: **The Psychology Department Poster Session** (on the last day of classes, December 12<sup>th</sup>, from 4:45-6:00 p.m. in Smail Gallery) and the **Minnesota Undergraduate Psychology Conference** (MUPC, at Gustavus Adolphus College on Saturday, April 27, 2019) MUPC is an exciting and important opportunity. You'll be surprised at how much fun it can be to work really hard on a project all semester and then get a chance to share it with people beyond the Macalester community. Obviously, because MUPC will happen

next semester, your presentation at MUPC will not be included in your grade for the course; it is, however, a graduation requirement. If you have some extenuating circumstance that will make it impossible for you to present at MUPC in the spring, do not worry, we will work it all out.

### Forms / APA Style / Other helpful material

Forms: There are several administrative processes that must be completed in conducting psychological research, including the critical process of obtaining approval to do a study that involves the use of human participants (there is also a process for studies that involve animals, but none of you will be doing one of those in this class). The psychology department's website includes all of the forms you must fill out in order to have your project approved (Review Form for Proposed Research):

<http://www.macalester.edu/psychology/research/forms/>

Publication manual: The definitive, official reference for all things related to APA style is the publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). You should already have this because it was a required text in Psych 301. There are a couple of copies of the publication manual (as it is known) in Lee's office. The library has at least one. If you're planning to continue study in psychology, it's a good resource to have and could be worth purchasing yourself (check, among other places, APA's website [www.apa.org])

Readings and assignments: There are a few, but not many, course readings that I will distribute for our collective consideration and discussion. Most of the reading you will do will be specific to your own research project. All assignments should be submitted to me *via email*, as MSWord documents (**not** PDFs; if you use Google Docs, just download the document as an MSWord document and submit it to me). Please name the file as follows: yourlastname\_assignmentname (if I were handing in the method section, for example, the file I submit would be called ostrove\_method.docx). Written assignments are due by midnight on the due date (see below).

### Structure of the class

This class is officially scheduled to meet from 10:50-11:50 on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. We will generally meet together as a group every Wednesday, during which time I'll provide information about different aspects of the research process and we'll have a chance to discuss those issues as a group (especially as they pertain to your own work) and work on your projects. Much of what makes research both more fun and more manageable is the knowledge and support and information we get from others who are engaged in a similar process. During group meetings, we will often spend time working, so always bring whatever materials you will need to make good use of this time (e.g., laptops, articles, etc.). On Mondays, you will have short individual meetings with me (I will

provide a sign-up sheet for individual meetings) so that we can facilitate the progress of your particular project. We will sometimes meet again, either in individual meetings or as an entire group on Fridays. **Please plan to keep ALL of the regularly scheduled course times open** because we will need to have additional full class meetings at several times during the semester.

Psychology research is (usually) conducted and (virtually always) written up in a quite structured fashion. There are four parts to the manuscript, so your assignments will be set up accordingly, with a few added steps to facilitate the process.

### **I. Individual library session**

As you are developing your research topics and working on reviewing the research literature, you will have an individual meeting with either Beth Hillemann or Aaron Albertson in the library. They will serve as an additional sounding board as you develop your research question and/or your methodological strategy, provide you with information and strategies about navigating PsycINFO and other critical databases and resources in order to find the relevant literature or measures for your specific project, and will discuss citation management. The more well-developed your idea is before you meet with the librarian, the more useful the session will be. You and I will work closely at the very start of the semester to ensure that your idea is as well-developed as possible. *This is an invaluable opportunity and the library staff has been incredibly generous in making themselves available to you.* **You must complete your library session by Monday, September 24th.** In order to schedule an appointment, you may email Beth Hillemann ([hillemann@macalester.edu](mailto:hillemann@macalester.edu)) or Aaron Albertson ([albertson@macalester.edu](mailto:albertson@macalester.edu)) directly, or use the [Request a Consultation](#) form.

### **II. Introduction outline**

Your first assignment will be to write up a *paragraph* that describes your proposed area of research. This will be followed by an *outline* of your plan for your project. What is your research area of interest? What is a key unanswered question or issue in that area that you will address? What are the relevant areas of literature that you will read and critically review in order to design your own project? For each heading and subheading of your outline, you must cite *at least two relevant references* from the psychology research literature that you've already read.

### **III. Introduction/Literature Review**

The introduction to a psychology research paper states the broad issues to be addressed, summarizes the previous research done on this topic, indicates the "gaps" that the current project aims to fill, and states the hypothesis(es) of the current project. The publication manual provides guidelines for writing this section,

you can base your introduction on others that you've read, and we'll talk more in class about how to write the literature review. You'll do yours in two steps:

- 1) Draft – A first draft of your literature review.
- 2) Revised literature review – A revised version of your literature review based on my feedback and whatever other literature you've read in the meantime. It should be well-organized, well-argued, and clearly and concisely written. The revision will be due with the revision of your Method section (see below)

#### **IV. Method**

The method describes all aspects of the procedure that you follow to conduct your study (who are the people, what will they do as part of participating in the study [including how you will debrief them at the end, if necessary], what variables are you interested in and how are you measuring them, how are you going to analyze the data). The general idea is that someone reading your Method section should be able to replicate your study themselves; that means there is an extensive amount of extremely informative and important information in this section! Again, this is described in the publication manual, you'll have read a bunch of different method sections, and we'll discuss how to write a method section in class. As you prepare to write your method section, you'll also be working on your PRB proposal, otherwise known as the Research Proposal Application see link at <http://www.macalester.edu/psychology/research/forms/>). This will be described more extensively in class, but you should be prepared during this time to be gathering materials for completing this form. There are two parts to the method assignment:

- 1) Draft – A first draft of your method section.
- 2) Revised method section – A revised version of your method section (to be turned in with your revised Introduction).

#### **V. PRB Proposal**

The Institutional Review Board is the name typically given to the committee that decides whether or not a proposed research study is appropriate and meets ethical standards for research. In the department here, we have named this the Psychology Review Board (PRB) Our section will serve as a "review board" for proposals from the other sections of Directed Research, and people in the other sections will review your proposals. This is a critically important step in the research process and I expect you to take it very seriously.

#### **VI. Results**

The results section is where you describe the results of the statistical analyses of your data. Not to worry if you feel like you've forgotten everything you learned in RIP I and RIP II; I'll be very available for personal statistical consultation, and we'll spend time in class reviewing the basics of what you'll need to do both conceptually and in

terms of using SPSS. There are lots of specific APA guidelines for summarizing results in both the text and in tables and graphs, so you'll need that publication manual handy...

## VII. Discussion

The discussion section is lots more than a restatement of what you found in "regular" language. It also addresses why you think you found what you did, how your findings fit in to the broader literature, what the limitations of your study were, and what the larger implications of the study could be.

## VIII. Manuscript

Here's the whole thing, all put together. The sections should flow easily, one to the next, and the entire paper should be a coherent presentation of a study that someone else could implement just by reading about what you did. The complete manuscript also includes a title page, an abstract, reference pages, notes (if necessary), tables (if you've got them). Again, here's where the publication manual is really helpful.

## IX. Poster

As you complete the draft of your manuscript, you'll create a poster presentation about your work. The ability to communicate your ideas and the results of your work succinctly and clearly is a critical part of the research process. There are samples of other students' posters hanging in the halls around the Psych Department, and we'll talk a lot toward the end of class about how to create an effective poster.

### Grading and the "Contract for B"

This course is a writing-intensive course that is intended to help you become proficient at conducting and writing about psychology research. You'll write drafts and get feedback on your work, and grades can sometimes get in the way of fully developing your capacities as a writer and a thinker. In addition, even the "best" writers can become better writers; grades can impede this developmental process, especially "good" grades that give us the impression that an "A" means there is no room for improvement. Ultimately, you will receive a traditional letter grade for this course, but in this class we will take a somewhat different approach to assessment and grading known as "contract for B."

\*thanks to Professor Cari Gillen-O'Neel for much of this description of "Contract for B"

Contract for B works as follows: Throughout the term, I will assess your work and give you extensive feedback. However, I will not *grade* anything until the final portfolio. This will allow me to be your mentor without grades getting in the way. I do not expect your work to be perfect, but I do expect you to meet the basic

requirements of each assignment and to work to improve your knowledge and skills. Staying on contract requires all of the following:

1. **Attendance:** You will be present (and on time) for all class sessions and individual meetings. Arriving late or leaving early three times will count as one absence.
2. **Preparation and Engagement:** You will be fully prepared for all class sessions and meetings, and you will be actively and appropriately engaged. In general, you will be a productive member of our community.
3. **Completing Work:** You will submit all assignments fully, by the agreed-upon deadline, with your file names labeled as follows (and as described above):
  - yourlastname\_assignmentname (if I were handing in the method section, for example, the file I submit would be called ostrove\_method.docx).
4. **Statistics:** Perform the statistical test(s) that are appropriate for your data and research questions, and report them accurately.
5. **Editing:** When completing second drafts and the final portfolio, your work will be carefully edited, free from mistakes and errors. It is a good idea to get editing help from fellow writers and the MAX center.
6. **APA Style:** Although formats of writing differ based on the situation, it is important to be able to follow a style guide and match the requirements for a particular journal or organization. In this course, we will be learning and using APA 6th Ed. Second and final drafts of papers are expected to follow this style.
7. **Rewriting:** Good writing requires substantial rewriting—reorganizing and restructuring sentences and paragraphs within your paper. Your final drafts will be rewritten from your first draft. Each draft of your writing should show progress in making the paper stronger and better, and should demonstrate the incorporation of my feedback.
8. **Peer review of research proposals:** You will carefully read, and offer in-class feedback on, the research proposals submitted to our class for review from the other sections.
9. **Present your work:** Attend and present your poster at our department's poster session (and at MUPC in the spring, separate from contract).
10. **Final Portfolio:** At the end of the semester, you will submit your final manuscript with careful revisions and "finished writing." We will have a conference about your final manuscript and poster at the end of the semester (see below).

**STAYING ON CONTRACT & FORGIVENESS\*:** In order to stay on the Contract for B, you must: work hard, be prepared, incorporate feedback to improve the quality of

your work, and be an active member of our class community. Staying on contract also requires punctual attendance and meeting deadlines. Because I recognize that life sometimes interferes with attendance and deadlines, I offer **three “forgiveness tokens”** that allow you to stay on contract despite small infractions. *One token may be redeemed for:* one class or individual meeting absence **or** one 24-hour extension. Your three tokens may be used in any combination. For example, you may miss three classes **OR** you may miss two classes and submit one assignment 24-hours late. In both of these examples, your three tokens would cover the infractions, and you would still be on contract. Once your three tokens are gone, additional absences or extensions will only be granted in extreme circumstances. If you have one additional small infraction beyond your three tokens, we may be able to work on a plan to get you back on contract. If this is your situation, please schedule a meeting with me. However, two additional small infractions or a major infraction (e.g., plagiarism or failure to revise between drafts) will take you off contract.

\*if you have approved disability accommodations that relate to absences or deadlines, we can negotiate this aspect of your contract individually

**PLAGIARISM:** Plagiarism is the presentation of others’ thoughts, ideas, or words as your own. Plagiarism can be blatant, such as copying sections of another’s paper, or it can be subtle, such as failing to properly cite another’s ideas. Either way, plagiarism constitutes a break in the Contract for B. If you are unsure about citations, wording, or similarity of structure, please discuss this during one of our writing conferences, and I can help you make sure that you are citing and paraphrasing appropriately. If I have any reason to suspect your integrity in this class, I will contact you. After that meeting, I will determine what further steps are appropriate. I may refer you to the Director of Academic Programs, who will determine the consequences. If you have questions, please contact me or visit: [www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/academicpolicies/academicintegrity/](http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/academicpolicies/academicintegrity/)

**FINAL GRADE:** Although I will give you *feedback* throughout the term, your final portfolio is the only thing that I will *grade*. During our final conference, I will examine your final write up of your full manuscript and your poster; based on the improvements that you have made and the quality of your work, I will assign a cursory grade. If you are satisfied with that grade, you are done. If you are not satisfied, you may continue to revise your final paper and poster until the deadline. At that point, I will take a closer look at your final paper, and the

poster, and assign a final grade. Your final grade will be no lower than the one assigned at the conference, but it is not guaranteed to be higher.

The grade that you earn on your final paper will be your course grade. ***However, if you stayed on contract during the semester, the lowest grade you could possibly receive in the course is a B.*** In other words, the contract provides you with a grade safety net; even if the quality of your final portfolio is below a B, your behavior in the course (e.g., punctuality, hard work, and improvement) would be enough to warrant a B in the course. Grades above B require excellence in writing. Throughout the semester, I will give you a lot of feedback and you will see many examples of excellent writing to help you see the quality of work that I am looking for. ***If you broke contract, only the grades from F to B- are available to you.*** In other words, even if the quality of your final work (manuscript and poster) is above a B-, your behavior in the course (e.g., missing class, missing deadlines, or not contributing to the class) cannot justify a higher grade.

**SCHEDULE AND (APPROXIMATE) DUE DATES (\*\*SUBJECT TO CHANGE\*\*)**

Wed	9/5	Introduction to Directed Research	
Fri	9/7	[read and prep for individual meeting]	<b>reading: Martin (2004)</b>
Mon	9/10	Individual meetings	
Wed	9/12	Group meeting: Writing an intro	
Mon	9/17	Individual meetings	<b>Introduction outline due</b>
Wed	9/19	[no group meeting: Yom Kippur]	
Mon	9/24	Individual meetings	<b>Complete library session by today</b>
Wed	9/26	Group meeting	
Mon	10/1	Individual meetings	<b>Introduction draft due</b>
Wed	10/3	Group meeting	
Fri	10/5	Group meeting: Qualtrics	
Mon	10/8	Individual meetings	<b>Method and PRB draft due</b>
Wed	10/10	Group meeting	
Mon	10/15	Individual meetings	<b>Revised PRB due</b>
Wed	10/17	Group meeting	
Fri	10/19	Additional individual or group meeting?	
Mon	10/22	Individual meetings	
Wed	10/24	Group meeting	
Mon	10/29	Individual meetings	<b>Revised intro &amp; method section due</b>
Wed	10/31	Group meeting	
Fri	11/2	Additional group meeting?	
Mon	11/5	Individual meetings	
Wed	11/7	Group meeting	
Mon	11/12	Individual meetings	
Wed	11/14	Group meeting	
Mon	11/19	Individual meetings	<b>Results draft due</b>
Wed	11/21	<b>Thanksgiving break</b>	
Mon	11/26	Individual meetings	
Wed	11/28	Group meeting	<b>Poster draft due</b>
Mon	12/3	Group meeting: poster presentations	
Wed	12/5	Group meeting: poster presentations	
Fri	12/7	Group meeting: poster presentations	<b>Poster final draft due for printing: noon</b>
Mon	12/10	Individual meetings (as needed)	<b>Completed manuscript due</b>
Wed	12/12	[individual portfolio meetings this week]	<b>Psychology Department Poster Session (4:45 to 6 p.m., Smail Gallery)</b>
Tue	12/18		<b>Final manuscript due</b>

## Other course policies:

- Academic integrity: I expect all of you to follow the college's guidelines regarding academic integrity, outlined in the Student Handbook. Please talk to me if you are not clear how these guidelines apply to the course. I will report any suspicion of academic dishonesty to the Dean of Academic Programs. Academic dishonesty will result in at least a failing grade on the assignment, and a second instance of dishonesty will usually result in a failing grade in the course.
- Incompletes: I will only grant incompletes under extraordinary circumstances that occur in the second part of the semester. This will not include being really busy at the end of the semester.
- Written assignments: Please computer type, double-spaced with 12-point font, all of your assignments for this course. Please do not use margins that are larger than 1 inch – all around. Don't use smaller margins, or smaller font, either – length is not necessarily strength.
- Accommodations for students with disabilities: I am committed to making this class work well for everyone and to providing any reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities that will assist in making this course accessible. If you have an accommodation plan via Disability Services, I will receive a letter and will work with you to ensure that plan will work in this course. Please speak to me at the beginning of the semester so that we can work together as effectively as possible; our meeting will focus on access and accommodation, not on your condition, label, diagnosis, etc. See <http://www.macalester.edu/studentaffairs/disabilityservices/> for additional information and assistance.
- Religious observance: If you will miss class or an individual meeting because of a religious observance, please let me know in advance to make alternate arrangements.
- Cell phones: Please turn your cell phones and other mobile devices off or to a (completely) silent (vibrate is not silent!) mode while in class or individual meetings. Except under extraordinary circumstances, you may not make or accept phone calls or text messages during class. If you know you are expecting a call or text in an emergency situation, please try to let me know in advance of class that this may happen. If you must take a call, do so quietly outside of the classroom.