



DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION: PSYCHOLOGY

COURSE OUTLINE – Winter, 2013

PY 2120 A3 RESEARCH METHODS - 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours

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OFFICE HOURS: Tues, Thur 8:00 – 11:30; Mon, Wed 10:00 – 11:30, Fri 8:00 – 10:00

PREREQUISITE(S)/COREQUISITE: PY 1040 and PY 2110

REQUIRED TEXT/RESOURCE MATERIALS: Shaughnessy, J.J., Zechmeister, E.B., & Zechmeister, J.S. (2012). *Research methods in psychology (12th Edition)*. McGraw Hill. ISBN: 978-0-07-803518-0

A statistics calculator.

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: This course, subtitled *Critical thinking about human behaviour*, is designed as an introductory course in quantitative research methods and statistics in psychology. Its primary goal is to direct students' development in critical thinking skills. Students will be able to make independent judgments and decisions based on reason and evidence as opposed to authority, tradition or opinion. The course will cover topics such as using objective measurement-based and inferential research strategies to develop hypotheses, designing appropriate data collection tools, analyzing and interpreting descriptive and inferential statistical results, and writing research reports and proposals. It is directed at both the consumer and producer of psychological research.

CREDIT/CONTACT HOURS: 3 credit hours per week, classroom and lab.

DELIVERY MODE(S): Lecture/Discussion/Lab work.

GOALS: This course requires students to develop cognitively and behaviourally in the following areas:

1. Knowledge structures; organized, related and interrelated information of research principles: the what of critical thinking.
2. Procedural knowledge; research methods and procedures, and communication of ideas: the how of critical thinking.
3. Metacognitive judgement; critical and analytic judgment concerning the proper use of the procedures; the where and when of critical thinking.
4. Attitudinal considerations; understanding the value of this work and its application: the why of critical thinking.

BEHAVIOURAL OBJECTIVES: As a result of participating in this course, students will demonstrate the abilities to:

1. understand and apply the concept of empirical objective evidence, to differentiate between what is and what is not evidence.
2. discuss the APA's guidelines of ethics in human experimentation by evaluating the ethics of research proposals.
3. formulate questions and hypotheses that are appropriate for systematic investigation, recognizing and distinguishing descriptive, correlational, and explanatory, basic and applied designs.
4. operationally define their variables as reliable and valid measurements using appropriate scales.
5. choose and design appropriate research strategies to investigate the problems they have formulated.
6. construct data collection tools that will be necessary to answer their questions validly.
7. analyse and interpret the data that their research, and others', might generate, through mastery of the concepts of measures of statistics: central tendency and variance, correlation and regression, and hypothesis testing using t-tests and ANOVAs.
8. master and apply computer applications (SPSS) of statistical tools of research.
9. evaluate their own research and that of others.
10. write research reports in APA style.

TEACHING STYLE:

My preferred teaching style is interactive lecture, derived from the teaching philosophy that little is learned until responses are made (either verbally or written). However, the majority of work in this course will be hands-on, lab-based experiential learning.

I encourage and welcome student consultation to the point of tutoring and I will be more than happy to proof students' rough drafts and to further discuss course material. Pre-writes are welcome up to the due date and may be submitted as an e-mail attachment.

Late papers will be graded but penalized 2 points per day. As adequate time will be allotted between the assignment and the due date, few excuses other than medical and major emergencies and single parenthood will be accepted. Papers with multiple spelling and grammatical errors will be returned ungraded.

ASSESSMENT:

"A grade is an inadequate report of an inaccurate judgement of a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has obtained an unidentified level of mastery of an unknown proportion of an indefinite amount of material."

-Paul Dressel, 1955.

As stated above, research psychology recognizes the authority of, and bases its judgements on, reason and evidence as opposed to authority, tradition, or opinion. In keeping with this philosophy, rather than me imposing my authority on you and telling you what you must know and then arbitrarily assigning cut-off points for grades through non-standardized tests and labs, you as a class will inform me what you are capable of, through my careful measurement of your performance. Students will be assessed according to their relative position within the class. The field of psychology always measures human behaviour in this way. This method will be explained fully in the first class period; a handout is available if requested.

Assessment will primarily consist of three formal lab-based research projects and one formal research proposal. In addition, there will be two short examinations. All six assignments are equally weighted. Examinations will place more emphasis on material not covered in labs. No dates are given at this time as this is a relatively new organization of this material for me and I intend to let student abilities direct the speed of the course, but each assignment due date will be announced in class with plenty of lead-time.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:

Refer to the Student Conduct section of the College Admission Guide at <http://www.gprc.ab.ca/programs/calendar/> or the College Policy on Student Misconduct: Plagiarism and Cheating at www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies/**

**Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

A GENTLE WARNING: Some students try to copy work from textbooks or other published writing and claim it as their own. This form of cheating is called plagiarism or theft of intellectual property. This is easy for me to spot; the difference in writing style between undergraduates and professionals is immediately obvious.

Other students may try to buy papers from the Internet or copy from other students. This is also easy for me to spot as a purchased paper is invariably different in scope from the highly specific requirements of this course. Further, it can be seen when the student shows no knowledge during class discussion of what was in the paper that he or she has just submitted.

A third way of cheating is to buy or borrow papers from students who took this course from me last year. Please be forewarned that I have changed the course material, student requirements, and textbook substantially from last year, and papers from last year will be radically different and easily identified.

If you cheat in any way, you will be given a zero for the paper, an “F” for the term, and I will write a letter to the administration recommending you be suspended from my class and the college.

TRANSFERABILITY:

** Grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability

GRADING CRITERIA:

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE			
GRADING CONVERSION CHART			
Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage of Class	Designation
A⁺	4.0	2%	EXCELLENT
A	4.0	3%	
A⁻	3.7	7%	FIRST CLASS STANDING
B⁺	3.3	9%	
B	3.0	13%	GOOD
B⁻	2.7	16%	
C⁺	2.3	16%	SATISFACTORY
C	2.0	13%	
C⁻	1.7	9%	
D⁺	1.3	7%	MINIMAL PASS
D	1.0	3%	
F	0.0	2%	FAIL
WF	0.0	0	FAIL, withdrawal after the deadline

The Percentage Guidelines listed above will obtain only if a perfectly normal distribution results. Deviations from the assumptions of normality will result in modified percentages. In short, this is NOT grading on the curve.