

RESEARCH METHODS (56:830:580)

FALL, 2023

COURSE INFORMATION

Time: Thursday, 6-8:50pm

Location: BSB 107

INSTRUCTOR

Kristin August, Ph.D.

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Office: 413 Armitage; Phone: (856) 225-6431

Office hours: By appointment (virtual or in person)

TEACHING ASSISTANT

Michaela Ancelo

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Office hours: By appointment (virtual)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Social scientists use research methods to describe, predict, explain, and determine causes of events, experiences, and behaviors. This course is designed to provide you with a basic foundation of conceptual and practical skills in research methods. These skills will allow you to creatively and systematically develop ideas about social science phenomena and pursue well-articulated, testable questions by using appropriate scientific methods. These skills also are essential for becoming a more critical and efficient consumer of research (scientific or otherwise). In this course, we will cover topics related to reviewing the relevant literature, designing and executing a study, interpreting and reporting results, and generating conclusions. This course is designed to prepare you to develop your own proposal for an empirical study.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives of this course are consistent with the goals of the Psychology and Prevention Science Graduate Programs. Course activities are designed to assess the following learning objectives. Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Identify the fundamental principles and procedures of social science research.
- Critically analyze social science research.
- Identify a research question that makes an important contribution to knowledge in psychology or prevention science and formulate a proposal to test that question.
- Effectively communicate ideas about research (orally and in writing).

REQUIRED READINGS

- Whitley, B.E. & Kite, M. (2018). *Principles of research in behavioral science* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
 - The book is available for purchase online or at the bookstore; it is also available on reserve at the Robeson Library.
- Additional required readings are available on the Canvas course webpage and will be posted/updated at least one week in advance (under each module).
- The following books are recommended:
 - Locke, L. F., Spirduso, W. W., & Silverman, S. J. (2014). *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
 - *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association

GRADING

Grades will be determined as follows:

Paper (research proposal)	40 points
Mini assignments	30 points
In-class writing assignments	15 points
Class presentation on research proposal	10 points
Attendance/class participation	<u>5 points</u>
	100 TOTAL POINTS

Letter grades:

A:	90-100 points
B+:	85-89 points
B:	80-84 points
C+:	75-79 points
C:	70-74 points
F:	Less than 70 points (“D” is not a grade in the graduate program)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

PAPER - RESEARCH PROPOSAL: To apply what you have learned in the course and enhance your writing skills, you will develop a proposal for a study that addresses a specific question that interests you. If you are a thesis-track student in psychology, this paper is intended to be used to write *an initial draft* of your thesis proposal and thus should be related to your advisor’s program of research (for that reason, you should consult with your advisor before starting this paper). If you are a content-track or prevention science student, you could use this paper as an opportunity to develop your thinking about a study that you actually might want to conduct at some point.

- First, you will write an introduction, which includes a literature review, your research questions, and the specific aims of your proposed project. This part of your paper should be approximately 8 pages long and is **due by 6pm on October 26 (uploaded to Canvas, under “assignments”; one copy should also be emailed to your assigned peer)**. You will receive *constructive and thoughtful* feedback from me and a fellow student so that this section can be revised for your final paper.
- Next, you will write the methods section of the paper, in which you propose a research project addressing the specific aims you already developed. The second part of your paper should be approximately 8 pages long and is **due by 6pm on November 16 (uploaded to Canvas, under “assignments”; one copy should also be emailed to your assigned peer)**. You will receive *constructive and thoughtful* feedback on this part of the paper from me and a fellow student so that this section can be revised and included in your final paper.
- The final research paper will be uploaded to Canvas by **Thursday, December 14 by 6pm**. It will be ~16 pages long and will include revised versions (using tracked changes or highlighted or bolded text) of your introduction and the proposed methodology for your project. If you turn your final paper in late, you will lose 4 points per day it is late.
- More detailed information about the paper is available online and will be discussed in class.

MINI ASSIGNMENTS: To support and assess your understanding of the material covered, as well as help you prepare your research proposal in a stepwise fashion, you will work on 6 “mini” assignments throughout the semester:

- Mini-assignment #1: CITI certification training (5 points; details posted on Canvas);
- Mini-assignment #2: Research question (2.5 points);
- Mini-assignment #3: Reference list/ abstracts (5 points; details posted on Canvas);
- Mini-assignment #4: Specific aims and hypotheses (2.5 points);
- Mini-assignment #5: Peer review of introduction (7.5 points; details posted on Canvas); and
- Mini-assignment #6: Peer review of methods (7.5 points; details posted on Canvas).

More details about assignments #2, 3, and 4 are included in your paper assignment and will be discussed in class (details about the other assignments will also be discussed in class). Due dates are listed on the schedule below (all assignments are due at the beginning of class). All assignments together will account for 30% of your overall grade. For assignments that involve a peer review component (#2, 3, 4, 5, 6), no late assignments will be accepted; other assignments (#1) will lose 10% of the grade each day it is late.

IN-CLASS WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: To assess your understanding of assigned readings, learn how to critically analyze social science research, and enhance your writing skills, you will be required to complete **five**, brief in-class writing assignments, which will be given at the beginning of select classes (six will be given but your lowest grade will be dropped). You should come to class prepared by reading the assigned readings *beforehand* for this purpose (and to participate in class discussions). Each writing assignment is worth 3 points. No make-up assignments will be given (if you miss one, you can drop it). Together, the writing assignments will account for 15% of your grade.

CLASS PRESENTATION: To enhance your oral communication skills, you will develop a 6-8 minute presentation on your research proposal. During your presentation, please be sure to explain why the research question you have identified is important, how researchers have typically approached it, and key elements of your proposal (specific aims, hypotheses, procedure, participants, measures, and analytic plan). Please distribute a handout of your presentation to me on the day of your presentation (or email it to me by 9pm the day before you are scheduled to present; you also need to upload a PDF to Canvas under “assignments”). We will reserve ~3 minutes after each presentation for class discussion. Further details about this presentation are posted on the course webpage and will be discussed in class. This presentation is **due either November 30 or 7** and will account for 10% of your overall grade.

CLASS ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION: To promote engagement in learning the course material, you are expected to attend and actively participate in class. You will be graded on active and high-quality participation. If you must miss class, please inform me if and why you plan to miss (if you miss more than 1 class, you will lose points from your grade). Class attendance and participation will account for 5% of your overall grade.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: This schedule is *tentative*; dates may change slightly depending on our progress in covering the material. **Additional reading assignments are posted on Canvas under each module and will be posted at least one week in advance.** You are expected to have reading assignments completed before class.

Module 1: Course Overview/Theory and Research Overview

Thursday, Sept. 7

Whitley & Kite: Ch. 1
No additional readings**Module 2: Research Methods Overview/Emerging Scientific Practices**

Thursday, Sept. 14

Whitley & Kite: Ch. 2
See Canvas for additional readings**Module 3: Research Ethics**

Thursday, Sept. 21

Whitley & Kite: Ch. 3, 4
See Canvas for additional readings**Module 4: Formulating a Research Question/Reviewing the Literature**

Thursday, Sept. 28

DUE: Mini-assignment #1: CITI trainingWhitley & Kite: Ch. 5; 19
See Canvas for additional readings**Module 5: Writing/APA Style/Developing a Research Proposal**

Thursday, Oct. 5

DUE: Mini-assignment #2: Research question
(bring 1 copy to class)

See Canvas for readings

Module 6: Measurement

Thursday, Oct. 12

DUE: Mini-assignment #3: Reference
list/abstracts (bring 1 copy to class)Whitley & Kite: Ch. 6
See Canvas for additional readings**Module 7: Internal and External Validity**

Thursday, Oct. 19

DUE: Mini-assignment #4: Specific aims and
hypotheses (bring 1 copy to class)Whitley & Kite: Ch. 7, 8
See Canvas for additional readings**Module 8: Survey Research**

Thursday, Oct. 26

DUE: Introduction section (uploaded to Canvas
and emailed to your assigned peer)Whitley & Kite: Ch. 15
See Canvas for additional readings**Module 9: Experiments**

Thursday, Nov. 2

DUE: Mini-assignment #5: Peer review of
introduction (uploaded to Canvas and emailed to
your assigned peer)Whitley & Kite: Ch. 9
See Canvas for additional readings**Module 10: "Other" Research Designs**

Thursday, Nov. 9

*No meeting this date (at home assignments)*Whitley & Kite: Ch. 16
See Canvas for additional readings

Module 11: Data Collection

Thursday, Nov. 16	DUE: Methods section (uploaded to Canvas and emailed to your assigned peer)	Whitely & Kite: Ch. 17 See Canvas for additional readings
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Module 12: Statistical Considerations/Interpreting & Writing Research Results

Tuesday, Nov. 21 (<i>observe Thursday schedule</i>)	Mini-assignment #6: Peer review of methods (uploaded to Canvas and emailed to your assigned peer) – DUE Tuesday, Nov. 28	Whitely & Kite: Ch. 11, 12, 18
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Thursday, Nov. 23 – NO CLASS (HAPPY THANKSGIVING!)

Student Presentations: Day 1

Thursday, Nov. 30

Student Presentations: Day 2

Thursday, Dec. 7

NO FINAL EXAM; FINAL PAPER IS DUE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14 @ 6PM

INCLUSIVITY STATEMENT

I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports diverse thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.). To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official Rutgers records, please let me know. If you would like to have your name changed officially on Rutgers University–Camden rosters, please follow the [Chosen Name Process](#). In addition, within the Canvas course site, the [Rutgers Shout-Out](#) tool allows you to type the phonetic spelling of your name and record the pronunciation of your name in a shared audio recording for me and fellow students.
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you. Remember that you can also submit anonymous feedback (which will lead to me making a general announcement to the class, if necessary, to address your concerns). If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, the Dean of Students is an excellent resource: deanofstudents@camden.rutgers.edu.
- I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it. (Again, anonymous feedback is always an option.)

COURSE POLICIES

It is my sincere hope that students are successful in this course and learn information that is useful for their academic and career goals. If you experience any difficulty in this course, please email me or contact me to schedule a time to talk. Please do not wait until the end of the semester to talk with me! Many of the policies outlined below are evidence-based and are in place to promote student success and provide an enriching and fair educational experience for all of my students.

- Course web page: Other than the textbook, all the materials you will need for the course will be organized by modules on the [Canvas course webpage](#). It is your responsibility to keep informed of any updates made to the syllabus and other assignments.
- Course communication:
 - **Announcements**: Announcements will be posted on Canvas on a regular basis. They will appear on your Canvas dashboard when you log in and/or will be sent to you directly from Canvas via your preferred method of contact. Please make sure the “announcements” feature is activated in Canvas (under “course notifications”) and be certain to check them regularly, as they will contain important information about the course.
 - **Email**: You may contact us by email. **Please use your Rutgers email to contact us, as emails from non-Rutgers’ accounts are sometimes filtered as spam.** Please do not submit your assignments via email. If you email us and do not receive a response within 24 hours during the week, we did not receive your email. Please note that we will not respond to emails after 9pm, on weekends, during holidays, or during university breaks.
 - **Office hours**: I am available to meet in person, by phone, or via Zoom; your teaching assistant is available to meet by phone or via Zoom. Please email us for an appointment.
- Missed class/assignments: Please contact me as soon as possible if you experience an event that affects your ability to attend class or complete an assignment on time. If you do not have a *valid* reason for missing class or turning in an assignment when it is due, you will lose 10% of your assignment grade for each day it is late (please note that as many of your assignments involve a peer review component, turning in assignments late adversely affect your classmates). Valid reasons for missing class include serious/highly contagious illnesses, deaths in the family, academic interviews (e.g., doctoral programs), and conference presentations; valid reasons for not being able to complete an assignment on time are determined by me on a case-by-case basis (and do NOT include insufficient planning/time management). There is limited flexibility in rescheduling presentations.

Rutgers University–Camden seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community, including in classroom space, and a community in which students respect academic integrity and the integrity of your own and others’ work. See below for information about Academic Integrity and Code of Conduct.

- Academic Integrity: As a student at the University, you are expected to adhere to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#). Academic Integrity is critical to the success of our students and the community and is everyone’s responsibility to take their education seriously and follow the requirements to ensure that you are doing your own work and following the guidelines of the course and professor and program. Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to): cheating; plagiarism; aiding others in committing a violation or allowing others to use your work; failure to cite sources correctly; fabrication; using another

person's ideas or words without attribution; re-using a previous assignment; unauthorized collaboration; and sabotaging another student's work. **Academic dishonesty also includes using artificial intelligence (AI) to complete a majority of your work (e.g., ChatBot).**

- Code of Conduct: You are also expected to adhere to the [Student Code of Conduct](#). The conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means “engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor’s ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities.” Please be aware of in-classroom and out-of-classroom expectations by making yourself familiar with and by following the Student Code of Conduct. For this class, please be courteous to others and arrive to class on time, stay the entire time, and do not use electronic devices during class unless you are asked to. *If you engage in any disruptive, offensive, or disrespectful behaviors, you may be asked to leave class and will lose points from your attendance grade.*
- Office of Disability Services (ODS)- Students with Disabilities: If you need academic support for your courses, accommodations can be provided once you share a Letter of Accommodation issued by the Office of Disability Services (ODS) that specifies your accommodations indicated. If you have already registered with ODS and have your Letter of Accommodation, please share this with me the first week of the course. If you have not registered with ODS and you have or think you have a disability (learning, sensory, physical, chronic health, mental health or attentional), please visit the [ODS website](#), [email](#), or call [\(856\) 225-6954](#). *Please Note:* Accommodations will be provided only for students with a Letter of Accommodation from ODS. Accommodation Letters only provide information about the accommodation, not about the disability or diagnosis.
- Dropping the course/incompletes: The last date to drop this course *without* a W grade is **Thursday, September 14**; the last date to drop *with* a W grade is **Monday, November 13**. (Please note that this is a required course that graduate students must take to fulfill the requirements of their degree.) Please consult the academic calendar for additional dates related to dropping the course without tuition penalties. Incompletes will not be given in this course except under extremely rare circumstances that require documentation and adherence to university policies.
- Additional resources: Please see the Canvas page for additional resources available (under the “Syllabus, Assignments, and Resources” module)