

METHOD AND THEORY IN PSYCHOLOGY
(50:830:255; SECTION 04)
SPRING, 2018

COURSE INFORMATION

Lectures: Tuesday & Thursday, 2:00-3:20pm

Location: Nursing and Science Building, Room 312A

Course web page: <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal/site/c807f848-c5ec-4f08-8914-339a1a4e5257>

Course pre-requisite: 50:830:101

INSTRUCTOR

Kristin August, Ph.D.

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Office hours: Thursday, 12:45-1:45pm and by appointment

TEACHING ASSISTANT

Paulene Castro

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Office hours by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to give you a broad overview of research methods in the field of psychology. Research methods allow psychologists to describe, predict, explain, and determine causes of behavior and experiences. In addition, an understanding of research methods is essential for becoming a more critical and efficient consumer of research (scientific or otherwise). In this course, we will cover such topics as the use of the scientific approach in psychology, reviewing the relevant literature, the strengths and limitations of different research designs, measurement issues such as reliability and validity, how to interpret results and generate conclusions, and ethics in research and writing. This is a writing intensive course in which you will develop your own research proposal for an empirical study.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The general learning objectives of this course are consistent with the goals of the department. Course readings, lectures, in-class activities, and assignments are designed to assess these learning objectives. Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Distinguish between scientific versus non-scientific sources of information.
- Identify the fundamental principles and procedures of psychological research.
- Critically analyze psychological research.
- Identify a research question that makes an important contribution to knowledge in psychology and formulate a proposal to test that question.
- Clearly and effectively communicate ideas related to psychological research (orally and in writing).

This course fulfills one general education theme/approach (*Physical and Life Sciences*) and one cross-cutting category (*Writing Intensive*). Additional objectives of this course consistent with general education requirements are listed below.

Objectives for *Physical and Life Sciences* Requirement

- Demonstrate a broad understanding of scientific principles and the ways scientists in psychology conduct research.
- Solve complex problems requiring the application of scientific concepts.
- Examine the scientific basis of complex questions, including how science impacts political, social, economic, or ethical issues.
- Critically evaluate scientific arguments and understand the limits of scientific knowledge.
- Communicate scientific ideas clearly and effectively.

Objectives for *Writing Intensive* Requirement

- Practice writing that is used and valued by members of the field.
- Revise your writing based on feedback from the instructor.
- Complete a writing assignment with revision that is worth a significant amount of your final grade in the course.
- Demonstrate basic information literacy skills.

READINGS

- *Required:*
 - Cozby, P. C. & Bates, S.C. (2017). *Methods in behavioral research* (13th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.*
 - Additional readings will be available on the Sakai course web page at least one week in advance (under “assignments”).
- *Recommended:*
 - *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.*
 - Strunk, W., Jr. & White, E.B. (2000). *The elements of style* (4th edition). New York: Allyn & Bacon. (This entire book can be read online – for free! Available online at: www.bartleby.com/141)

*The Cozby & Bates text and APA publication manual are available for purchase at the bookstore; they also are available on reserve at the Robeson Library.

GRADING

Grades will be determined as follows:

Research proposal paper (2 drafts)	90 points (30% of your grade)
“Mini” assignments related to paper	30 points (10% of your grade)
1 st Exam	30 points (10% of your grade)
2 nd Exam	30 points (10% of your grade)
3 rd Exam (Final)	30 points (10% of your grade)
Participation in human subjects research	30 points (10% of your grade)
Research in the media assignment	30 points (10% of your grade)
Human subjects certification	15 points (5% of your grade)
Attendance and participation	<u>15 points (5% of your grade)</u>
	300 TOTAL POINTS

Letter grades:

A:	270-300 points
B+:	255-269 points
B:	240-254 points
C+:	225-239 points
C:	210-224 points
D:	180-209 points
F:	179 points or less

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: To learn how to develop a testable research question, plan a research study, and effectively communicate these ideas in writing, you will be required to complete a research proposal paper. All parts of the paper will account for 30% of your grade. You will lose 10% of the paper grade per day for each part you turn in late. More detailed information about the paper is available online and will be discussed in class.

- First, you will write an introduction, which includes a literature review on a topic of your choice (this topic needs to be approved by me) and the specific aims/hypotheses of your proposed project. This part of your paper should be approximately 4-5 pages long and needs to be **uploaded to Sakai (“Assignments -> Paper-Introduction”)** by **2pm on Tuesday, March 20**. You will meet with me to receive feedback on this part of the paper so that it can be revised and included in your final paper.
- Next, you will write the methods section of the paper, in which you propose a research project addressing the specific aims/hypotheses you already developed. The second part of your paper should be approximately 4-5 pages long and needs to be **uploaded to Sakai (“Assignments -> Paper-Methods”)** by **2pm on Thursday, April 12**. You will meet with me to receive feedback on this part of the paper so that it can be revised and included in your final paper.
- You will assemble revised versions of your introduction and methods section (revisions indicated by track changes or bolded text) into a final paper that is approximately 8-10 pages long. You will then add a title page and reference list and **upload your final research paper to Sakai (“Assignments -> Final Paper”)** by **2pm on Tuesday, April 24**.

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 5 “mini” assignments throughout the semester. Detailed instructions and point values for assignments will be distributed in class (and posted on Sakai) at least one week prior to their due date; due dates are listed on the schedule below. All assignments together will account for 10% of your overall grade. You will lose 10% of the assignment grade per day for each assignment you turn in late.

EXAMS: To assess your mastery of core concepts covered in lecture and assigned readings, you will take three exams in this course. Study guides are designed to aid in your preparation for the exams. No make-up exams will be given unless arrangements are made prior to an exam **and** proof of the necessary absence is provided (see below). Please arrive to the exam on time; if you arrive more than 10 minutes late for an exam, I reserve the right not to administer the exam to you. All three exams are non-cumulative, and will account for a total of 30% of your overall grade.

RESEARCH IN THE MEDIA: To become a more prudent consumer of research in the media and other real world outlets, you will complete an assignment in which you will critically evaluate research presented in a media outlet. We will take some time during each class to discuss each student’s assignment and how it relates to course material. Thus, each student should sign up for a day to bring a news story to class that reports the results of an empirical study and present their completed assignment. (You are required to **sign up** for a day to turn in your assignment/present by **Tuesday, January 23**; otherwise, you will receive zero points on this assignment.) On the day you present, you will hand in your completed assignment, with the media article attached. Further details can be found on the course web page and will be discussed in class. This assignment will account for 10% of your overall grade. Late assignments will lose 3 points per day, in addition to 2.5 points for not presenting in class.

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH PARTICIPATION: To promote a better understanding of psychological research from the perspective of a participant, you are required to participate in human subjects research conducted by the Department of Psychology at Rutgers-Camden (to sign up, go to: <https://experimetrix2.com/rutcmdn/>). You must participate in a total of 3 credit hours of research studies (but only 2 if you complete them without missing appointments). Further details can be found on the course web page and will be discussed in class.

Alternative activity: If you choose not to participate in human subjects research, the designated alternative activity consists of writing a paper on some aspect of the psychological research process associated with a psychology-related topic (your topic must receive prior approval by me). Your paper must be 5 pages in length in correct APA style (in addition to a title page and reference list). Either version of this assignment will account for 10% of your overall grade and must be completed by **Thursday, April 26**. If you do not complete either of these assignments, you will receive zero points (no late assignments will be accepted).

HUMAN SUBJECTS CERTIFICATION: To foster a better understanding of research ethics, you will be required to complete a Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Basic Course at: www.citiprogram.org. You must turn in a hard copy of your completion report, along with a 2-page reaction paper by **Thursday, February 20**. Further details can be found on the course web page and will be discussed in class. This assignment will account for 5% of your overall grade. Late assignments will lose 1.5 points per day.

ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION: To promote engagement in learning the course material, you are expected to attend and participate in class. I welcome your comments, thoughts, and questions, and hope you take an active role in learning the course material. Activities during class will count toward your attendance grade. If you miss more than *two* classes (for whatever reason) you will lose points from your attendance grade. Please do not contact me if you miss class. ***I do not “excuse” missed classes***, unless you will be out for an extended period of time for exceptional circumstances that are discussed with me in advance; in this case, I require documentation for your absences. In addition, if you miss any class meetings, you will lose points for any assignments that are due that class meeting. Class attendance and participation will account for 5% of your overall grade.

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 as well as their daily lives. If you experience difficulty in the course, please email me or stop by during my office hours. Please do not wait until the end of the semester to talk with me! I am always happy to review drafts of any written assignments, but I only provide feedback *in person* (not via email). The policies outlined below are in place to promote student success and provide an enriching and fair educational experience for all of my students.

- **Course web page:** Additional information about this class, a copy of the syllabus, assignment details, and additional required readings are available on the Sakai course web page (sakai.rutgers.edu). It is your responsibility to keep informed of any updates made to the syllabus and other assignments posted online.
- **Contacting the instructor/teaching assistant:** You may contact me during my office hours or by e-mail. In addition, individual assistance is always available by appointment. You also may contact the teaching assistant by e-mail or schedule an appointment to meet with her. To ensure e-mails are read promptly and not filtered, please put the course name in the subject line of your message. **Please use your Rutgers email to contact me, as emails from non-Rutgers' accounts are sometimes filtered as spam.** I will be sending course announcements over email, so please check your Rutgers' account regularly. If you email me and do not receive a response, I did not receive your email.

- Attendance/taking notes: You will benefit the most from this class if you attend class and are an active participant. To this end, PowerPoint slides shown during class will only be made available if we discuss a topic that is *not* included in your readings. In addition to encouraging attendance, taking your own notes will help you learn how to extract the most important information from readings and lectures. Further, evidence suggests that taking your own notes is related to improved recall of the information presented.
- Class etiquette: All students are expected to conduct themselves during class in a manner that does not interfere with the educational experience of other students in the course. Please be courteous to others and arrive to class on time and stay the entire time. Late arrivals, early departures, “quiet conversations,” and electronic device usage are distracting and noticeable throughout the classroom (please *silence/turn off* **all** electronic devices in class). These behaviors are not conducive to a positive learning environment and will result in lost attendance points for that day.
- Missed class/meetings: If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to become informed of any announcements made in class and the material presented. You should obtain notes from a classmate and read the required readings. (Out of fairness to other students, I will not provide copies of my notes to students.) A majority of the material discussed in class can be found in the required readings. If you do not show up to a scheduled meeting time, you will lose 1 point from your attendance grade.
- Missed exams or assignments: Illnesses, death in the family, or other stressful events are an unfortunate part of life. If you experience any of these unfortunate events, a make-up exam will be given only if you contact me prior to the exam **and** provide documentation of your absence (e.g., a doctor’s note). If you unexpectedly miss an exam due to exceptional circumstances, it is your responsibility to contact me within 24 hours of the exam to discuss the possibility of a make-up exam. Make-up exams may consist of essay questions. If you miss turning in an assignment when it is due, you will lose 10% of the assignment grade for each day it is late. There will be no exceptions, as due dates of all assignments are posted in advance.
- Academic dishonesty: Cheating, plagiarizing, or any other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated in this course. If you engage in any form of academic dishonesty in this course, you will receive a failing grade on the assignment in question and may face other sanctions as specified by the university. Please see further information about Rutgers’ policies concerning academic integrity at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy>.
- Disability services: If you need disability accommodations, please contact the Disability Services Coordinator (Ajeenah Nuriddin-Little: (856) 225-2722, ajeenah.nuriddin-little@camden.rutgers.edu, Armitage Hall, Room 235). Students who require special accommodations should notify me during the first week of class.
- Dropping the course/incompletes: The last date to drop this course *without* a W grade is **January 23**; the last date to drop *with* a W grade is **April 2**. 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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: This schedule is *tentative*; dates may change slightly depending on our progress in covering the material.

Additional reading assignments not listed will be posted on Sakai at least one week in advance (under “assignments”). You are expected to have reading assignments completed before class.

Week 1: Course Introduction and Overview/ Scientific Understanding of Behavior

Tuesday, January 16 Cozby: Ch. 1

Thursday, January 18

Week 2: Scientific Understanding of Behavior (cont'd)/Formulating Research Questions

Tuesday, January 23

Last day to sign up for research in the media assignment/presentation

Thursday, January 25 Cozby: Ch. 2

**Library instruction on conducting literature searches - meet in library (electronic classroom)*

Week 3: Formulating Research Questions (cont'd) /Conducting Literature Searches

Tuesday, January 30

Thursday, February 1

*DUE: Mini-assignment #1:
Research question approval*

Week 4: Ethics in Research and Writing

Tuesday, February 6 Cozby: Ch. 3

Thursday, February 8

Week 5: Ethics (cont'd) and Exam #1

Tuesday, February 13

*DUE: Mini-assignment #2:
Reference list*

Thursday, February 15 **EXAM #1**

Cozby Ch. 1-3 and Additional Readings

Week 6: Writing in Psychology

Tuesday, February 20 Cozby: Appendix A

DUE: Human subjects certification assignment

Thursday, February 22

Week 7: Studying Behavior: Variables and Experimental vs. Non-Experimental Approaches

Tuesday, February 27 Cozby: Ch. 4

DUE: Mini-assignment #3: Specific aims/hypotheses

Thursday, March 1

Week 8: Measurement

Tuesday, March 6 Cozby: Ch. 5

*DUE: Mini-assignment #4:
Introduction outline*

Thursday, March 8

Tuesday, March 13 and Thursday, March 15 – NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)**Week 9: Descriptive Statistics and Exam # 2**

Tuesday, March 20 Cozby: Ch. 12 (pp. 239-252)

DUE: Introduction section of paperThursday, March 22 ***EXAM # 2****Cozby: Ch. 4, 5, 12 and Additional Readings***Week 10: Observational Methods**

Tuesday, March 27 Cozby: Ch. 6

Thursday, March 29

Week 11: Survey Research

Tuesday, April 3 Cozby: Ch. 7

Thursday, April 5

DUE: Mini-assignment #5: Outline of methods section of paper**Week 12: Experimental Designs**

Tuesday, April 10 Cozby: Ch. 8

Thursday, April 12

DUE: Methods section of paper**Week 13: Conducting Experiments/Other Research Designs**

Tuesday, April 17 Cozby: Ch. 9

Thursday, April 19 Cozby: Ch.11

Week 14: Design Overview/Generalizing Results

Tuesday, April 24 Cozby: Ch. 14

DUE: Final paper

Thursday, April 26

DUE: Human Subjects Participation or Alternative Activity***FINAL EXAM (#3): THURSDAY, MAY 3, 11:30AM-2:20PM (the exam starts at 11:30am)****Cozby: Ch. 6-11, 14 and Additional Readings*