

Special Topics: Directed Readings in Psychology PSYC 499A-01 CRN: 41226
Shepherd University Spring 2010

SYLLABUS

3 credits

Meets 9:35-10:50 am TR, in WH 109

Professor: Dr. Anne Murtagh amurtagh@shepherd.edu (304) 876-5257

OFFICE HOURS: **Tues., Wed., & Thurs. 11-12 noon, and Wed. 1-4 pm**
Other times by appt.

NOTE: My office is in the Free School, a small brick building about 2 blocks down Princess St., at the corner of Princess and New Streets

Required textbooks and readings:

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

American Psychological Association (2002). *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
(download from APA website, <http://www.apa.org/ethics/>)

Mitchell, M. L., Jolley, J. M. & O'Shea, R. P. (2004). *Writing for Psychology*, 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Psychology Department Participant Pool Policies and Procedures. Download from Psychology Department website (from SU site, undergraduate programs, Psychology, then click on "Research Participation").

Catalog description:

As a first course in a series of two, the Directed Readings seminar is designed to prepare students for the senior thesis capstone course. In collaboration with a faculty mentor, the student will develop an idea for an original research project, conduct a review of the relevant literature, and generate an appropriate research design. The final product of the class will be an APA format paper describing the final design. Prerequisites: PSYC 251 and senior standing.

Some thoughts on science:

"Science is not a collection of facts, any more than opera is a collection of notes. It's a process, a way of thinking, a method, based on a single insight – that the degree to which an idea seems true has nothing to do with whether it is true, and that the way to distinguish factual ideas from false ones is to test them by experiment."

Timothy Ferris
From The New Yorker, 7-20-98

Welcome to Special Topics: Directed Readings in Psychology!

NOTE: Be sure to get a substitution form and have it signed by Dr. Daily so that this course will count as PSYC 484, Directed Readings for you.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Research proposal:

Psychology is an objective natural science, and it is important for psychology students to be familiar with the nature of scientific explanation and scientific research in psychology. The best way to achieve this goal is to conduct a research project. The major assignment of this class is the development of a research proposal which you will then implement in PSYC 485, Senior Thesis.

Your goals are to demonstrate 1) your knowledge of a specific area of psychology, 2) your ability to ask meaningful questions in that area, and 3) your ability to design a methodology to answer those questions. This means that you must do a thorough review of the professional literature on your topic, then design a novel study that can add to the body of psychological knowledge. It should **not** be a simple replication of a previous study.

The final product of this process will be a written proposal in APA style. We will be covering APA style as part of the course. Your paper should include the following sections: Title page, Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results (not an actual results section, but a description of your statistical analysis plan), and References. The project you design should:

- Be a novel study that contributes something new
- Be of sound scientific design
- Conform to APA Ethical guidelines
- Be realistic, doable.

All of the readings and assignments of this course relate directly to the development of your proposal. These include:

Topic paragraph. The first step in developing your project is to choose a topic. Your project will be more interesting and meaningful to you if the idea comes from you. Devote time to reading, thinking, reflecting – what attracted you to psychology to begin with? What was especially interesting to you in your first psychology courses? What about later courses? Once you've identified a topic, I want you to submit a paragraph that identifies your potential topic and why you selected it. What questions do you have about that topic?

We will discuss various possible topics in class. Make sure your topic is something that can be studied objectively – measured, tested. Demonstrating the existence of God is out of our realm (see your philosophy professor for that one). Also, if you keep it light and simple you will thank yourself later.

Reading logs. The next step in the process is to become familiar with the literature. This is important for several reasons.

- 1) The most obvious is to avoid re-inventing the wheel, so to speak. Why put so much work into designing a study to answer a question that has already been answered? It is important that you learn what kinds of studies have been done and what was found in the area of your interest.
- 2) Familiarize yourself with the methods and types of measures commonly used in your area of interest. You will get some great ideas for your own study from doing this.
- 3) Learn to write like a psychologist. Immerse yourself in the literature and you can become familiar with the tone and style of APA papers – which details are important to include and which are not.

We will discuss how to do a careful literature search in class. **Google is not particularly helpful in this type of search.** To search the professional literature in psychology, use APA's PsycInfo database. This indexes hundreds of psychology journals back to 1887 and is the professional's tool of choice for reviewing the literature.

You will keep a reading log as you conduct your literature search. Your log should be kept in a 3-ring binder (with 1" rings). For each article you read, you should put into your log a typed entry that includes the date, the APA-style citation for the article, your notes on the article, and a copy of the first page of the article. Your notes should include information on the basic questions asked, methods and measures used, major findings, and conclusions from the study, as well as your evaluation of the article's strengths and weaknesses.

You will turn in your log three times throughout the semester. The entries for each date should be clearly separated from previous entries. You should have 10-12 new entries each time your log is due. I will give you a sample log entry to follow for style and content.

In your final paper you must cite at least 30-35 references. Be aware that you will have to read more than that in order to get 30-35 that you can weave into a coherent thesis. An article that seems relevant at first may later become less relevant. Also, you will have to order many articles through inter-library loan, and it can take a week or two for them to arrive – be sure to plan and allow time for that. Finally, the bulk of your references (90% or more) should be primary sources – original reports of research published in reputable psychology journals. References can include a small number of textbooks or other books that describe studies. Avoid Internet sources (except for reputable sites like APA or NIMH) and avoid popular media sources (e.g., *Newsweek* or *Psychology Today*). When you are summarizing and analyzing these articles, **BE SURE TO CITE SOURCES APPROPRIATELY AND TO WRITE COMPLETELY IN YOUR OWN WORDS!**

Preliminary drafts of your proposal. You will submit several drafts of your proposal. I will give you more details about each as we go along. Each draft should be in APA style and should include all the sections described above.

Proposal presentations. In the last week of class and on the day we are scheduled to take the Final Exam, students will do presentations of their proposals. Thus, while we will not have a Final Exam, we will meet at the designated time. Your presentation should be about 10 minutes long, and should convey your research question, hypotheses, design, methods and measures, and how you will analyze the

data. While you should briefly describe previous research, your presentation should primarily focus on your study. Plan to use Powerpoint.

Final draft. Your final draft should review the literature thoroughly, identify your basic question and hypotheses, describe your methods and measures (give operational definitions of your variables), and describe your procedures in detail. The paper should conform to APA style and include all the sections described above.

You should turn in with your final draft copies of the checklists at the end of chapters 3, 6, and 7 of the Mitchell et al. book. Complete these checklists as part of your review of your draft before you submit it, to help insure that you meet the quality standards below.

All drafts of your paper should be in Times New Roman at 11 or 12 pts., with 1-in. margins on all sides. Use a large paper clip to hold it together. This is your senior capstone project – the culmination of all your work as a psychology major. Take pride in it! Your paper should be your most polished writing, thoroughly proof-read and spell-checked. In grading them, I will use a “3 strikes, you’re out” policy – if I find more than 3 spelling or grammar errors I will stop reading and return it to you at our next class. Your paper will be considered late and you will lose 10 pts. per day until it is turned in with spelling and grammar errors corrected. (Go to the Academic Support Center for help with eliminating errors.)

Course grade.

There are a total of 100 pts. that can be earned in this class.

Topic paragraph	5 pts.
Reading logs	10 pts. each (total of 30)
Preliminary drafts	10 pts. each (total of 20)
Presentation	10 pts.
IRB forms	5 pts.
Final draft	30 pts.

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

60-69 = D

59 and below = F

Attendance.

Regular attendance is extremely important as we work step-by-step on your proposals. You are responsible for catching up on information missed during an absence from class and for making up missed material.

POLICY ON ACADEMIC HONESTY.

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Shepherd University Academic Integrity Procedures found in the **Shepherd University Student Handbook**. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or

receive "consulting" help from such students. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e-mail, an e-mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy.

Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

All papers should reflect your own words and thoughts, unless you indicate otherwise. Academic honesty requires that you give credit for ideas or statements that are not your own. Thus, if you are summarizing someone's ideas in your own words, you must cite the source of the ideas. It should be clear **in every statement or sentence** whether you are expressing your own thoughts, or reporting those of someone else. If you find a quote that you think will add substantially to a paper, you must use quotation marks around the quote, and give the precise source of that quote, including the author, source, and page no.

Plagiarism is taking credit for the ideas or statements of someone else, presenting it as your own work. It is becoming more common these days, as people cut and paste material from the Internet, and falsely submit it as their own writing. However, there are ways to detect this dishonesty. Plagiarism is a serious act, and it will be reported to the Dean of the College. Suspension or dismissal from the college are possible consequences. If you have any questions at all about what is OK and what is not, please ask me. For more information about college policies related to academic honesty, please see the Shepherd University Student Handbook.

Shepherd Late Work Policy

All assignments have a specific due date and it will present considerable problems for you, for your classmates (since much of our classwork will consist of collaborative work with classmates on your proposals), and for me if you do not meet these deadlines. If there is some unavoidable problem that interferes with your work in the class, discuss this with me at the earliest time possible. If this is not done, late work may not be accepted, or points may be deducted for each day it is late.

Accommodations for students with disabilities

Please see me to discuss any appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with Disability Support Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

Please feel free to come and talk to me (or call or e-mail) if you have any questions, concerns or comments, or if I can be of service to you in any way. You've heard that saying, "There is no such thing as a stupid question" – I believe that is true. I enjoy meeting with students one-on-one, and I hope you will not hesitate to share your thoughts with me. Let's have a great semester!