Psychology Honors Seminar
V89.0200.001
Fall 2009
Wed, 6:20 – 8:10 pm, Room 851

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Overview

The Honors Seminar is the required course for all psychology students doing honors projects. The goal of this course is to ensure that you do the best project and produce the best report of it possible. As a result, in the Fall semester the course will focus primarily on getting you started on your thesis research project, with the end product being a completed *Final Research Proposal* for your thesis. The Spring semester will then focus on completion of your project, including the completion of data collection, the analysis and presentation of your results, drawing appropriate and logical conclusions from them regarding your problem topic, and producing the final version of the written thesis.

In this Fall semester you will work with your faculty sponsor to come up with a research project of mutual interest (if you haven't already done so). With the guidance of your sponsor you will conduct a literature review, identify a research question, design an experiment, and identify what types of data analyses will be required. The results of this work will go into your Final Research Proposal, due at the end of the semester (Dec. 12).

It is expected that some students will not yet have a clear idea of their research topic. We also don't expect you to have the necessary skills to collect and analyze data. This is not cause for panic—this is what the course is all about. We are here to help you understand the process so that you can become a competent researcher in your own right.

Major Course Milestones

The creation of your Final Research Proposal will take place in three phases.

1. ***Research Question Overview****: Identification of Research Question/Initial Literature Review*. With the help of your faculty sponsor, in this phase you will state the research question you are interested in, perform an initial literature review, identify what is missing from current research, and how your thesis will fill that gap. This work will culminate in you submitting a written *Research Question Overview* of 1-2 pages (first draft due Sept. 21, final version due Oct. 3).

2. ***Initial Research Proposal***: *Expanded Introducion/Initial Methods Section*. During this phase you will produce an initial design of your thesis experiment(s). You will submit a first draft of your Initial Methods Section (due on Oct. 23). During this phase you will also do additional literature review and expand your Research Question Overview (suggested length of 3-5 pages) into what will become the introduction to your thesis. This expanded introduction and the revised Methods Section should be combined and submitted as an *Initial Research Proposal* to the instructor on Oct. 30.

3. ***Final Research Proposal****: Final Introduction and Methods Section/Planned Data Analysis*. During this phase you will continue to refine your introduction (suggested length of 7-10 pages) as you complete your literature review and incorporate the feedback you've received from the instructor from the previous phase. You will also update your Methods section as more details of your experiment become available (and also to incorporate instructor feedback). Finally, you should identify the types of data analyses and statistical procedures you will be performing (t-test, ANOVA, regression, etc.). You will submit a first draft of your Hypothetical Results Section (due on Dec. 2). Your new Introduction, Methods Section, and final Hypothetical Results Section will be combined into a *Final Research Proposal*, due on Dec. 15.

Oral Presentations

Besides the development and execution of a meaningful research project, another major goal of this course is to teach you how to communicate the results of scientific research. One way this will be done of course is through the written assignments just described. But another way is through oral presentations. In this course we will teach you how to put together effective Powerpoint presentations of your research. Each student will make two presentations.

1. *Presentation of Research Question.* You will present your Research Question as part of an approximately 8 minute in-class Powerpoint presentation in either Meeting 5, 6, or 7 (Oct. 7, Oct. 14, Oct. 21). The intended format of this talk is as an introduction to the longer presentation of your Research Proposal.

2. *Presentation of Research Proposal*. You will present your Initial Research Proposal as part of a 15-minute in-class Powerpoint presentation during Meetings 9–13 (Nov. 4, Nov. 11, Nov. 18, Dec. 2, or Dec. 9). Your faculty sponsor will be invited to attend this talk.

After each talk you will receive both oral and written feedback from other students and the instructor. The instructor will also email you a day or two after your talk giving you additional feedback. Your presentations will make up a portion of your grade for the course (see below).

Peer Comments

For each written and oral assignments you will of course receive feedback from your instructor. But in addition, an important component of your learning experience will be the feedback that students give to one another. To this end, the class will be broken up into *Research Groups* of 3–5 students who have similar research interests. Students within a group should become familiar with each other's research, with the intention of giving each other assistance in experimental design and effective written and oral communication.

1. *In-class peer comments*. Research Groups will meet in class to discuss each other's Research Question Overview drafts (on Sept. 30) and also their Initial Methods Section first drafts (Nov. 4).

2. *Peer comments on Initial Research Proposal*. The students within a Research Group will email each other copies of their Initial Research Proposal on Oct. 30 (in addition to the copy emailed to the instructor). Each student should return written comments on each Proposal they receive from their group members. These comments should be at least one page in length, and are due Nov. 11.

3. *Peer comments on Oral Presentations*. Each student presentation will be followed by classroom discussion in which we comment and make suggestions on both the content of the talk and your presentation style. Your fellow classmates are like to know best which parts of your talk were difficult to comprehend and follow. They are also a good source for ideas on how to improve your talk.

Beginning of Data Collection

Finally, although this course requires that you complete the design of your experiments this semester, it does not require that you begin data collection. However, we *strongly* recommend that you begin data collection in the Fall semester if at all possible. This increases the chances that you get the number of subject you need to participate in your experiment. It will also give you additional time in the Spring to write your thesis. Most importantly, it will give you time to think about what the results of your experiment *mean*, that is, to determine what you have in fact discovered. It is our goal that many students will be able to begin the process of data collection by mid-November.

Readings

Bem, D.J. (1987). Writing the empirical journal article. In M. P. Zanna & J. M. Darley (Eds., 1987), *The Complete Academic.* New York: Random House.

Writing Assignments

1. Research Question Overview – 5%
First Draft of Research Question Overview Due for Peer Comments: Sept. 25.
Due: Oct. 7

2. Initial Research Proposal – 15%
First Draft of Methods Section due for Peer Comments: Oct 23.
Due: Oct. 30

3. Peer Comments on Initial Research Proposal – 5%
Students give each other written feedback (i.e., via email) on their Research Proposals (~1 page).
Due: Nov. 11

4. Hypothetical Results Section – 5%
A section outlining the data analyses that you intend to run (t-test, ANOVA, regression, etc.), graphical presentation of data, etc.
Due: Dec. 2

5. Final Research Proposal – 35%
Your Research Proposal includes a longer and more complete version of your Introduction (suggested length: 7-10 pages), an updated Methods Section, and an updated Hypothetical Results Section.
Due: Dec. 15

Oral Presentations

1. Presentation of Research Question Overview – 10%
A 5-8 minute in-class Powerpoint presentation of your Research Question Overview.
Meetings: 5-7

2. Presentation of Research Proposal – 25%
A 15 minute in-class Powerpoint presentation of your Research Proposal.
Meetings: 8-12

Course Schedule

1	9/9	Course overview
2	9/16	Discussion of reading by Bem.
3	9/23	Finding a research question. Making effective Powerpoint presentations.
	9/25	**DUE: RESEARCH QUESTION OVERVIEW (FIRST DRAFT) (EMAIL TO RESEARCH GROUP AND INSTRUCTOR)**
4	9/30	IRB - Students must pass the OSP Human Subjects Tutorial prior to the class. http://www.nyu.edu/osp/human.html; click on "human subjects tutorial" on the left. In-class discussion of Research Question Overview drafts.
5	10/7	Student Research Question Presentations **DUE: RESEARCH QUESTION OVERVIEW**
	10/9	**DUE: IRB FORMS SUBMITTED**
6	10/14	Student Research Question Presentations
7	10/21	Student Research Question Presentations
	10/23	**DUE: INITIAL METHODS SECTION (FIRST DRAFT) (EMAIL TO RESEARCH GROUP AND INSTRUCTOR)**
8	10/28	In-class discussion of Methods Section
	10/30	**DUE: INITIAL RESEARCH PROPOSALS**
9	11/4	Student Research Proposal Presentations
10	11/11	Student Research Proposal Presentations **DUE: PEER COMMENTS ON RESEARCH PROPOSALS**
11	11/18	Student Research Proposal Presentations
	11/25	*NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Eve)*
12	12/2	Student Research Proposal Presentations **DUE: HYPOTHETICAL RESULTS SECTION (FIRST DRAFT)**
13	12/9	Student Research Proposal Presentations
	12/15	**DUE: FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSALS**

Course Milestones and Schedule