

Honors Tutorial

Department of Psychology
New York University
(V89.0201, Section 2, Spring 2011)

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We will meet on Wednesdays from 6:00-8:20 PM. Our regular classroom will be Meyer 771.

Course Description

This class is the required seminar for all psychology students doing honors projects. The main goal of this course is to ensure that all of you do the best project and write up the best report possible. As a result, the vast majority of the course will be focused on writing—both generally and as regards psychological research in particular. For example, you will learn not to write sentences like the preceding one. But we will also address the techniques and problems of writing research reports in psychology, such as APA style, how to describe complex designs or statistics, how to make your report comprehensible to people in other areas of psychology, and so on.

The two texts were chosen to address each of these issues as well. The Strunk & White book (S & W) is one of the classic texts of writing in English. We will discuss issues of style, grammar, and punctuation, using it as a very brief guide. The APA style manual addresses the rules of writing research reports in psychology. Unlike Strunk & White, it is long and annoying, filled with apparently arbitrary rules. However, all psychologists must learn to follow those rules, if only because it makes it easier if everyone follows the same arbitrary rules rather than making up their own. Your thesis will be required to follow the APA style manual, and so if you don't already own one, you will need to purchase one.

In this class, we will also discuss important issues of research ethics.

Class Schedule

Week of:	Activity (reading)	(Read) / Due / Do
Jan 26	Introduction to the course; progress reports; establishment of work groups	
Feb 2	Research ethics: Human subjects	(Bem; S &W Ch. I)
Feb 9	Describing what was done: Methods	(S&W II); method

		Method 1 st draft Method ppt
Feb 16	Data analysis (SPSS), References	(S&W III, V); <i>Method</i> method ppt
	Feb 18 5:00pm deadline	Apply to URC
Feb 23	Describing what happened: Results	<i>Revised Method</i>
Mar 2	Tables, figures, graphs	<i>Results 1st draft</i> Results ppt
March 9	Scientific integrity	Results Results ppt
Mar 16	Interpreting the Results: Discussion	Spring Break <i>Revised Results</i>
Mar 23		Discussion 1 st draft
	March 25 5:00pm deadline	Send abstract to URC
Mar 30	Defining the Problem: Introduction	
Apr 6	How to make and present a poster	<i>Revised Discussion</i>
Apr 13		<i>Introduction 1st draft</i> Project ppt
	Apr 15 Undergraduate Research Conference, Friday	
Apr 20		Project ppt <i>Revised Introduction</i>
Apr 27	No class; schedule individual meetings this week	

****Apr 27 deadline** HONORS THESES DUE!!!!!!**

May 4 Last class, ceremony (Yes, we will be meeting!)

***May 13* Final ABSTRACT DUE for Inquiry, the undergraduate research journal**

S&W = Strunk & White: *The Elements of Style (4th Edition)* by W. Strunk Jr. & E.B. White.
URC = Undergraduate Research Conference

Activities and Due Dates

The honors thesis itself is due on April 27. This date has been determined by the department (not me) to give time for the honors committee to read and evaluate the theses, which must in turn be done in time for graduation. In order to make that deadline with a minimum of last-minute hysteria, you will be writing sections of your thesis throughout the semester, giving them to other students to critique, and then rewriting them. By the time April 20 comes around, then, you should only need to insert last-minute results and add the necessary discussion of those results. Clearly, you need to discuss this schedule with your research advisor to make sure that you will have your data collected in time, and so that your advisor can allocate time to give you necessary help and feedback.

The main other activity will be the preparation of posters for the Undergraduate Research Conference (URC). (A few lucky individuals may be asked to present their research as talks.) Because the URC's schedule is very close to the thesis due date, we will have to work hard to prepare for both. Important due dates include the following:

Feb 18: Apply to research conference
March 25: Submit abstract to conference
April 15: Undergraduate research conference
April 27: Thesis due

Important note. I don't know how your individual project is going yet. If you are on schedule and have a lot of data collected, then the following may not apply to you. However, if you are kind of behind, not sure exactly what the study is supposed to prove, or expect to have a lot of trouble with data analysis, then you should start thinking about how you will spend your spring break. The break may be the perfect time for you to finish your data analysis and get a lot of your writing done. The honors project is a major piece of work, and if you are finding it daunting, you can perhaps be less daunted by the idea that you could have a week free with nothing to do except work on it. Obviously, if you make reservations for Jamaica or the Alps or Staten Island for that week, you will be closing off this option.