

Psychology 211A: Experimental Methods and Data Analysis I Spring 2012

Instructor:	Dr. Sarah Johnson	When:	M/W 1:10-3:30pm
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	Pwd: OMGstats		

Overall Course Goal: This course will foster understanding of how researchers in psychology go about studying the way individuals think, feel, act, etc. The primary focus of this first course in the 2-part series of 211-212 is on the scientific method as the means through which knowledge advances in psychology. You will learn how to develop and test hypotheses, collect reliable data, use some basic statistical procedure, and interpret/report the results of those statistical tests. You will also begin to learn the skills and tools used by psychologists in their work, including descriptive and inferential statistics, spreadsheets and graphing, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), and writing in American Psychological Association (APA) format. Further understanding of more advanced statistical procedures will be the focus of Psyc 212, in which you will actually implement a study of your own design. The proposal of the design for your own study will be the major project of the current class. This course is a writing and computing intensive course for the major in Psychology. Prerequisite: PS 120.

THE SECOND HALF OF THE COURSE (I.E., 212 IN THE FALL SEMESTER) WILL FOLLOW THE SAME SCHEDULE (SAME TIME/SAME DAYS) AS OUR SPRING SCHEDULE.

Specific Course Objectives: By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of scientific method as a way of knowing
2. Understand and apply the APA Principles of Ethical Conduct to the research process
3. Think critically about all phases of the research process in order to critique your own research and the research of others (i.e., recognizing potential design flaws), as well as to become a better consumer of information
4. Use appropriate on-line (e.g., PsycInfo) and library resources in the research process
5. Design a study to answer a specific research question of your own choosing
6. Understand the connection between research design and statistical analysis
7. Use basic statistical procedures appropriately, involving both hand-calculation and applying SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), as well as graphing the data using either SPSS or Excel
8. Write a research proposal in following the guidelines set forth by the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (i.e., APA format)

Required Textbooks: Any additional readings will either be handed out during class or made available via Blackboard. Readings may be added that are not currently on the class schedule.

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

Heiman, G. W. (2001). *Understanding Research Methods and Statistics* (2nd ed.). New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Expectations for the Course: Preparation and Commitment

a) As a prerequisite for upper level courses in psychology and due to its rigor of combining both statistics and methodology – you must be willing to give preparation for this course a high priority in terms of your time management.

b) You **MUST** have basic math skills. If you have difficulty with math, you may need to rethink taking this course right now. Help is available through Learning Services (see below).

c) You should allocate a time and place to study for this course. Your studying will not be successful if done in 10 or 15 minute segments, late at night or at the last minute. I recommend several study sessions of one hour per week, although what is needed may vary from individual to individual. This time is in addition to the time required to complete assignments, quizzes, independent research work, and group study sessions. I strongly encourage you to form study groups and meet on a regular basis in order to review homework problems and to capitalize on different perspectives and examples.

d) You must read before class or you will not fully comprehend the lectures. Your reading and studying goal should go beyond comprehending – you must eventually be able to speak the language of research.

e) Form study groups and meet on a regular basis in order to capitalize on different perspectives and examples.

f) I assume that all of you have had a basic writing course (WR100 or equivalent). Therefore, I expect strong writing to be displayed in your assignments and projects. Spelling, grammar, and structure are always relevant, and will therefore be a large source of the grading of assignments and the project.

g) **USE THE APA MANUAL AND WRITING CENTER AS VALUABLE RESOURCES!**

The Writing Center is located in a building that is not accessible to persons with mobility impairments. If you need the services of the Writing Center, please call 610-861-1392.

h) Commit to the policies, procedures, and spirit of the syllabus. Please consult the relevant parts of the syllabus when necessary before discussing concerns with me.

In the spirit of fairness to ALL students I must be consistent with the policies laid out in this syllabus and ask you to be familiar with and respectful of them.

Course Evaluation:

Class Participation: The attendance requirement is necessary for two reasons: 1) The coursework is extremely layered and missing one day can put you behind for future meetings and assignments; 2) Your fellow students rely on your presence, for providing feedback or participating in group activities. Each student has up to **3 allowed absences** (there is no distinction made between excused and unexcused absences. Exceptions for absences beyond the allowed 3 will be made, on a case-by-case basis, only in cases of documentable emergencies. For each absence beyond that, your final course grade will be reduced by 1/3rd letter (e.g., B+ → B). If you have special circumstances that will result in missing more than two classes, you should see me and contact the Learning Services Office. There are some class activities that, if missed, cannot be made up. In addition, I expect all assigned readings to be done in advance.

I reserve the right to adjust final grades based on quality of participation, as follows:

- + A student who arrives on time and prepared for *every* class, participates in discussion frequently, has clearly read in advance, is highly active in all group activities, and who generally contributes high quality ideas during class, may receive a boost of 1/3rd letter grade to his/her final course grade.
- No adj. A student who arrives on time and prepared for most classes, answers questions in class sufficiently and occasionally adds his/her own comments or questions, has clearly read in advance, and participates adequately in group activities will not receive any adjustment to his/her final course grade. I expect the majority of the class to fall in this category.
- A student who shows up late to class repeatedly, does not contribute in class discussions/group activities, is poorly prepared (e.g., has not done assigned readings), or who repeatedly fails to follow instructions for an in-class activity may receive a reduction of 1/3rd letter grade to his/her final course grade. If a reduction is warranted, a warning note will be given to the student prior to the end of the semester.

1. Assignments: There will be some in-class and some take-home assignments due over the course of the semester. Take-home assignments should be typed—excluding computational problems, which may be written by hand—and proofread for clarity, spelling and grammar, etc, as appropriate. Unless otherwise noted, take-home assignments are due at the beginning of class, and in-class assignments are due before leaving class. Except in cases of documentable emergencies, late assignments will ***not be accepted***. If you miss an in-class assignment due to absence and you cannot document the reason for the absence, you will not be permitted to make it up. If you miss an in-class assignment due to an excused absence, we will, if possible, arrange an extension in proportion with the excuse, as determined on a case-by-case basis. However, there are some in-class activities/assignments that cannot be made up if missed.

2. Quizzes: I will give a quiz at the end of class for every chapter of the course that we cover (excluding Ch. 1). The quizzes will happen on the day when the chapter is listed on the class schedule (see end of syllabus). You may use your notes and the textbook, but the quizzes will be timed. The quizzes will be multiple-choice/short-answer (10 questions per quiz). Your lowest quiz score will be dropped, and you have the option of retaking 1 quiz immediately after we have finished covering the chapter in class (you should contact me if you wish to retake a quiz). Once the exam for that chapter has occurred, you cannot retake that quiz.

3. Exams: There will be exams given throughout the semester and one cumulative exam given during finals period. Test format may include multiple choice, short answer/identification, short essay, and/or computational problems. Questions can be on anything in the assigned text chapters and handouts even if not discussed in lecture. Study guides with important terms to know and sample questions will be posted on Blackboard as each exam approaches. You will be allowed to use the grade on the cumulative final to replace a lower score from the earlier exams or to substitute for a missed exam provided you had an *extraordinary* and *documentable* excuse for missing it, as determined on a case-by-case basis.

Missed exams: If you have an extraordinary and documentable excuse for missing an exam, contact me as soon as possible and we will arrange to either administer a make-up or to have you skip that test and use the cumulative final to substitute for it. If you know in advance that you will be absent during an exam (e.g., because of travel for a sports team, medical excuse, interview, etc.) then you need to let me know as soon as possible beforehand. You may not use the cumulative final to replace a missed exam if you skipped the exam without legitimate reason.

4. Proposal: You will be working throughout the semester on a proposal for a study to be implemented next semester (in Psyc 212). This project has multiple components that will build on each other, culminating in a final research proposal, with at least 6 references, written in APA style. Some portions of the project will be ungraded (e.g., potential project questions, methods draft); these ungraded portions must be turned in on time or a reduction will be applied to the graded portion of the proposal. Further information regarding the expectations for and grading of homework assignments, and proposal components will be given in separate handouts.

Late Policy: Except in rare cases, late homework and ungraded proposal assignments will not be accepted. Late papers will be accepted for up to four calendar days after the due date and, unless otherwise noted, will result in a ***reduction in points equivalent to 1 letter grade (10%) for every day late*** beginning at 5pm on the assignment's due date. After the four-day period, the paper will not be accepted and a grade of 0 will be applied. No exceptions will be made for minor technical difficulties. Situations involving documentable excuses will be taken on a case-by-case basis. **I accept work by email only if you have arranged it with me for that assignment.**

Note that it is within my purview to use qualitative judgment in assigning grades for various components of the course (e.g., participation, homework assignments, exam essays, papers, etc.).

Overall grades- Point Breakdown:

Assignments (9 @ ~15 pts each)	135 pts
Quizzes (10 @ 10 pts each)	100 pts
Exams (3 @ 100 pts each)	300 pts
Final exam	120 pts
Beginning lit search	15 pts
Proposed Research Outline	70 pts
Proposal draft	110 pts
<u>Final proposal</u>	<u>150 pts</u>
Total	1000 pts

Unless otherwise noted, I will use the following scale for calculating grades:

Letter	Score	Grade range	Letter	Score	Grade range
A	100	95-100	C	75	73-76
A-	92	90-94	C-	71	70-72
B+	88	87-89	D+	68	67-69
B	85	83-86	D	65	63-66
B-	81	80-82	D-	61	60-62
C+	78	77-79	F	0	0-59

Extra credit: Extra credit opportunities involving participation in experiments will be available throughout the semester. I will inform you of these opportunities as they approach. However, do come and see me at any point during the semester if you feel you could be doing better than you are. We can work together to improve your performance.

PLEASE NOTE: THE POLICY IN THE PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT STATES THAT, IN ORDER TO MOVE ON TO THE SECOND COURSE IN THIS SERIES (PSYC 212), YOU MUST EARN AT LEAST A C (72.6) IN THIS COURSE. BOTH 211 AND 212 ARE REQUIRED FOR PSYCHOLOGY MAJORS.

Calculator: You will need a calculator for many class meetings, so please bring it *every* class once we start working on statistics. Calculators that let you save new equations or automatically calculate any of the statistical tests we cover are not permitted. If you aren't sure whether your calculator is appropriate, bring it to me for approval. **If a prohibited calculator is used for an exam, the exam will receive a grade of zero.** If you forget a calculator for an exam, I cannot guarantee there will be one for you to use, in which case your test grade will be affected.

Plagiarism and cheating: Any work that you turn in for this class must be entirely your own work. Any sources used must be properly documented, and I will ask you **not to use any direct quotes** in assignments or papers. This means PARAPHRASING—i.e. putting all info into your own words.

For more information on plagiarism and cheating, refer to the Student Handbook and the following website regarding academic responsibility at Moravian College:
<http://www.moravian.edu/studentLife/handbook/academic2.htm>. As this site clearly explains, the consequences for cheating or plagiarism can range from failing the assignment to receiving an F for the final course grade to expulsion, depending on the severity of the case and prior history of offenses. Although I am not generally opposed to your discussing assignments with fellow students from the class, all of the work you submit to me must be entirely your own, except where explicitly noted that collaboration is allowed.

Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides for some accommodations to be made for students with certain disabilities. If you have such a disability and are willing to disclose it, you may take advantage of such accommodations. In order to do so, you are required to meet with Mr. Joseph Kempfer in the Office of Learning Services. Accommodations cannot be provided until I have received authorization from Mr. Kempfer. You should also consider taking advantage of the Learning Services Office if you are having difficulty academically in this (or any other) class. The office is located at 1307 Main St. (phone: 610-861-1510). They coordinate Statistics tutors (including students from previous Psyc statistics courses, when there are volunteers available).

Class Schedule (This schedule is tentative. I reserve the right to make announced changes with sufficient notice. Assignments are take-home unless otherwise noted.):

Week:	Class topic/activities:	Text Chs/Assignments:
1		
Jan 16 M	Introduction and course overview	
Jan 18 W	Scientific Methods	Ch. 1
2		
Jan 23 M	Research Design	Ch. 2
Jan 25 W	Reliability & Validity	Ch. 3
3		
Jan 30 M	Design issues & Ethics (experiments)	Ch. 4
Feb 1 W	Cont'd	Milgram readings; Potential project questions due
4		
Feb 6 M	Design issues & Ethics (descriptive)	Ch. 5
Feb 8 W	Design issues cont'd; Start APA in-class assignment	<i>Design issues assignment</i>
5		
Feb 13 M	PsycInfo Tutorial ; Finish APA assign't	<i>APA assignment 1</i>
Feb 15 W	Exam 1	
6		
Feb 20 M	Intro to SPSS; Start Freq. distributions	Beginning literature search due
Feb 22 W	Frequency distributions & Percentiles	Ch. 6
7		
Feb 27 M	Central tendency	Ch. 7
Feb 29 W	Variability	Ch. 8; <i>Central tendency assignment</i> ; Proposed Research Outline due Fri, Mar 2nd
8		
Mar 5-9	Spring Break – No class	
9		
Mar 12 M	Variability cont'd	<i>APA assignment 2</i>
Mar 14 W	In-class proposal design critiques; Discussion of methods writing/SPSS	<i>Variability assignment</i>
10		
Mar 19 M	Exam 2	
Mar 21 W	In-class peer review of methods	Proposal methods draft due in-class
11		
Mar 26 M	z-scores	Ch. 9
Mar 28 W	Correlation	Ch. 10; <i>z-score assignment</i> ;

Week:	Class topic/activities:	Text Chs/Assignments:
12		
Apr 2 M	Correlation cont'd	Proposal draft w/commentary due
Apr 4 W	Regression	Ch. 11; <i>Correlation assignment</i>
13		
Apr 9 M	Easter recess – No class	
Apr 11 W	Regression cont'd	<i>Regression assignment</i>
14		
Apr 16 M	Exam 3	
Apr 18 W	Final paper prep/SPSS review	
15		
Apr 23 M	Probability	Ch. 12; Final proposal due
Apr 25 W	SPSS	<i>SPSS assignment (in-class)</i>
Finals Wk	Final exam – Tues. May 1 st at 8:30am	

Exam 1: Chs. 1-5

Exam 2: Chs. 6-8

Exam 3: Chs. 9-11

Final exam: Cumulative + Ch. 12

Required Competencies for Students Completing PS 211

Competency Area 1: **Research Methodology**

At the conclusion of the course, the student should be able to. . . .

- Understand scientific method as distinct from other ways of knowing
- Identify from an abstract or short description of an empirical study: the relevant theory, hypotheses, independent & dependent variables, operational definitions of variables, study design, potential confounding variables
- Critique a study with respect to its reliability & validity, and suggest potential improvements to a flawed study design
- Distinguish between a population and sample of scores
- Describe the ways of obtaining a random sample & merits of each type of sample
- From the description of a study, identify ethical concerns & suggest potential solutions
- Describe the key points that must be included in the Informed Consent for a study

Competency Area 2: **Statistical Concepts**

At the conclusion of the course, the student should be able to. . . .

- Identify the scale of measurement used to measure a variable
- Identify and compute the appropriate descriptive statistics for a distribution of scores
- Create the proper graph to portray a distribution of scores
- Explain the common terms in a statistical formula
- Understand the distinction between theoretical (or definitional) and computational formulas
- Explain the concept of the standard normal distribution
- Compute & interpret z-scores and understand their use in psychology
- Compute & interpret the strength & direction of a correlation coefficient
- Explain, give an example, & sketch the scatterplot for each of the following: positive correlation, negative correlation, nonlinear correlation, no correlation
- Understand how linear regression can be used to predict the score on one variable from the knowledge of the obtained score on a second variable

Competency Area 3: **Computer Applications**

At the conclusion of the course, the student should be able to. . . .

- Code and enter a multiple variable data set using SPSS
- Transform variables using compute & recode functions
- Create graphs using SPSS and/or Excel
- Compute and interpret SPSS output for Frequencies and Correlation
- Use Microsoft Word to produce APA format documents

Competency Area 4: **Writing & APA Format**

At the conclusion of the course, the student should be able to. . . .

- Identify & correct errors in APA format for references & citations within the text
- Identify & correct common errors highlighted in the APA Manual in the format, structure, grammar and style of manuscripts