As Honors students in Psychology, you have many options available to you both now and after graduation. Our goal in this course is to introduce you to the important option of psychological research. We encourage undergraduates to become involved in research early on, and Psychology students have been quite successful in receiving awards and scholarships for research. Many students have completed first-rate independent projects as undergraduates. Several Honors students have published their research in professional research journals.

We want to share with you some of the excitement we faculty have in doing research and give you a chance to learn about the broad range of methods psychologists use and the topics that psychologists research. We are fortunate that many of the nationally and internationally known faculty in the UW Madison Psychology Department can help to provide this learning experience. Although we hope that outstanding students like you will share our excitement and want to become research psychologists and teachers, it is important for you to sample the research process as part of your undergraduate honors experience to see if this is an appropriate career for you.

As noted, the primary objective of this course is to help you to find your place in the very broad field of scientific psychology. There are two ways in which this course is designed to help you attain this goal. First, the course will help you to develop critical skills necessary to make informed decisions about your personal career path. The first few weeks of the course will be spent introducing you to skills necessary for critical thinking about scientific psychology. Second, the course will serve to introduce you to individual psychology faculty members and the questions, excitement, and challenges of different types of research. Faculty presentations will vary in format; however, all will help you to evaluate different scientific approaches with respect to your particular intellectual inclinations and strengths.

We hope that this course will help you to better understand the nature of research in psychology and to better choose the area in which you may like to do research in the future. The class will meet on Tuesday afternoons at 3:50 during both Fall and Spring semesters. The general format will be as follows: Two (or three) faculty members with related research interests will each present a 50-minute talk on consecutive weeks. Following the talk, there will be about 20 minutes for your questions. On the third (or fourth) week, there will be no lecture. Instead, smaller discussions will be held, and it is expected that all students will be prepared to enter into the discussion.

Requirements for the course include:

I. You must take this course for both Fall and Spring semesters.

II. You must attend every class session. Absence without prior notice and a very good excuse will result in a lower grade for the course.
III. You will read one or two research articles prior to each faculty presentation. Skimming will not do. You must do your best to understand well the material in the articles. Faculty presenters are offering their time for your benefit. It is an important responsibility and courtesy that you do your very best to be well-prepared for their talks. Faculty have been assured that you will come to class prepared, and they will assume that you are prepared and will feel free to build upon the readings when they give their lectures.

IV. You will maintain a journal throughout the course. Journals should be typed and brought to each class meeting (both faculty presentations and discussions). Journals will be collected during each small discussion session. For each week's speaker, you will have two entries:

1) Three or four comments and questions on readings done before class. These questions will serve several purposes. First, asking deep questions is a terrific way of helping you to understand and remember the research. Second, two of the questions should be in a form that you can ask, in public, to the faculty presenter. In fact, you are REQUIRED to ask questions after the presentation. Third, the questions will be used to stimulate our own discussions. Although questions of clarification are fine, more interesting questions attempt to probe deeper. Some examples of questions you might ask after a presentation are: "Your data show X, but person B's data show Y; can you explain the discrepancy?" "Your theory says X, but everyday experience implies Y; why is there a difference?" "What is the relationship between the theory, the prediction, and the design of the experiment; why is this experiment relevant to testing the theory?" "What is the future direction of your research?" "How do your results help us to understand everyday experience or help others?" "Last week we heard Professor B say X, but this week you are saying Y; how can these both be true?" And most importantly, "What theories have been disconfirmed by your research?"

2) A brief (<200 words) abstract of the presentation. See below for hints on writing an abstract.

V. Most journal entries will be graded as simply "done" or "not done." There are two exceptions, however.

1) After writing your journal entry for the first faculty presenter (Pollak on September 23), you will schedule a meeting with the professor leading your discussion section (Glenberg, Cai, or Jenison) to review it.

2) Over the course of the semester, two additional journal entries must be submitted by the Tuesday following the presentation. These will be graded and returned with feedback.

Your journal serves as your personal record of this course. A thoughtful journal will provide you with the opportunity to observe your own critical thinking evolve as you think as a scientist of human behavior.

Grading:
A prerequisite to receiving a grade higher than a "C" is attendance at every class and completion of all journal entries unless excused in advance.

The two graded journal entries will contribute 25% of your grade. Participation in class discussions will contribute 65% of your grade. Participation in discussion with faculty presenters will contribute 10% of your grade.

Some tips on writing abstracts

When one is writing a research article, an abstract is a summary of the entire research paper. In essence, from an abstract one should be able to learn the following: What questions need to be addressed and why; what is known from past research in the area; how were the present experiments conducted; what are the results; how can the results be be interpreted; what does the reader know about the initial question now that these studies have been done? You may have noticed that the answers to these questions match well with the skeleton of a research paper: Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion.

When possible, the following describes how your abstracts should be written for this course. You should begin by stating the "big picture": why does one wish to study the questions at hand; why are these questions important; how can one investigate the answers? Often you will need to describe two or more opposing explanations for a phenomenon because the research is meant to discriminate between the explanations (see Platt reading). Next, you should describe the basic methods used to address the research question at hand followed by a brief description of experiments done. Next, describe the most important data and their interpretation. Finally, you should come full-circle to state how the present work informs the reader about the "big picture" questions.

Not all faculty presentations in Psychology 386 will be strictly amenable to the standard abstract format. Nevertheless, you must cover all of the points listed above to the best of your ability. NOTE: An abstract is not a simple summary of a talk that follows the order in which the speaker presents concepts. Giving an effective talk is often like telling a story. For example, a speaker may keep the results a surprise until the end, or the speaker may describe his or her own journey through several failed experiments until the right method is discovered. The story of the journey may not fit the constraints of an abstract, however. For example, describing the steps in the journey may take too much space when ultimately they are irrelevant to the final conclusions. Thus, your abstract may require rearranging components of the talk, or imposing a structure that is different from that of the talk. The point of the abstract is to give, in a very small amount of space, the most important components and their relations: General question; specific question; methodology for answering the question; results; answer to questions.

There are several reasons for writing abstracts for this class. One reason is to learn to write publication-quality abstracts, that is, to write abstracts that cogently summarize major ideas and approaches in a manner that conveys most or all of the essentials in a brief and straightforward manner. The biggest challenge may be keeping such an abstract within 200-250 words. Also, as is the case for published abstracts, there is no place for personal opinion in your abstracts: save personal opinion for the questions and comments in your journal. A second reason for writing
abstracts is because it encourages you to think deeply about the research topic and the relations among the hypotheses, experiments, results, and conclusions. This sort of thinking is invaluable for evaluating your own research as well as that of others.

Fall Semester Schedule
(some adjustments may still need to be made)

Sept 2 (room 121) - Introductions, and meet Jenny Saffran, the Honors Advisor who will talk about the honors program and funding that is available to support your research.

Sept 9 (Section 1:room 634; Section 2: room 134; Section 3: room 311) - Discussion of Stanovich

Please be prepared to discuss the major points in Stanovich. As will be the case for next week also, your journal will diverge from the standard model. Please adapt the format in a fashion that best allows you to share your thinking about these general issues.

Sept 16 (Section 1:room 634; Section 2: room 134; Section 3: room 311) - Discussion of Platt's Strong Inference & Hempel and Oppenheim's Logic of Explanation

Hempel and Oppenheim is quite lengthy, but very interesting. Feel free to read it all, but our discussion will focus on Part I and to a lesser extent on Part II and Part III, section 6. One question to consider for discussion is, What is the relation between Platt and Stanovich? A second question is, What is the relation between Platt and Hempel and Oppenheim?

Sept 23 (room 121) Professor Seth Pollak
Sept 30 (room 121) Professor Joseph Newman
Oct 7 (Section 1:room 634; Section 2: room 134; Section 3: room 311) Discussion

Oct 14 (room 121) Professor Alexander Grunewald
Oct 21 (room 121) Professor Bradley Postle
Oct 28 (Section 1:room 634; Section 2: room 134; Section 3: room 311) Discussion
Nov 4 (room 121) Professor Jeremy Biesanz
Nov 11 (room 121) Professor Robert Livingston
Nov 18 (Section 1:room 634; Section 2: room 134; Section 3: room 311) Discussion

Nov 25 (room 121) Professor Mark Seidenberg or Maryellen MacDonald
Dec 2 (room 121) Professor Maryellen MacDonald or Mark Seidenberg
Dec 9 (Section 1:room 634; Section 2: room 134; Section 3: room 311) Discussion

References for September 10 and 17

** Available through electronic reserves at the College Library**


** Available at: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sid=0036-8075%2819641016%293%3A146%3A3642%3C347%3ASI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-K or, ask Glenberg for a copy of the pdf file.


** Available through electronic reserves at the College Library**

Where to take complaints about a Teaching Assistant or Course Instructor

The College requires that a statement telling students where to take complaints about a course TA be included in the course syllabus. When the policy was first set out, several faculty in the Department felt that it should include instructors as well and the paragraphs below were adopted as the standard Psychology Department statement on complaints.

Occasionally a student may have a complaint about a T.A. or course instructor. If that happens, you should feel free to discuss the matter directly with the T.A. or instructor. If the complaint is about the T.A. and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with him/her, you should discuss it with the course instructor. If you do not feel the instructor has resolved the matter to your satisfaction, then you should speak to the Psychology Undergraduate Advisor, Ms. Arlene Davenport (room 428 Psychology) or the Department Chair, Professor Charles Snowdon (room 238 Psychology). You should also speak to either of these individuals if the complaint is about the instructor and you do not feel comfortable discussing it directly with him/her.

If you believe the T.A. or course instructor has discriminated against you because of your religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnic background, you also may take your complaint to the Affirmative Action Office (room 175 Bascom Hall). If your complaint has to do with sexual harassment, you may also take your complaint to Ms. Arlene Davenport, the Psychology Department sexual harassment contact person.

If your T.A. is not a native English speaker and you have difficulty understanding his or her speech, ask the T.A. to repeat sentences that you do not understand. If you have serious or prolonged difficulty understanding, discuss the problem with the course instructor. But remember that this is a multicultural
institution and that the diversity of T.A.s can add substantially to your education. Some patience with unfamiliar accents may reward you with a better understanding of the world.

Conflicts between religious observances and class work

According to University policy, students must notify the course instructor within the first two weeks of class of the specific days or dates on which you request relief; make ups may be scheduled either before or after the regularly scheduled requirements; instructors may set reasonable limits on the total number of days claimed by any one student. Action Office (room 175 Bascom Hall). If your complaint has to do with sexual harassment, you may also take your complaint to Ms. Arlene Davenport, the Psychology Department sexual harassment contact person.

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