Senior Thesis Seminar

PSY 411
ID: 2765

Fall 2013
Instructor: Elena Kim
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Course language: English
Classes: Tue 15:35 (room 324)
Consultations: by appointment
Prerequisites: PSY 218; PSY 230
Number of credits: 3
Course status: required

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is the Department of Psychology's capstone course, designed to foster and evaluate the student's fundamental understanding of psychology as an empirical research science. In this two-semester course, students will acquire and utilize the skills necessary for conducting and reporting empirical research in psychology. The students will be a involved in finding and reviewing literature, forming hypotheses, designing research to test those hypotheses, undertaking a thorough data collection, analyzing the data, and beginning to write up a defensible thesis project. During the Fall semester, each student will conduct a literature review, designs a project, and preferably complete their data collection. In the early spring semester, data collection must be completed and the rest of the semester devoted to analyzing the data, writing the thesis, and creating a professional presentation. The course culminates with the presentation of the senior theses at Mock Defense.

Each student will individually conduct their own one-year long research project under the supervision from a member of the Department of Psychology and with the support from the instructor of this course. We understand that because of the nature of scientific research, each senior project will differ in terms of its timing and emphasis on particular aspects of the research process. However, completion of each part of the senior thesis project will be strictly controlled based on deadlines. The deadlines will be announced earlier in the semester.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
By the completion of this course the students will be expected to demonstrate the following skills:

- Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from primary sources to address psychologically relevant issues.
- Develop and conduct a research project.
- Write using APA style.
- Communicate orally as they plan, conduct and describe their research findings.

READINGS

1. Students' Guide designed by the Department of Psychology at AUCA
2. C. James Goodwin. *Research in Psychology: Methods and Design.* NY: J. Wiley
3. 5American Psychological Association (2002). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th Edition). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
4. Abu-Bader, S.H. (2006). *Using Statistical Methods in Social Work Practice: A complete SPSS Guide.* Chicago: Lyceum Books, Inc.
5. American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th Edition). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE:
The course will use a seminar format. Each class students will present their work in relation to their senior project in the format of structured assignment or in less formal discussions. Throughout the semester students will carry out five assignments completion of which will lead to development of their thesis. Three times during the course, each student will

give formal presentations in the presence of all faculty members. The schedule of these meetings as well as the description of the requirements for the presentations will be available early in the semester. Each student is expected to actively participate in the in-class discussions, present their assignments, raise questions for discussions and carefully attend to the comments received at the departmental meetings.

CLASS POLICIES:

ATTENDANCE
Attendance for this class is mandatory. In the beginning of each class, I'll take attendance. If you come late to class, you can be present but I will consider this day as missing. Above all, I do not like when students go back and forth during the class. It distracts my attention. Please, do not do that. Try to solve all your problems before the class. I am not going to regard a person as being present in class if she/he left the classroom for more than 15 minutes. The class will be held once a week.

IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION
Each class we will have discussion sessions. During these sessions, you will be asked to share your experiences with the process of carrying out your research project. You will be encouraged to raise questions outlining the moments that were not very clear or you would like a second opinion about. You will be expected to listen to other students without interruption and critically reply to other students' comments and questions.

ISSUES OF GRADING
If you feel that the evaluation of your work was not fair or you noticed some scoring mistakes in your grade, you should bring these issues to my attention immediately! If your demands are reasonable, I will remedy my mistakes. After all, social psychological research demonstrates that all people are susceptible to mistakes and biases. I promise, there will be a no-risk situation for you – I will not penalize anyone who takes the time to highlight instances where you or someone else were treated unfairly.

CHEATING POLICY
If I notice that you have submitted someone else's work and presented it as your own, copied your answers from other exam papers or plagiarized from a published article, I will assign you an F in the course and inform the administration about this issue regardless of your performance in other portions of the course. I will hate to do that, but there will be no exceptions to this rule.

GRADING SYSTEM

1. Progress report 1	20%
2. Progress report 2	20%
3. Progress report 3	20%
4. Assignments	30%
5. In-class participation	10%
TOTAL	100%

GRADING SYSTEM

95-100%	A		74-77 %	C	
90-94 %	A-		70-73 %	C-	
88-89 %	B+		68 - 69 %	D+	
84-87 %	B		64 - 67 %	D	
80-83 %	B-		60- 63 %	D-	
78-79 %	C+		0-59 %	F	

POLICIES

- Electronic course system (e-course.auca.kg) is encouraged to be used as the primary platform for communicating with the instructor and other students. Additional reading materials and study guides will be posted via electronic course system on a regular basis.
- Late arrival/early leaving to and from class without a proper excuse will be regarded as missing the entire session.
- Cell phones and other mobile devices are not allowed during the class session.
- Laptops and tablet computers should be used for taking notes only.
- Missed or late work will be accepted only if a student provides an official note reasoning a substantive excuse for such circumstances.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week	Topic	Notes
Week 1	Choosing a topic	
Week 2	Investigating the area of interest	Assignment 1
Week 3	Finalizing topics	
Week 4	Research goals, hypotheses and questions	Assignment 2
Week 5	Choosing a research design	
Week 6	**Progress Report 1.**	
Week 7	Proposal writing	Assignment 3
Week 8	Proposal writing	
Week 10	**Progress Report 2**.	
Week 11	Methods, Participants, Materials	
Week 12	Data collection and issues of ethics. Sampling	Assignment 4
Week 13	Statistical analysis	
Week 14	Writing up “Methods” section in APA style	
Week 15	Writing up “Analysis” section in APA style	Assignment 5
Week 16	**Progress Report 3.**	

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Schedule of Student Progress Reports on Senior Theses Implementation

1. **Progress report I: Submission of topics**

Date: **October 1st, 2013**

Description: All students in their senior year submit their project topics, research questions, hypotheses and a research plan.

2. **Progress report II: Proposal presentation.**

Date: **November 5th, 2013**

Description: All students submit their research proposals. The content of the proposals may vary but should contain the following:

Title, the problem under investigation, history of the research problem, rationale for the study, hypotheses and objectives of the study, theoretical and practical implications of the study, research methods (including description of prospective participants, instruments and procedures). Proposal must contain a paragraph which explains how your research design complies with APA Ethical Standards.

3. **Progress report III: Data collection**

Date: **December 17th, 2013**

Description: Students report on their data collection and submit detailed statistical analysis of data and the raw data and computer analysis output.

4. **Progress report IV:**

Date: **February 25th, 2014**

Description: Students submit to the Department the first drafts of their theses formatted in accordance with APA style.

5. **Mock Defense.**

Date: **April 22nd, 2014**

Description: Students present final version of their theses. Supervisors report on their assessment of the progress of the students and their preparedness for the Defense.

6. **Final versions submission.**

Date: **May 12th, 2014**

Students submit their final projects. Late projects are subject to a mandatory and substantial grade penalty. On the project due date, students must submit the bounded copy as well.

7. **Defense**

Date TBA (preliminary scheduled for late May).