

PSY329

Social Psychology Laboratory

Course Syllabus

Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00pm-4:00pm. In person. SS560



Instructor and Teaching Assistant Information

Instructor:

Amanda Sharples, Ph.D. amanda.sharples@mail.utoronto.ca

Student Hours:

In-person Tuesdays 12:00pm-1:00pm (Starting May 14th), SS4091

Online Wednesdays (see calendar)

<https://utoronto.zoom.us/my/sharplesmeetingroom>

Teaching Assistant

Ruth Yilma

ruth.yilma@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Description and Learning Objectives

This course will introduce you to a variety of innovative methodological approaches used to study fundamental questions in social psychology. We will explore topics including research ethics and values, research design, data analysis, and the dissemination of findings. As this is a lab course, much of the focus will be on applying what we are learning, which will be done by completing labs and a final research project.

Learning Objectives:

1. *Knowledge:* By the end of this course, you should have a solid understanding of key methods and measures used in studies in social psychology. You should be able to compare different methodologies, and their strengths and weaknesses.
2. *Application:* By the end of this course, you should be able to use common research methods to test research questions that interest you. As this is a lab course, much of the class time will be spent applying what we are learning.
3. *Scientific Thinking:* By the end of this course, you should understand how the empirical method applies to research in social psychology. You should feel more comfortable evaluating research and the conclusions that are drawn from scientific studies.
4. *Communication:* By the end of this course, you should have improved your ability to communicate your thoughts and research findings verbally and in writing.
5. *Professional Development:* By the end of this course, you should have improved your time-management skills and ability to respond appropriately to constructive feedback.

Class Structure: Classes will include lectures, videos, short writing activities, and group discussions. Each week, class time will be broken up between lectures and group discussions.

Discussion Participation: In the class discussions, you will have the opportunity to express your opinion and learn your classmates' opinions on topics and readings. This provides an interactive component of the course that is meant to be engaging for students. During discussions, please remember that some of your classmates may have opinions that are different from your own. Please be respectful of your fellow classmates' opinions, and be respectful in language and when sharing your opinions.

Note about prerequisites: It is your responsibility to ensure that you have met *all* prerequisites listed in the Psychology section of the A&S Calendar for this course. If you lack any prerequisites you may be removed.

Course Resources

Readings: All readings for this course, which include chapters and journal articles, will be made available on the Quercus site under library course reserves. The citations for these readings may be found in this syllabus after the lecture schedule.

When reading experimental journal articles, try to make note of the research question, the hypotheses, identify the key variables and how they are being operationalized (e.g., what kind of measures are they using), identify the design of the study (was there an experimental manipulation? Was it within or between subjects), identify the key results, and provide a 1-2 sentence paraphrased conclusion of what they found.

When reading theoretical papers or chapters, I will guide you as to what information you should take away from these papers.

Quercus: All course materials will be made available on the Quercus website, including lecture slides, announcements, and supplementary materials. You are advised to regularly check the announcements section of the Quercus website because you are solely responsible for staying on top of all course announcements made through Quercus.

Ongoing feedback: I've created a survey that students can fill out anonymously after each class to provide me with feedback on lectures. This gives you the opportunity to let me know if I am going through the material too quickly, if there is a particular concept you are really struggling with, if there is something that could be improved about the structure of each class, etc. The link to this survey is available on Quercus. I can't promise that I will be able to touch on every concern expressed in the feedback surveys. I will be looking for common concerns being expressed by students.

How to get help with the course: The fastest way to get help with the course is to attend one of the weekly office hours. If you have a short question that can be answered via email, then please email me or the TA. Before emailing, however, please check the course syllabus as most of the important information about the course can be found there. If you have a question that may require a longer explanation, please come to office hours instead of emailing as it will be much easier for me to explain this in person and it will give you the opportunity to ask follow-up questions

Course Evaluation

Component	Date	Weight
Weekly labs/activities	Throughout the term	20%
Participation (In-class or discussion board)	Throughout the term	10%
Study Proposal	May 21st	12%
Poster Presentation	June 11th	22%
Final Research Paper	June 14th	36%

Throughout the course, there will be a combination of summative and formative forms of assessment. Summative forms of assessment are meant to test your knowledge of the content and see what you are learning in the course. These include your presentation and the written paper. Formative assessments are meant to provide feedback to you so you may improve your work, and to provide feedback to me regarding how you are learning. These include group work and participation, your proposal, and some of your labs/activities.

Weekly Labs/Activities: During some classes, you will be required to complete labs and activities, sometimes alone and sometimes in small groups. These are described more in the course schedule below. These are worth 4% each. Ideally, these will be completed in person in class. These will be due a week after the class in which they were assigned (at 11:59pm the following Tuesday or Thursday).

Participation: Part of your grade will be allocated to participating in class discussions. To receive full marks, you should come to each class with a question or comment on one of the readings (unless there are no readings that week). You should aim to contribute one thoughtful question and one thoughtful response to a question each week.

Research Proposal, Presentation, and Final Paper: For this course, you will have to complete a research project. This will involve you coming up with a study idea that does not require ethics approval. This may involve using archival or existing data or conducting an observational study. We will discuss ways to do this in the first few lectures.

This research project will be broken into three components:

Proposal: First, you will submit a 3-page (double-spaced) proposal where you describe your research question and specific hypotheses. This should provide a brief introduction to the topic, a statement of the research question and specific hypothesis, and a description of the methods you intend to use (if you are using existing data, describe the methods they used).

Presentation: After you finish conducting your research, you will create a poster to present during a poster presentation session (held in class on June 11th). I will give you

example templates so you understand what a poster looks like. We will present these posters digitally on the computers in the lab, so you do not need to pay to get these printed. The evaluation will be focused on the quality of the content, the general organization of the poster, and your brief synopsis of the poster's content. You will be evaluated by myself and the TA.

Final Paper: The final paper should include an abstract, an introduction, a methods section, a results section (with at least one table or figure), a discussion section, and a reference list. More examples and information about how to write a research paper will be discussed in class (we will dedicate one class to this). This should be roughly 8-12 pages long (not including references or appendices) and should be in APA style 7. This should also be double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font. A breakdown of the paper length may be found below:

Introduction: 3-4 pages

Methods: 2-3 pages

Results: 1-2 pages

Discussion: 3-4 pages

A few important details: For the final paper, when you are summarizing past research, you must include citations for at least 8 papers published in peer-reviewed journals (we will discuss this in class). The paper should be written in APA style. Both the proposal and the final paper should be handed in on Quercus by 11:59pm on the day they are due, and should include a full reference list.

More details on these assignments will be provided in class.

Using AI: Artificial Intelligence programs like ChatGPT are becoming more common and this has prompted discussions surrounding how they may impact student learning and academic integrity. I have been learning about the pros and cons of using these tools and allowing students to use these tools for assessments and think that these tools may work as a good starting point (e.g., for brainstorming) or summarization, but they should be used carefully. For this course, you may use generative AI programs for the final paper so long as you appropriately cite the program, so that I know where and how this was used. I also recommend that you discuss your experience using this tool in the reflection you submit with your paper. For the midterm and final exam, you should be submitting work in your own words only and not using generative AI to help you complete these assessments.

Policy on Lateness: I understand life gets challenging and things may come up that make it difficult for you to complete your work on time. I am happy to support you and work with you so that you can successfully complete this course and have a positive learning experience. For most course assignments, you do not need to contact me so long as your assignment is submitted within 24 hours of the due date. Following this, a 2% late penalty may apply. If you are concerned about meeting a deadline or need assistance planning for getting work completed, please contact me as soon as you can so we can work this out together. Please contact me in advance of the due date unless this is not possible.

Specific Medical Circumstances. If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, consult me right away. Normally, I will ask you for documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. This documentation can be an Absence Declaration (via ACORN) or the University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form. The VOI indicates the

impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. If you cannot submit a VOI due to limits on terms of use, you can submit a different form (like a letter from a doctor), as long as it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI (including dates, academic impact, practitioner's signature, phone and registration number). For more information on the VOI, please see <http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca>. For information on the Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence>. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

Ensuring Transparency in Grading: Your proposal and final paper will be marked by the TA and I. Marking these types of assignments can be challenging and somewhat subjective (my perception of a well-written paper may differ from the TA's). To make this process as fair as possible, I will be creating a detailed rubric for myself and the TA to use when grading these assignments. I will provide you with a copy of these rubrics at least one week before the assignment is due. This should provide you with a clear understanding of how you will be graded before you submit your assignment.

Contesting your grade: Please carefully review and consider your feedback before contesting your grade for an assignment or test. Your course instructors and TAs work very hard to mark course assignments and exams as fairly as possible. If you have concerns about how an assignment was graded, you need to submit an official re-grade request form explaining why you think your assignment should be re-graded. This can be found on Quercus under "course materials." You must send this to the person that graded your assignment (either myself or the TA) within 2 weeks of receiving your grade. We will review your request but reserve the right to remark the entire paper, which means you could lose marks in other sections.

If there has been a calculation error, please just let me or the TA know and we will re-calculate your grade immediately.

Final grades: While I encourage you to focus on what you are learning in the course rather than on any particular grade you receive, I understand the importance of grades. There are times when a grade we obtain does not align with our goals (I have been there!). Grading is not a perfect process, but your final grade should be a fairly accurate representation of your performance in the course as it is calculated across multiple forms of assessment. Moreover, you are given many opportunities throughout the course to seek help, to work on assessment-related activities in class, and to contest grades if you feel they do not adequately reflect the quality of your work. I encourage you to be proactive and seek help throughout the course if there is a particular grade you are working towards. I do not make changes to final grades in the course for the reasons noted above and the fact that requests for final grade increases may lead to systemic biases.

Academic Resources

Accessibility Needs: It is very important to me that students with diverse learning needs feel supported in this course. There is no one-size-fits all approach to course design, so I do my best to build in accessible course policies. For example, all students have a 24-hour extension on assessments as noted above under the policy on lateness, and you can also approach me if you need additional support. I understand that some students may have accessibility needs but may not have the documentation to get specific accommodations. I hope that by having these broader policies those students feel supported in this course. I will do everything in my power to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed in the course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Accessibility Services at (416) 978 8060; accessibility.utoronto.ca.

Religious Accommodations: As a student at the University of Toronto, you are part of a diverse community that welcomes and includes students and faculty from a wide range of cultural and religious traditions. I will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations, or other compulsory activities on religious holy days not captured by statutory holidays. Further to University Policy, if you anticipate being absent from class or missing a major course activity due to a religious observance, please let me know as early in the course as possible, and with sufficient notice, so that we can work together to make alternate arrangements.

Writing: One of the key skill-sets you are developing as a student are your communication skills, including written communication. Understanding how to communicate clearly and concisely is essential for many career paths. The university provides its students with a number of resources to help them develop these skills. For more information on campus writing centres and writing courses, please visit <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/>. More info on writing resources available at U of T will be posted on Quercus. I highly recommend that you make use of these. Moreover, I'm more than happy to give you feedback on your writing during my office hours, so feel free to stop by.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: Academic misconduct will be taken very seriously in this class. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and will be reported through the official university channels. Please refer to the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for more information about what constitutes academic misconduct and how academic misconduct will be dealt with: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppjun011995.pdf>

Resources for Distressed Students: As a student, you may experience challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation, financial concerns, family worries and so forth. These factors may affect your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate fully in daily activities. All of us benefit from support and guidance during times of struggle; there is no shame in needing help or in asking for help. There are many helpful resources available through your college Registrar or through Student Life (studentlife.utoronto.ca and www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/feeling-distressed). An important

part of the University experience is learning how and when to ask for help. Please take the time to inform yourself of available resources and do not hesitate to seek assistance from your Teaching Assistant or from me to help learn what supports are available.

Course schedule is available on the next page

Course Schedule

I will try my best to stick to this outline, but changes may be made. Changes will be announced on Quercus. All readings can be found in the reference list following this page.

Lecture	Date	Topic	Notes
L1	May 7	An Introduction to Research in Social Psychology	
L2	May 9	Experimental Research in Social Psychology	Lab 1
L3	May 14	Observational Research and Field Methods in Social Psychology	Lab 2
L4	May 16	Archival Research and Data Coding	Lab 3
L5	May 21	Survey Research and Design in Social Psychology	Lab 4
L6	May 23	Data Collection, Maintenance, and Organization	Create an outline for your R or SPSS syntax to analyze your data (focus on commenting and recognizing necessary steps).
L7	May 28	Writing a Research Paper	
	<i>May 30</i>	<i>No Class - work on your project (finish data collection)</i>	
L8	June 4	Data Analysis and Reporting	No Lab. Help from the instructor and TA to finalize your analyses.
L9	June 6	Maintaining integrity with research design, data analysis, and reporting.	Lab 5
	June 11	Poster Presentations	No Lab
L10	June 13	Reflecting on what we have learned.	No Lab.

Course Schedule

L1.

Syllabus

Chapter below:

[1.3 Conducting Research in Social Psychology – Principles of Social Psychology – 1st International H5P Edition \(opentextbc.ca\)](#)

L2.

Two textbook chapters listed below:

[Experimental Design – Research Methods in Psychology – 2nd Canadian Edition \(opentextbc.ca\)](#)

[9.1 Setting Up a Factorial Experiment – Research Methods in Psychology \(wsu.edu\)](#)

L3.

Ditlmann, R., & Paluck, E. L. (2015). Field experiments. *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 9, 128-34.

Field Methods in Social Psychology Chapter: [Laboratory in Social Psychology | Noba \(nobaproject.com\)](#)

Williams, E. (2015). Analyzing public disposal behaviour: Observational research. SAGE Research Methods Cases. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/978144627305014554894>

L4.

Nguyen, T.-H. (2018). *Archival research: a case study*. SAGE Publications Ltd

Snelson, C. L. (2016). Qualitative and Mixed Methods Social Media Research: A Review of the Literature. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 15(1)

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406915624574>

L5.

L5.

Chapter below:

<https://opentextbc.ca/researchmethods/chapter/reliability-and-validity-of-measurement/>

Flake, J. K., Pek, J., & Hehman, E. (2017). Construct validation in social and personality research: Current practice and recommendations. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 8(4), 370-378

L6.

APA: JARS-Quant Guidelines (<https://www.apastyle.org/jars/quantitative>)

L7.

Fallon, M. (2018). Writing quantitative empirical manuscripts with rigor and flair (yes, it's possible). *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research*, 23, 184-198.

L8.

No Readings. Download and familiarize yourself with R (links available on course website).

L9.

van't Veer, A. E., & Giner-Sorolla, R. (2016). Pre-registration in social psychology—A discussion and suggested template. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 67, 2-12.

Simmons, J. P., Nelson, L. D., & Simonsohn, U. (2011). False-positive psychology: Undisclosed flexibility in data collection and analysis allows presenting anything as Significant. *Psychological Science*, 22, 1359-1366.

Podcast: (transcript also available):

<https://www.npr.org/2016/05/24/477921050/when-great-minds-think-unlikeinside-sciences-replication-crisis>

L10.

L10.

No readings