Field Methods for Social Psychology
Course Syllabus

Fridays from 12:00pm-3:00pm. In person. SS560.

Instructor and Teaching Assistant Information

Instructor:
Amanda Sharples, Ph.D.
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Instructor Office hours:
Online Tuesdays and Thursdays or In person after class. Please book through the calendar on the Quercus site.

Teaching Assistant
TBA

Course Description and Learning Objectives

The use of field methods in social psychology has grown substantially over the last decade, with some arguing that these methods will be critical to the future of this field. This course will introduce you to innovative field research methods that are used to study fundamental questions in social psychology. We will explore topics including research design, data analysis, and the dissemination of findings, with a focus on how to adapt our approaches for the study of real-world phenomena. As this is a lab course, much of the focus will be on applying what we are learning, which will be done by completing weekly(ish) 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 field studies. You should understand how field studies differ from other methodologies, and their strengths and weaknesses.

2. *Application:* By the end of this course, you should understand how you may use field 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 field research. You should feel more comfortable evaluating research in general, but field studies specifically and the conclusions that are drawn from these 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, group discussions, and lab work.

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 myself 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)	Throughout the term	8%
Study Proposal and Literature Review	Oct 11	12%
Poster Presentation	March 22nd	24%
Final Research Paper	Dec 2	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 study proposal, and some of your weekly 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, but there will be online options as well for those that prefer this. These will be due two weeks after the class in which they were assigned at 11:59pm.

Participation: Part of your grade will be allocated to participating in weekly discussions. 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 field study that does not require ethics approval. This may involve using archival or observational methods. 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 Nov 22). I will give you some 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, general organization

of the poster, and your brief synopsis of the poster's content. You will be evaluated by myself, the TA, and your peers.

Final Paper: The final paper should include an abstract, introduction, a methods section, a results section, a discussion section, and a reference list. More examples and information about how to write a research paper will be discussed in class. This should be roughly 10-15 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 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.

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 (Proposal, Labs, Final Paper), 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 making a plan 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, popular science assignment, and final paper will be marked by the TA and I. Marking these types of assignments can be challenging and somewhat subjective. In order 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 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.

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 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 Proposal and Final Paper so long as you appropriately cite the program, so that I know where and how this was used.

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 to students and their future pursuits. 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 engagement and performance in the course. 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 can lead to systemic biases in academic systems.

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 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.

Departmental Guidance for Undergraduate Students in Psychology: The Department of Psychology recognizes that, as a student, you may experience disruptions to your learning that are out of your control, and that there may be circumstances when you need extra support. Accordingly, the department has provided a [helpful guide](#) to clarify your and your instructor's responsibilities when navigating these situations. This guide consolidates Arts & Science Policies for undergraduate students in one place for your convenience. As an instructor in the department, I will frequently consult with these recommendations when providing you with support, and I recommend that you also consult it to learn more about your rights and responsibilities before reaching out to me.

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: A key set of skills you are developing as a student are your communication skills, including written communication. Understanding how to communicate clearly 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 centers 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.

English Language Resources: For anyone who would like to advance their understanding and command of English, there are many supports available at UofT: https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academicadvising-and-support/english-language-learning

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.pd

Mental Health and Well-being: 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 seek assistance from your Teaching Assistant or from me to help learn what supports are available.

PLEASE SEE LECTURE SCHEDULE 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	Sept 6	What are field methods?	No Lab
	Sept 13	*No Class - Faculty Retreat*	
L2	Sept 20	Common field methods and manipulating variables in the real world	Lab 1 (4%)
L3	Sept 27	Non-Experimental methods for field research	Lab 2 (4%)
L4	Oct 4	Daily diary and experience sampling designs.	Lab 3 (4%)
L5	Oct 11	Measurement in the real-world: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches	Lab 4 (4%). Research Proposal Due
L6	Oct 18	Writing a research report and presenting your research	
L7	Oct 25	Data analysis for field experiments Part 1.	Create an outline for your R syntax to analyze your data (focus on commenting and recognizing necessary steps).
	Nov 1	*Reading week - No class*	
L8	Nov 8	Data analysis for field experiments Part 2.	No Lab. One-on-One help from instructor and TA to finalize your analyses
L9	Nov 15	Research Ethics and Maintaining integrity throughout the research process	Lab 5 (4%)
	Nov 22	Poster Presentations	
L10	Nov 29	Reflecting on what we have learned.	No lab. Final Paper Due Dec 2

Course Schedule

L1.

Syllabus

L2.

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

Paluck, E. L., & Cialdini, R. B. (2014). Field research methods.

Mousa, S. (2020). Building social cohesion between Christians and Muslims through soccer in post-ISIS Iraq. *Science*, *369*(6505), 866-870.

L3.

Williams, E. (2015). Analyzing public disposal behaviour: Observational research. SAGE Research Methods Cases. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446273050145554894

Fisher, G. G., & Chaffee, D. S. (2018). Research using archival data. *Advanced Research Methods for Applied Psychology*, 76-84.

L4

Horstmann, K. T. (2021). Experience sampling and daily diary studies: Basic concepts, designs, and challenges. In *The Handbook of Personality Dynamics and Processes* (pp. 791-814). Academic Press.

L5.

Wrzus, C., & Mehl, M. R. (2020). 20 Ecological Sampling Methods for Studying Everyday

Situations. *The Oxford Handbook of Psychological Situations*, 312-327

Sun, J., Schwartz, H. A., Son, Y., Kern, M. L., & Vazire, S. (2020). The language of well-being: Tracking fluctuations in emotion experience through everyday speech. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *118*(2), 364-387

Below is a link to an open-source textbook on Qualitative Research. I would recommend Chapters 1 and 10 for this lecture:

[Chapter 10. Introduction to Data Collection Techniques – Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods (oregonstate.education)](#)

L6

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

L7.

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

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.

Gelman, A. (2023, June 27). How academic fraudsters get away with it.

The Chronicle of Higher Education.https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-

academic-fraudsters-get-away-with-it.

L10.

No readings