

PSY400Y1 Y

Research Specialization: Thesis

Fall 2024 - Winter 2025 Syllabus

Course Meetings

PSY400Y1 Y

Section	Day & Time	Delivery Mode & Location
LEC0101	Monday, 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM	In Person: SS 560

Refer to ACORN for the most up-to-date information about the location of the course meetings.

Course Contacts

Course Website: <https://q.utoronto.ca/>

Instructor: Dr. Morgan Barensen

Email: morgan.barensen@utoronto.ca

Office Hours and Location: Directly after class or by appointment
(morgan.barensen@utoronto.ca)

Course Overview

An individual thesis done under the direction of a faculty member. Lecture and seminar presentations of proposals in the Fall session. Enrolment is restricted to PSY Research Specialists. Not eligible for CR/NCR option.

An individual thesis done under the direction of a faculty member. The course itself is designed to scaffold the thesis process, with additional instruction and feedback on writing, presenting one's science, and presenting oneself (e.g., in graduate school interviews).

Course Learning Outcomes

The goal of this course is to provide each student with an intensive apprenticeship in psychological research to prepare you for graduate study in Psychology. In the process of collaborating with faculty, students are expected to acquire (or sharpen) the skills required for conducting and presenting research. These skills include literature reviews, writing, public speaking, designing experiments, and collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. These skills can be useful tools for life, regardless of your career path. Class activities and assignments are focused on equipping you for success as a psychological scientist, with a special emphasis on critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills. Upon completion of this course, you should be ideally poised to continue your studies in a Psychology graduate program.

Even if you never become a psychologist—even if you never go to graduate school—this course should be of value. Regardless of what you do in life, there is great value in improving your skills in writing, presentation, and critical thinking. Also, we'll have fun.

Prerequisites: Enrolment in the PSY Research Specialist program, **and** PSY309H1, **and one of** PSY319H1/ PSY329H1/ PSY339H1/ PSY349H1/ PSY359H1/ PSY369H1/ PSY379H1/ PSY389H1

Corequisites: PSY409H1

Exclusions: PSY400Y5/ PSYC98Y3

Recommended Preparation: None

Credit Value: 1

PSY400 will not meet every week during either term. The schedule may change as we go along so you are advised to keep course time open in your calendar.

There are several components to the course. The major requirement is completion and writing of a thesis project under the supervision of a faculty member. In addition, students will prepare a written proposal for the thesis, present this proposal in class, present preliminary data in class, present their thesis results in class, generally participate in class discussions, and present a poster about their work.

Marking Scheme

Assessment	Percent	Details	Due Date
Thesis proposal presentation	10%	During class on November 4 (approximately 6 presentations) and November 11 (approximately 3 presentations), students will make oral presentations describing their proposed thesis projects. The purpose is to hone your presentation skills and to receive feedback on your thesis project while the project still is in a relatively early stage. Each presentation should last no more than 15 minutes, so that time is available for class members to provide comments and helpful critique. Note that all students are expected to attend all presentations.	2024-11-04,2024-11-11

Assessment	Percent	Details	Due Date
Thesis proposal	10%	<p>Written proposals, up to a maximum of 10 type-written pages long (not including reference list), double spaced, 12-point font, must be submitted on Quercus. A well-prepared proposal will contain most of the Introduction of the final thesis, a skeleton of the Methods, and an outline of the important points to be addressed in the Results. Especially in the event that you are still busy collecting data as the final deadline nears, this will give you a great head start on the final write-up. If you need to apply for human ethics approval, there may be some overlap between this and the ethics application. Your supervisor will be asked to provide a grade and feedback on your proposal. This grade will be averaged with mine (with equal weight) to calculate your grade.</p>	2024-11-18
Data blitz	5%	<p>You will be required to present preliminary data early in January, even if all you have is a single subject at that time. You are allowed to present five slides: theory, hypotheses, methods, results, conclusions. Presentations should be no more than 5 minutes. All members of the class are expected to attend all data blitz presentations.</p>	2025-01-13

Assessment	Percent	Details	Due Date
Thesis presentation	10%	<p>In class time on March 24, you will present your theses as if you were giving a talk at a scientific conference (i.e., tell us what you did, why you did it, what you found, and what it means). Presentations should not exceed 15 minutes. All members of the class are expected to attend all presentations.</p>	2025-03-24
Thesis poster presentation	10%	<p>Every year, the graduating thesis class will present their research to the Department as a research poster. This is tentatively scheduled for April 7. Typically, this event is held in the Psychology lounge on the 4th floor. Ask your research advisor or a grad student for a copy of a poster they presented at a recent conference and use it as a model for your own poster. Involve your research advisor early. Making a poster takes longer than you think and you need to budget some extra time to get the poster printed and to give some practice presentations in your lab.</p>	2025-04-07

<p>Thesis</p>	<p>20%</p>	<p>Theses should report results from a psychological study conducted by the student under the supervision of a faculty member. Students are encouraged to browse through theses submitted in previous years to get a better understanding of what is expected in a thesis; old theses can be obtained from the undergraduate psychology advisor's office. Every thesis must be submitted as if for publication, in format and style requirements set out in the APA Publication Manual, 7th edition. (2020). Theses must also include appendices summarizing data and statistical analyses upon which results and conclusions have been based. Theses must not exceed 20 type-written pages (double spaced, 12-point font), excluding the title page, abstract, references, tables, figures and figure captions, and appendices. Your thesis should be submitted on Quercus by 5 pm on March 31, 2025. (Top tip: Try to get a first draft ready by early March so your supervisor has enough time to give you meaningful feedback.) The thesis grade indicates the quality of the final version of the thesis. Each thesis will be read by at least one anonymous reviewer that will be chosen from among the faculty who have a familiarity with the general research area (or I will take over the grading, depending on the availability of reviewers). It is important to note that in assigning a grade, no penalty should be imposed if a reasonable research plan failed to work as intended. In other words, whatever the results, good</p>	<p>2025-03-31</p>
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Assessment	Percent	Details	Due Date
		<p>research design, clear justification for the study, and thorough and thoughtful presentation of the research are what counts. The referees can weigh several criteria as they deem most appropriate (more information provided below).</p>	

Assessment	Percent	Details	Due Date
Research advisor grade	20%	<p>The advisor's grade indicates the quality of the student's work up to, but not including, the final version of the thesis. The supervisor can weigh the following criteria as they deem appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent was the research question chosen as a result of the student's own initiative, persuasion, and reasoning? • To what extent were important design issues resolved by the work and reasoning of the student? • To what extent did the student demonstrate a commitment to their project, completing day-to-day responsibilities efficiently and autonomously? • To what extent were data produced through resourceful efforts of the student? • To what extent did the student analyze the data effectively, with a clear appreciation of the most useful questions to be put to the data? • To what extent did the student understand his or her findings and their implications? • To what extent did the student successfully communicate his or her thesis work in the early drafts of the thesis and in conversations with the supervisor? • To what extent did the student meet individual deadlines set by the supervisor? • To what extent was learning and progress seen over the course of the year, with signs of new skills acquired and a deepened understanding of the research enterprise? You are encouraged to discuss these criteria with your supervisor early in the year. 	2025-04-04

Assessment	Percent	Details	Due Date
Class participation	15%	Attendance at all classes is mandatory. If you will miss a class (or have missed a class), you should be prepared to provide a very good reason for your absence. Students are expected to come prepared to class with assignments prepared and to participate in all class activities. Unexcused absences from a class result in 10% grade deduction from the class participation mark.	No Specific Date

Criteria in evaluating the thesis are similar to those used in judging the acceptability of an article in a scientific journal, for example:

- Is the thesis well written?
- Are the research questions and experimental design stated clearly?
- Is the research design appropriate to answer the research question (and does the author state clearly how the design is appropriate)?
- Could a reader replicate the critical elements of the study based on the information given in the methods section?
- Are the results described clearly and completely?
- Are the statistical analyses appropriate, correct, and described clearly and completely?
- Does the author make appropriate use of figures and tables?
- Are the conclusions linked clearly to the data?
- Is there evidence of original thinking and creative contribution in the thesis?
- Is the thesis "scholarly" (how well informed is the author about the thesis topic)?
- Does the thesis conform to APA guidelines for manuscripts submitted to journals?

Late Assessment Submissions Policy

Late penalty for any course component or assignment is 10% per day. Unexcused absences from a class result in 10% grade deduction from the class participation mark. If you are required to isolate while the course is offered in-person, please contact me ASAP to work out online arrangements. With proper arrangements this will not be counted as an absence.

Course Schedule

Tentative schedule: Note that the dates are subject to change, so keep the Mon 2-5pm timeslot open

Week	Description
Week 1 9-Sep	Welcome and course overview
Week 2 16-Sep	Graduate school AMA & How to discuss your research interests <u>Assignment due:</u> Post questions about graduate school to the Quercus discussion thread "Applying to Graduate School: Ask Me Anything" <u>Reading:</u> "Discussing your Research Tip Sheet" (under "Files" section of Quercus)
23-Sep	No class
Week 3 30-Sep	Elevator pitches to classmates (round robin) & Grad school AMA (continued) <u>Assignment due:</u> Come to class ready to give your elevator pitch and post any additional questions to Quercus discussion thread "Applying to Graduate School: Ask Me Anything"
7-Oct & 14-Oct	No class
Week 4 21-Oct	How to give a good talk <u>Reading:</u> Kosslyn, S. M., Kievit, R. A., Russell, A. G., & Shephard, J. M. (2012). PowerPoint® Presentation Flaws and Failures: A Psychological Analysis. <i>Front Psychol</i> , 3, 230. <u>Additional reading:</u> Kosslyn, S.M. (2010). Better PowerPoint®: Quick fixes based on how your audience thinks. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
28-Oct	No class
Week 5 4-Nov	Thesis proposal presentations (approx 6 students present) <u>Assignment due:</u> Come ready to give your proposal presentation
Week 6 11-Nov	Thesis proposal presentations (remaining students present) & How to give a good data blitz <u>Assignment due:</u> Come ready to give your proposal presentation (students who did not present on Nov 4)
18-Nov	Submit thesis proposal on Quercus by 5pm
	No class until mid-January: Focus on your thesis data collection
Week 7 13-Jan	Data blitzes <u>Assignment due:</u> Come ready to give your data blitz
20-Jan & 27-	No class

Jan	
Week 8 3-Feb	How to set up a poster and give a good walkthrough <u>Assignment due:</u> Come to class with a very rough draft of your poster, which should include: (1) 3-5 bullet points for the Introduction section of your poster, (2) a figure and bullet points to depict your methods, (3) 3 main takehome points for your poster (some of these will be pending the data), and (4) 1-3 figures you could use to back up those takehome points (sketches or preliminary data are fine)
Week 9 10-Feb	Effective scientific writing: Masterclass on title, abstract, and introduction
17-Feb & 24-Feb	No class <u>Assignment due 24-Feb:</u> Submit your draft title, abstract, and introduction to Quercus. This will be reviewed by your peer review group and discussed in the next class
Week 10 3-Mar	Writing workshop: Feedback on title, abstract, and intro from peer review group (2-3 people per group) <u>Assignment due:</u> Come to class with prepared feedback for those in your peer review group
10-Mar & 17-Mar	No class
Week 11 24-Mar	Thesis presentations <u>Assignment due:</u> Come ready to give your final thesis presentation
31-Mar	Submit thesis on Quercus by 5pm
Week 12 7-Apr (TBD)	Poster day <u>Assignment:</u> Come ready to present your poster

Policies & Statements

Course Communication and Quercus

Log in to Quercus (<https://q.utoronto.ca>) to view the course webpage. I will post relevant material there. **In particular, you are responsible for announcements posted to Quercus, so check this page regularly for updates and/or set up email alerts.**

If you have a general question, please post it to the discussion board. If you have a personal question or would like to set up a meeting time, please contact me through email (morgan.barens@utoronto.ca), not the Quercus mail tool. Be sure to include PSY400 in the subject line, because I receive a lot of emails.

SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT GRADES POSTED ONLINE: Please also note that any grades posted are for your information only, so you can view and track your progress through the course. No grades are considered official, including any posted in Quercus at any point in the term, until they have been formally approved and posted on ACORN at the end of the course. Please contact me as soon as possible if you think there is an error in any grade posted on Quercus.

Assignment Submission Method

There are three written assignments that should be submitted via Quercus: (1) thesis proposal, (2) draft of title, abstract, and introduction, and (3) final thesis.

Oral assignments will be given at the specified time and do not need to be submitted via Quercus.

Plagiarism Detection Tool

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

Late/Missed Assignments

Late penalty for any course component or assignment is 10% per day.

Unexcused absences from a class result in 10% grade deduction from the class participation mark. If you are required to isolate while the course is offered in-person, please contact me ASAP to work out online arrangements. With proper arrangements this will not be counted as an absence.

If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, we will normally require documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. Please provide this documentation or discuss your plans to acquire this documentation when you contact me. This documentation can be in the following forms:

1. **Absence Declaration (via ACORN).** For information on Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence>.
2. **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>.

3. **Accessibility services (AS).** If you are registered with AS, your Accessibility Advisor can reach out to me to discuss your situation. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with AS as soon as possible.
4. **College Registrar.** If none of these options are available to you, please connect with your registrar who can contact me to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is mandatory. If you will miss a class (or have missed a class), you should be prepared to provide a very good reason for your absence. Students are expected to come prepared to class with assignments prepared and to participate in all class activities.

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 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.

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. For my part, 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 (such as a test or in-class assignment) due to a religious observance, please let me know as early in the course as possible, and with sufficient notice (at least two to three weeks), so that we can work together to make alternate arrangements.

Students with Disabilities or Accommodation Requirements

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have an acute or ongoing disability issue or accommodation need, you should register with Accessibility Services (AS) at the beginning of the academic year by visiting <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/accessibility-services/>. Without registration, you will not be able to verify your situation with your instructors, and instructors will not be advised about your accommodation needs. AS will assess your situation, develop an accommodation plan with

you, and support you in requesting accommodation for your course work. Remember that the process of accommodation is private: AS will not share details of your needs or condition with any instructor, and your instructors will not reveal that you are registered with AS.

Accommodation for Personal Reasons

There may be times when you are unable to complete course work on time due to non-medical reasons. If you have concerns, speak to me or to an advisor in your College Registrar's office; they can help you to decide if you want to request an extension or other forms of academic consideration. They may be able to email your instructors directly to provide a College Registrar's letter of support and connect you with other helpful resources on campus.

Re-marking Policy - Timeline and Protocol

You must wait for at least 48 hours following the return of an assignment/assessment before bringing a grade concern to me; use this time to reflect upon your performance and grade. Additionally, grade concerns must be brought to my attention within 14 days of the return of the assignment/assessment. Please write a short paragraph detailing your grade concern, including a copy, photo, or scan of the original assignment, if relevant, and email it to me. Only reasonable and well-justified concerns will be considered, and all decisions are final. Note that in agreeing to resubmit your work for remarking, you are agreeing to a re-evaluation of the entirety of your work; your grade may go up, go down, or stay the same. If there has been an error in our arithmetic, your grade will be immediately recalculated (no written request necessary). Negotiations for extra marks once final grades are in will not be considered. Out of fairness for everyone in the class, arbitrary requests for grade increases will not be considered (e.g., "I need to get into grad school, so could you please change my grade from a B+ to an A-?").

Academic Integrity

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019) (<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>). If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources. For example, to learn more about how to cite and use source material appropriately and for other writing support, see the U of T writing support website at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca>. Consult the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for a complete outline of the University's policy and expectations. For more information, please see [A&S Student Academic Integrity](https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/student-academic-integrity) (<https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/student-academic-integrity>) and the [University of Toronto Website on Academic Integrity](https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca) (<https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca>).

Recording Lectures (by Student)

You may record lectures, but please note that lectures are the intellectual property of the instructor.

Course materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation. These materials are protected by copyright. Do not download, copy, or share any course or student materials or videos without the explicit instructor permission.

Mental Health and Well-Being

Your mental health is important. Throughout university life, there are many experiences that can impact your mental health and well-being. As a University of Toronto student, you can access free mental health and wellbeing services at Health & Wellness (<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/>) such as same day counselling, brief counselling, medical care, skill-building workshops, and drop-in peer support. You can also meet with a Wellness Navigation Advisor who can connect you with other campus and community services and support. Call the mental health clinic at 416-978-8030 ext. 5 to book an appointment or visit <https://uoft.me/mentalhealthcare> to learn about the services available to you.

You can also visit your College Registrar to learn about the resources and supports available: <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/college-registrars-offices>

If you're in distress, you can access immediate support: <https://uoft.me/feelingdistressed>

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

New Ethics Policy for Undergraduate Course-Based Research

Please note that the way research ethics is evaluated for undergraduate course-based research has recently changed. The revised policy can be found here:

<https://memos.provost.utoronto.ca/revised-course-based-human-ethics-review-process/>

There is no longer a Department of Psychology Ethics Review Committee (DPERC) that can provide expedited review for student projects. Instead, all new human research protocols must be submitted through the My Research Human Protocols (MRHP) system. Review times in this system depend on many factors, making them hard to predict, but you might expect 1-2 months to have a straightforward, low-risk protocol approved.

Research undertaken by a student for course credit that has already been approved by the REB (e.g., faculty research that will involve some work conducted by the student) likely will not require a new ethics protocol. However, an amendment request should be submitted to add the student as a co-investigator and describe what they will be doing for their project.

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.