



Peru State College
PSYCHOLOGY 495: SEMINAR IN PSYCHOLOGY
Spring Semester, 2012

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Office Hours: Meeting with students individually is an important part of my job. Please feel free to schedule an appointment to meet with me if you need to discuss class performance, advising issues, etc. I am committed to being in my office and available for student visits on Mondays from 10:00 AM-12:00 PM, Tuesdays from 11:00 AM-1:00 PM and Wednesdays from 3:30-5:00 PM. If those times don't work for you, we can always arrange to meet/speak at a different time.

Class meets: Mondays and Wednesdays from 8:00-9:15 AM in TJ Majors 301

Required Textbook: There is no required textbook for this course. Students will be required to read various scholarly journal articles and book chapters, which will be provided. Students will also be required to locate and read scholarly sources in order to complete the senior thesis project. A binder, a three-hole punch, and highlighters will be useful tools for this course.

Course Prerequisite: Students enrolled in Psychology 495 must be senior psychology majors who have completed at least 45 hours of psychology related courses including Psychology 121 (Introduction to Psychology), 250 (Human Growth & Development), 305 (Social), 320 (Learning), 330 (Research Methods), 345 (Personality), and 380 (Adolescent).

Course Description: This senior-level seminar is a capstone experience, utilizing individual research and incorporating cooperative learning for assignments in which each student demonstrates mastery of verbal and written expression of major, broad psychological concepts, concerns, and perspectives, and their application in society.

Course Objectives: After completing Psychology 495, you will have:

- reflected on your own educational experience in psychology
- considered psychology's role and importance in the greater society
- explored, in-depth, a psychological topic, theory, or idea that interests you
- debated some of the most influential developments in psychology's history
- improved your ability to read and understand research literature
- sharpened your writing and oral presentation skills

At the beginning of the course, we will discuss how these objectives fit into the College's and School's mission and goals.

Course Overview and Grading: The major requirements of this course will include several written assignments, participating on the discussion board, and completing a cumulative final exam.

The total point distribution is as follows:

Letter to freshmen	25 points
Student-led discussion	75 points
Discussion quizzes	70 points
Thesis checkpoints	
Topic	20 points
List of sources	20 points
Outline	20 points
First draft of thesis	100 points
Proofreading a classmates' thesis	20 points
Final draft of thesis	100 points
Oral presentation of thesis	50 points
Attending classmates' thesis presentations	25 points
Proctored final exam	125 points
Total	650 points

Letter to freshmen: Early in the course, you will reflect on your experience as a college student who has studied psychology and write a letter to college freshmen psychology majors, giving them your best advice to help them in their journey completing the psychology major.

Student-led discussion: During one week of the course, it will be your task to lead your classmates' consideration of a journal article or book chapter. You will either select this journal article or book chapter from my collection OR find your own. A good discussion will provide access to some sort of activity or resource above and beyond the text, and insightful discussion questions. You can expect your classmates to be active participants in the discussion. One of our first tasks in the course will be to schedule students to lead the discussion for different weeks of the course.

Discussion quizzes: Each day we have an in-class discussion, there will be a reading assignment. The discussion will begin with a quiz of sorts. In order to have an opportunity to earn the quiz points, you must a.) be in class, on time, and b.) have read the assignment for that day. Each quiz will be worth 5 points, and students will have an opportunity to complete 14 of the 15 possible quizzes. The 15th quiz will take place on the day a given student leads the class discussion and will be written/designed by the student him or herself.

First draft of thesis: The major project of this course is to write a review of the literature paper (senior thesis) over a *specific* psychological topic of interest to you. This will likely be the longest and most detailed paper you have written in your academic career. You will be expected to write this thesis in APA-style, and it must be original work (no recycling papers you have written for other courses). Because completing the thesis is a major undertaking, you will have several checkpoints throughout the course, including submitting a topic for approval, providing a preliminary list of sources, putting together a rough outline of your final paper, and proofreading a copy of a classmates' thesis and offering quality feedback. These thesis checkpoints are worth points, and failing to complete them will jeopardize your final grade in the course. When you complete your thesis, it will be submitted to a plagiarism detection service called Turnitin.com. The first draft of your thesis is due by Monday, March 26.

Final draft of thesis: Because revision is an integral part of academic writing, you will revise the first draft of your thesis based on the detailed feedback you receive from the professor and a classmate. The new-and-improved, polished version of your thesis is due by Tuesday, May 1. Because you will be told exactly what changes you need to make to improve the first draft of your thesis, every student should be able to earn 100% on this portion of the course.

Oral presentation of thesis: Through the process of researching a specific topic for your thesis, you will develop some expertise on this topic. An oral presentation will be your opportunity to present this expertise verbally. You can create a PowerPoint presentation or some other visual aid for your talk, which will be between 10 and 15 minutes long. More specific guidelines for this oral presentation will be provided.

Proctored final exam: Finally, you will complete a proctored final exam. This exam is worth 125 points and will assess your general knowledge of psychology and selected readings from the course. The psychology program will use student scores on this exam to help us assess the effectiveness of the core courses PSC offers in psychology. You will be given more information about this exam later in the course.

Failure to complete any of the major components of this course will result in the student being given a grade of "incomplete" until all coursework is completed. Students cannot graduate from Peru State College until they receive a grade of C or better in this course.

Final course grades will be assigned as follows:

Course grade	Percentage of points earned	Number of points earned
A	100-90%	650-582
B+	89-86%	581-556
B	85-80%	555-517
C+	79-76%	516-491
C	75-70%	490-452
D+	69-66%	451-426
D	65-60%	425-387
F	Below 60%	386 and below

Final grades are assigned based on the point cut-offs above. I do not round up in cases where a student is within one or two points of the next highest grade. Unless some severe extenuating circumstances caused a student to be unable to finish a course and to temporarily take an “incomplete”, all course grades are final.

Course policies

Course late work policy (assignments): It is very important that students turn in their work in a timely fashion. *Assignments that are submitted after the deadline will not be scored unless a student has made arrangements with me.* I also reserve the right to impose a late penalty of as much as 25% of the total possible points. Deducting points from well-done work is painful for both of us. Please make it a priority to submit your work in on time.

Dropping and Withdrawing from a course: Until Sunday, January 15, students may add or drop classes on for this term. When a student drops a class, it doesn't appear on the semester grade report or college transcript. After January 15 but before Friday, March 9 (for full-term classes), students can choose to withdraw from a course. When a student withdraws, the course still appears on a student's grade report and college transcript with a grade of “W”, and the student still bears some financial responsibility for the course (contact PSC's Business Office for more information). Adding, dropping, and withdrawing from courses can be completed through myPSC.

College's Incomplete Coursework Policy: To designate a student's work in a course as incomplete at the end of a term, the instructor records the incomplete grade (I). Students may receive this grade only when serious illness, hardship, death in the immediate family, or military service during the semester in which they are registered prevents them from completing course requirements. In addition, to receive an incomplete, a student must have completed substantially all of the course's major requirements.

Unless extenuating circumstances dictate otherwise, students must initiate requests for an incomplete by filling out an Incomplete Grade Completion Contract, which requires the signature of the student, instructor, and Dean. The Incomplete Grade Completion

contract cites the reason(s) for the incomplete and details the specific obligations the student must meet to change the incomplete to a letter grade. The date by which the student agrees to complete required work must appear in the contract. The Dean, the instructor, and the student receive signed copies of the Incomplete Grade Completion Contract.

Even if the student does not attend Peru State College, all incomplete course work must be finished by the end of the subsequent semester. Unless the appropriate Dean approves an extension and if the student does not fulfill contract obligations in the allotted time, the incomplete grade automatically becomes an F.

College's Academic Integrity Policy

The College expects all students to conduct themselves in a manner that supports an honest assessment of student learning outcomes and the assignment of grades that appropriately reflect student performance. It is ultimately the student's responsibility to understand and comply with instructions regarding the completion of assignments, exams, and other academic activities. At a minimum, students should assume that at each assessment opportunity they are expected to do their own original academic work and/or clearly acknowledge in an appropriate fashion the intellectual work of others, when such contributions are allowed. Students helping others to circumvent honest assessments of learning outcomes, or who fail to report instances of academic dishonesty, are also subject to the sanctions defined in this policy.

Instances of academic dishonesty may be discovered in a variety of ways. Faculty members who assign written work ordinarily check citations for accuracy, run data base and online checks, and/or may simply recognize familiar passages that are not cited. They may observe students in the act of cheating or may become aware of instances of cheating from the statements of others. All persons who observe or otherwise know about instances of cheating are expected to report such instances to the proper instructor or Dean.

In order to promote academic integrity, the College subscribes to an electronic service to review papers for the appropriate citations and originality. Key elements of submitted papers are stored electronically in a limited access database and thus become a permanent part of the material to which future submissions are compared. Submission of an application and continued enrollment signifies your permission for this use of your written work.

Should an occurrence of academic misconduct occur, the faculty member may assign a failing grade for the assignment or a failing grade for the course. Each incident of academic misconduct should be reported to the Dean and the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA). The VPAA may suspend for two semesters students found to be responsible for multiple instances of academic dishonesty. The reason for the suspension will be noted on the student's transcript.

A faculty member need present only basic evidence of academic dishonesty. There is no requirement for proof of intent. Students are responsible for understanding these tenets of academic honesty and integrity. Students may appeal penalties for academic dishonesty using the process established for grades appeals.

Title IX Compliance Notice

Peru State College is an equal opportunity institution. PSC does not discriminate against any student, employee or applicant on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or age in employment and education opportunities, including but not limited to admission decisions. The College has designated an individual to coordinate the College's nondiscrimination efforts to comply with regulations implementing Title VI, VII, IX, and Section 504. Inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies and practices may be directed to Eulanda Cade, Director of Human Resources, Title VI, VII, IX Compliance Coordinator, Peru State College, PO Box 10, Peru, NE 68421-0010, (402) 872-2230.

Students requesting reasonable accommodation and tutoring services should contact the Center for Achievement and Transition Services (CATS).

The senior thesis, defined

The most important component of the Seminar in Psychology course is the senior thesis. What is a senior thesis, and how is it different from the many research papers you've already written in your upper-level psychology courses?

The thesis topic will be narrower in focus. You will need to consider how to narrow your topic enough that the thesis is an in-depth investigation of a particular question. "ADHD" is not an appropriate topic for the thesis. "What teaching strategies are most effective for educators who have students with ADHD in their classrooms?" is much more focused and workable topic idea.

The thesis will be measured in number of sources cited, rather than number of pages written. After having been assigned a paper, a common question students have is, "How long does the paper have to be?" You will not receive a length guideline for the thesis. Progress on your thesis will be measured, in part, on the number of sources you cite; your final thesis will cite at least 20 sources, all of which will be formatted correctly in APA-style in the References section.

The thesis will cite primarily scholarly sources. Sources considered "scholarly" are typically books, book chapters, and articles published in professional journals. At least 16 of your 20 required sources (80%) must be scholarly in nature.

The thesis will be written in YOUR words. Students will be allowed a total of TWO direct quotes in the thesis. All other research must be cited, not quoted.

The thesis will emphasize revision as a crucial aspect of the writing process. Graduate students and Professional psychologists are constantly editing and revising their writing. To get some exposure to the role of revision in the writing process, you will be required to first submit a first (NOT ROUGH) draft. You will receive extensive feedback on your first draft, and you will use it to revise and submit a more complete, more polished, and more thoughtful final draft.

The thesis may not be recycled from another course. You can use a similar topic as a previous paper, but this thesis must represent a narrower focus, different angle, or fresh take on the subject.

Tentative Course Schedule: The following course schedule includes topics, reading assignments, and the dates of exams. However, I do reserve the right to change this course calendar as needed. You will always be notified if our plan deviates from this schedule.

Week 1: January 9 & 11

Monday, January 9: Course introduction

Wednesday, January 11: Expectations for student-led discussions/Finalizing course schedule

Week 2: January 16 & 18

Monday, January 16: Finding materials/obtaining sources from interlibrary loan

Letter to freshmen due

Wednesday January 18: Professor-led discussion 1

Week 3: January 23 & 25

Monday, January 23: How to read and summarize articles

Checkpoint! Paper topics due

Wednesday, January 25: Professor-led discussion 2

Week 4: January 30 & February 1

Monday, January 30: Organizing articles

Wednesday, February 1: Student-led discussion 1

Week 5: February 6 & 8

Monday, February 6: Student-led discussion 2

Checkpoint: Preliminary list of sources due!

Wednesday, February 8: Student-led discussion 3

Week 6: February 13 & 15

Monday, February 13: Student-led discussion 4

Wednesday, February 15: Student-led discussion 5

Week 7: February 20 & 22

Monday, February 20: Writing in APA style

Wednesday, February 22: Student-led discussion 6

Week 8: February 27 & February 29

Monday, February 27: Student-led discussion 7

Checkpoint: Outline of thesis due

Wednesday, February 29: Student-led discussion 8

Week 9: March 5 & 7

SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS

Week 10: March 12 & 14

Monday, March 12: Student-led discussion 9
Wednesday, March 14: Student-led discussion 10

Week 11: March 19 & 21

Monday, March 19: Expectations for Thesis Presentations
Wednesday, March 21: Student-led discussion 11

Week 12: March 26 & 28

Monday, March 26: First Draft of thesis due! Peer review
Wednesday, March 28: Student-led discussion 12

Week 13: April 2 & 4

Monday, April 2: Discussion of/preparation for final exam
Wednesday, April 4: Professor-led discussion 3

Week 14: April 9 & 11

Monday, April 9: Thesis Presentations 1 and 2
Wednesday, April 11: Thesis Presentations 3 and 4

Week 15: April 16 & 18

Monday, April 16: Thesis Presentations 5 and 6
Wednesday, April 18: Thesis Presentations 7 and 8

Week 16: April 23 & 25

Monday, April 23: Thesis Presentations 9 and 10
Wednesday, April 25: Thesis Presentations 11 and 12
Final draft of thesis due

Final exam: Wednesday, May 2 from 8:00-10:00 AM