



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

Department of Psychology

Psychology 596/598 (L01) – Honours Thesis Seminar

Fall/Winter 2007-2008

Instructor:	Dr. Christopher R. Sears	Lecture Location:	TRA 102
Phone:	220-2803	Lecture	TR 3:30-4:45
		Days/Time:	
Email:	sears@ucalgary.ca		
Office:	Admin 262		
Office Hours:	By Appointment		

Course Description and Goals

This course is required of all honours students and is intended to facilitate completion of the honours thesis and the development of research-related skills. The major goals of this course are to 1) develop your presentation skills, 2) increase your knowledge of the different areas of psychological research, 3) enhance your understanding of how psychological research is conducted, 4) increase your understanding of the ethical issues involved in psychological research, and 5) help prepare you for graduate or professional level training.

The fall session seminars will consist of presentations on important information related to the honours thesis (e.g., the process of applying for ethics approval), information on graduate studies, and instructions on how to give a proposal presentation. Each student will then give a proposal presentation (the details of which are described below). The winter session will begin with two information seminars, and then each student will give an updated oral presentation on their thesis research (the research presentation). All students will present their research at the Student Research Conference (April 25, 2008).

Course Requirements

1) The Honours Thesis

Completion of an honours thesis to be submitted no later than Monday, April 21, 2008. Identical copies of the thesis must be submitted to the Supervisor, the Second Reader, and the Psychology Department (A275). Each copy must be bound with a cover and a coil binding.

Students seeking an extension for completion of the thesis beyond April 21 must complete an Application for Deferment of Term Work and submit it to the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences for approval (see the University of Calgary Calendar for regulations). A completed Physician/Counselor Statement may be required to confirm deferral of term work for health or personal reasons.

2) Participation in the Honours Seminar

Participation in the seminars is required and contributes to your grade in the course. Students are expected to evaluate other presenters and to provide written feedback on all presentations. An attendance sheet will be circulated each week and your absences will be noted when evaluating your seminar participation. If you cannot attend a seminar please give advance notice of your absence. Poor attendance at the seminars will affect your final grade.

3) Proposal Presentation

Each student will give an oral presentation outlining their proposed honours thesis research (background research, the research question, and proposed methods). Proposal presentations will be a maximum of 12 minutes in length, with an additional 3 minutes for audience questions. All presentations will be given using Microsoft PowerPoint. Students will be evaluated and will receive feedback on their presentation from Dr. Sears and from their classmates, and these evaluations will contribute to your final grade.

4) Research Presentation

Each student will give an updated oral presentation on their research in the winter session. This presentation will cover the entire honours project, including methods and results. These presentations will be a maximum of 12 minutes in length, with an additional 3 minutes for questions. Again, students will receive feedback on their presentation from Dr. Sears and from their classmates, and these evaluations will contribute to your final grade.

5) Department of Psychology Student Research Conference

You will present your thesis research at the Department of Psychology's Student Research Conference at the end of the winter session (April 25, 2008). You can choose to give a spoken presentation or a poster presentation, but not all students will be able to give a spoken presentation due to time constraints (typically only about 50% of the class can give a spoken presentation). The spoken presentations will be 12 minutes in length, with an additional 3 minutes for questions. The poster presentations are scheduled for 30 minutes, during which you describe your research to others and answer questions. Students giving poster presentations will be responsible for creating their own posters (instructions on how to do so will be given in the seminar).

Evaluation

Your Supervisor and the Second Reader, using evaluation criteria set out by the Department of Psychology (to be described later), determine 90% of your final grade. Note that it is your Supervisor's responsibility to secure a Second Reader. Please provide Linda Duffy (lduffy@ucalgary.ca) with the name of your second reader by the end of September. They will each complete the Undergraduate Thesis Feedback Form and will each recommend a letter grade. Your Supervisor is responsible for providing copies of the Feedback Forms (completed by the Supervisor and the Second Reader) to you and to Dr. Sears. The Supervisor and Second Reader provide Dr. Sears with a recommended letter grade. Dr. Sears will submit your final grade for the course.

Keep in mind that the grade your supervisor assigns does not reflect just the written honours thesis. Part of the supervisor's evaluation includes the amount of effort the student put into the project, how well the student worked independently, how well the student received feedback, whether or not deadlines were met in a timely manner, and other aspects of the experience. Different supervisors have different expectations, so you need to clarify what your supervisor's expectations are soon after you begin your project.

Your seminar participation and presentations determine 10% of your final grade. Seminar participation will be evaluated by considering your record of attendance at the seminar. Your presentations will be evaluated by considering your classmates' evaluations of your presentations and Dr. Sears' evaluations. Your final grade is determined by considering the evaluations of your supervisor, your Second reader, and Dr. Sears's evaluation of your seminar performance.

University of Calgary Curriculum Objectives

This course addresses the following core competences:

Critical and creative thinking
Analysis of problems
Effective written communication
Gathering and organizing information

Abstract reasoning
Insight and intuition in generating knowledge
Interpretive and assessment skills

With the following course characteristics:

Completion of an independent research project with involvement in all aspects from design to analysis
Writing a formal thesis
Two research presentations, one in the seminar and one at the student research conference
Weekly class discussion related to seminar presentations

(2) This course addresses the following curriculum redesign features:

Integration of research
Experiential component
Faculty/student interaction

With the following course characteristics:

Reading primary research literature as background to the thesis and carrying out the research project
Supervised by a faculty member with expertise in the field of research

Grading Scale

A+	96-100%	B+	80-84%	C+	67-71%	D+	54-58%
A	90-95%	B	76-79%	C	63-66%	D	50-53%
A-	85-89%	B-	72-75%	C-	59-62%	F	0-49%

As stated in the University Calendar, it is at the instructor's discretion to round off either upward or downward to determine a final grade when the average of term work and final examinations is between two letter grades. To determine final letter grades, final percentage grades will be rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage (i.e., 89.5% will be rounded up to 90%; 89.4% will be rounded down to 89%, etc.).

Experience has shown that honours thesis supervisors typically use a more qualitative grading scheme, which resembles the following:

- A+ Exceptional performance in all respects
- A Excellent work throughout the project
- A- Very good work, but not uniformly excellent
- B+ Good work, but there were issues

Of course, your seminar grade will have to be consistent with your supervisor's grade for the final grade to be identical. For example, if your supervisor assigns an A+, your seminar performance (your attendance and your two presentations) will have to be evaluated as an A+ or an A for your final grade to be an A+, otherwise your final grade will be an A (or lower). Alternatively, your supervisor may assign an A- but your seminar performance may be outstanding and justify increasing your final grade to A.

Reappraisal of Grades

A student who feels that a piece of graded term work (term paper, essay, test, etc.) has been unfairly graded, may have the work re-graded as follows. The student shall discuss the work with the instructor within fifteen days of being notified about the mark or of the item's return to

the class. If not satisfied, the student shall immediately take the matter to the Head of the department offering the course, who will arrange for a reassessment of the work within the next fifteen days. The reappraisal of term work may cause the grade to be raised, lowered, or to remain the same.

If the student is not satisfied with the decision and wishes to appeal, the student shall address a letter of appeal to the Dean of the faculty offering the course within fifteen days of the unfavourable decision. In the letter, the student must clearly and fully state the decision being appealed, the grounds for appeal, and the remedies being sought, along with any special circumstances which warrant an appeal of the reappraisal. The student should include as much written documentation as possible.

Plagiarism and Other Academic Misconduct

Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge and requires that the contribution of others be acknowledged. Consequently, plagiarism or cheating on any assignment is regarded as an extremely serious academic offense. Plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Students should examine sections of the University Calendar that present a Statement of Intellectual honesty and definitions and penalties associated with Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct.

Academic Accommodation

It is a student's responsibility to request academic accommodation. If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation and **have not** registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. If you are seeking academic accommodation, please notify your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the commencement of the course. Note that the lecturer must approve any tape recordings of lectures.

Course Credits for Research Participation

Students in this course cannot apply research credits toward their final grade in the course.

Student Organizations

Psychology students may wish to join the Psychology Undergraduate Students' Association (PSYCHS). They are located in the Administration building, room 170, or may be contacted at 220-5567.

Student Union VP Academic: Phone: 220-3911 suvpaca@ucalgary.ca
Student Union Faculty Rep.: Phone: 220-3913 socialscirep@su.ucalgary.ca

Important Dates

The last day to drop this course and **still receive a fee refund** is September 21, 2007.
The last day to withdraw from this course is April 18, 2008.