

Muhlenberg College - Department of Psychology
Experimental Psychology: Clinical Research
Course Syllabus (Fall, 2004)

Instructor: Mark J. Sciotto, Ph.D.

Class Meetings: T - R 2:00 - 4:30 p.m., Moyer 26

Office Hours WF 1:00-2:00, TR 9:30-10:30, or by appointment.
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Required Texts: Thomas, J. C., & Hersen, M. (2003). *Understanding Research in Clinical and Counseling Psychology*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Lilienfeld, S. O., Lynn, S. J., & Lohr, J. M. (2002). *Science and Pseudoscience in Clinical Psychology*. New York: Guilford Press.

Recommended Texts: American Psychological Association (2001). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
(2 copies are available in the Library) Strongly recommended for students pursuing graduate study in psychology.

Additional Readings: Additional readings will be placed on reserve in the Trexler Library

Course News, Documents etc. Blackboard.com (<http://blackboard.muhlenberg.edu/>). This link is also available from the MuhlNet Start Page.

Course Objectives

- To develop an understanding of the key principles and logic of research design as they relate to clinical research (i.e., investigations of the origins, prevention, and amelioration of psychological problems).
- To cultivate the fundamental skills used by researchers in psychology, including the following: synthesis and analysis of existing research, critical analysis of methodological and statistical arguments, use of computer technology to facilitate the research process, written and oral presentation of research findings, and collaboration with peers.
- To develop a greater understanding of the ethical issues and methodological challenges inherent in clinical research.
- To foster appreciation and understanding for the inter-relation between clinical research and clinical practice.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

The final course grade will be determined as follows:

Mid-Term Exam	15%
Cumulative Final Exam:	25%
Brief Assignments:	15%
Group Research Project:	35%
Leading Discussion:	10%

Individual exam and assignment grades will be assigned according to the following numerical equivalents:

93 - 100	A	77 - 79	C+
90 - 92	A-	73 - 76	C
87 - 89	B+	70 - 72	C-
83 - 86	B	65 - 69	D
80 - 82	B-	Below 65	F

In-Class Examinations: (40%) Two in-class examinations (including the final) will be administered. The exam format will be primarily essay questions that focus on analysis and application. If you have a conflict with any exam, you must notify me at least 48 hours in advance. Make-up exams will only be given for the following reasons, (1) sickness—you must bring me a note from the health center verifying your illness, (2) a family emergency/crisis/death—must be verified by the Dean of Students. If an exam is missed for reasons other than those listed above and I am not notified ahead of time, you will receive a zero for that exam. You must take the final exam during the designated final period. *If you have to miss the final, you will receive an “Incomplete” for the class. You are then subjected to College procedures regarding an incomplete grade (see student handbook).*

Group Research Project (35%): Groups of 3 students will research, design, and conduct an original psychological experiment on a topic of their choice. The completed project will include a written report in APA format and an oral presentation of the project. Preliminary drafts of each section of the paper are due throughout the semester and a suggested timeline is presented in the course schedule. These preliminary drafts will not be graded, but are meant to provide valuable feedback. **You are strongly encouraged to seek feedback frequently throughout the semester.**

Brief Assignments (15%): In addition to the major research project, you will also engage in a series of brief practice assignments, mini-experiments, and computer work. Some of these assignments will be graded and some will not. Graded assignments will be evaluated on the quality of the final product. For many of these assignments, you will have the opportunity to submit rough drafts, which will not be graded. Un-graded assignments will be evaluated on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) scale. Assignments that receive a grade of “U” must be revised and resubmitted within one week of receiving the instructor’s feedback.

Leading Discussion/Presentation (10%): Throughout the semester, we will supplement our focus on methodological concepts with critical analysis of applications of research in clinical practice. To do this, we will be reading portions of Lilienfeld et al.’s (2003) book, *Science and Pseudoscience in Clinical Psychology*. Lilienfeld and colleagues present a critical analysis of various aspects of clinical practice and its impact on society. Groups of students will be assigned to lead a discussion of a particular reading from this book. More specific guidelines and suggestions will be distributed later in the semester.

Attendance: Although attendance is not mandatory, it is strongly encouraged. Attendance records will be used in determining borderline courses grades (e.g., Johnny has a 92.9 average and has only missed one class--he gets an A; Jimmy also has a 92.9 average and he has missed 10 classes--he gets an A-). A word of caution: In the past, students who have missed multiple classes have not done very well. Your presence and active participation are essential to learning in this course.

Late Assignments: Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day late (including weekend days).

Academic Integrity: You are expected to conduct yourself in accordance with the Academic Behavior Code of Muhlenberg College (www.muhlenberg.edu/mgt/deans/abc_statement.html). Honesty is an essential aspect of academic integrity. Individual students are responsible for doing their own work and for not taking credit for the effort and ideas of others. This includes plagiarism, cheating and not contributing to group projects. This obligation is based on mutual trust and is essential to meeting the goals of this course. Academic dishonesty of any type on exams, quizzes or other graded work will not be tolerated.

Some important points about academic integrity:

1. You are responsible for keeping drafts, references/sources, disk copies, and backup copies of all of your written assignments, to turn in upon my request until final grades are completed.
2. You should begin your work early. An unforeseen event arising the night before a paper is due is not a legitimate reason for a paper extension. When submitting assignments electronically, you should request confirmation that your assignment has been received or you should save some form of confirmation that your e-mail was sent (each e-mail program differs in how to do this).
3. You are responsible for taking precautions that your work (especially written work that paraphrases another written source). If I determine that you have copied all or part of an exam or paper from another source (including another student, a web page, a textbook, or other published source), you will receive a failing grade in this course. If your written work includes material that is paraphrased unacceptably from the original source, I will ask you to re-submit the written work and I will lower the assignment grade by 10%.
4. On all work submitted for a grade, you must write and sign the following pledge: "I pledge that I have complied with the Academic Behavior Code in this work."

Students with Disabilities. Students with disabilities who may need disability-related accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. If you have a documented condition, such as a physical or sensory disability, that will make it difficult for you to complete the work as outlined or that will require additional time on examinations, then it is your responsibility to see me during the first two weeks of class so that we can make appropriate arrangements. I will not indulge any requests that come to my attention for the first time the day before an exam.

Important Note about Information Technology:

In this course, you will be required to make extensive use of the information technology available at Muhlenberg. You will be using a software program called Blackboard © to exchange documents electronically, communicate outside of class, and stay updated on class events. Students who are less comfortable with information technology should schedule an appointment with me so that I can help orient you to the various tools we will be using.

Class Schedule

Date	Class Topic	Readings (TH= Thomas & Hersen, L= Lilienfeld)	Tentative Group Project Timeline	Tentative Assignment Timeline
8/31 (T)	Introduction : Science in the Service of Practice	TH: Chpt. 1		Post Topic Interests to Blackboard (U)
9/2 (Th)	Science and Pseudoscience in Clinical Psychology: Introduction	L: Chpt. 1	Form Groups, Generate List of Potential Topic Areas,	Thought-Field Therapy Analysis (U)
9/7 (T)	Selection of the Research Problem and Design: Sources of Research Ideas; Library Search Strategies	Handouts	Begin Library Work	
9/9 (Th)	Refining Ideas: The Importance of Theory	Gershoff (2002, pp. 539-544)	Choose General Topic Area and Continue Library Work	Practice Intro Section (U)
9/14 (T)	Ethical Issues and Guidelines for Research; Understanding Why Some Clinicians Use Pseudoscientific Methods	TH: Chpt. 10 L: Chpt. 2	Continue Library Research; Begin to Outline and Organize Introduction Section	
9/16 (Th)	Drawing Valid Inferences (Internal and External Validity)	TH: Chpt. 4 Article TBD (see below)	Continue to Expand Outline/Introduction; Construct hypotheses	<i>Submit a 1-page Description of Proposed Research Question and Rationale (U)</i>
9/21 (T)	Group Designs	TH: Chpt. 5		
9/23 (Th)	Correlational Methods	TH: Chpt. 6	Identify General Research Strategy; Refine Hypotheses	Threats to Validity Assignment (U)
9/28 (T)	Understanding Measurement <i>Discussion:</i> Controversial and Questionable Assessment Techniques	TH: Chpt. 2 L: Chpt. 3	Identify Relevant Measures of Constructs	
9/30 (Th)	Measurement (cont.); Group Project Time		↓	<i>Submit Draft of Introduction Section</i>
10/5 (T)	Writing an APA Format Paper (Part I) ; Group Project Time		Begin to Outline Proposed Methodology	Practice Method Section (U)
10/7 (Th)	The Case Study and Single-Case Research Designs	TH: Chpt. 7 (Chorpita, Vitali, & Barlow, 1997)	↓	Single-Case Assignment (G)
10/12 (T)	<i>Special Topics:</i> Meta-Analysis	Gershoff (2002) Handouts	Refine Experimental Materials; Pilot Test	
10/14 (Th)	Group Project Time		Refine Experimental Materials; Submit Ethics Proposal	
10/16 - 10/19	FALL BREAK		↓	

10/21 (Th)	Peer-Review of Group Projects			<i>Submit Draft of Method Section</i>
10/26 (T)	Mid-Term Examination			
10/28 (Th)	<i>Special Topics</i> : Clinical Outcome Studies; Discussion: Toward a Science of Psychotherapy Research	L: Chpt. 6	Begin Data Collection	
11/2 (T)	Data Analysis: Review of Descriptive Analyses and SPSS		Data Collection	Data Analysis I (G)
11/4 (Th)	Discussion: New Age Therapies	L: Chpt. 7	Data Collection	
11/9 (T)	Data Analysis: Review of Inferential Analyses and SPSS		Data Entry and Analysis	Data Analysis II (G)
11/11 (Th)	Discussion: Problematic Memory Recovery Techniques	L: Chpt. 8	Data Analysis	
11/16 (T)	Writing an APA Format Research Paper (Part II); Group Project Time		Data Analysis; Organize Results Section	APA Format Exercise (U)
11/18 (Th)	Discussion: Controversial Treatments for Alcoholism	L: Chpt. 10		
			↓	
11/23 (T)	Discussion: Herbal Treatments and Antidepressant Medication	L: Chpt. 11	Outline Discussion Section	<i>Submit Draft of Results Section</i>
11/30 (T)	Discussion: Treatments for ADHD	L: Chpt. 12	Discussion Section: The Finer Points of APA Format	
12/2 (Th)	Discussion: Entertainment, Advertising and Psychological Advice	L: Chpt. 15		
			↓	
12/7 (T)	Project Presentations			
			↓	
12/9 (Th)	Open Date		<i>Final Paper Due</i>	
12/13 – 12/17	Final Exam (TBD)			

**This schedule is tentative. We may find it necessary to alter the schedule slightly as the semester progresses. Check regularly for announcements posted on Blackboard.

Additional Assigned Readings:

- Chorpita, B. F. , Vitali, A. E., & Barlow, D. H. (1997). Behavioral treatment of a choking phobia in an adolescent: An experimental analysis. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, 28, 307 – 315.
- Gershoff, E. T. (2002). Corporal punishment by parents and associated child behaviors and experiences: A meta-analytic and theoretical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 539 – 579.
*(Read pp. 539-551)

Possible Outcome Studies for Illustration of Validity Concepts (9/16): More articles may be added. Check Blackboard for updates.

- Kelley, M. L., & Fals-Stewart, W. (2002). Couples- versus individual-based therapy for alcohol and drug abuse: Effects on children's psychosocial functioning. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 70, 417 – 427.
- Ramirez, E. M., & Rosen, J. C. (2001). A comparison of weight control and weight control plus body image therapy for obese men and women. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 69, 440 – 446.
- Resick, P.A., Nishith, P., Weaver, T. L., Astin, M. C., & Feuer, C. A. (2002). A comparison of cognitive-processing therapy with prolonged exposure and a waiting condition for the treatment of chronic posttraumatic stress disorder in female rape victims. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 70, 867-879.
- Rothbaum, B. O., Hodges, L., Smith, S., Lee, J. H., & Price, L. (2000). A controlled study of virtual reality exposure therapy for the fear of flying. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 68, 1020 – 1026.