

Psychology Honors II, Fall, 2011
MW 12:00-1:15

Instructor/Facilitator: Dr. Linda Chrosniak

Office: David King Hall 2045

Phone: (703) 993-4139 **e-mail:** lchrosni@gmu.edu

Office Hours: Mon: 1:45-3:45 and by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Evan Kleiman (ekleiman@gmu.edu)

Text:

- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (Sixth Edition) (2009). (Strongly recommended)
- Additional reading materials will be distributed throughout the semester during class, including papers submitted by classmates.

Course Objectives: This semester the course goals are:

- Supporting students in the development of their individual honors project
- Facilitating the process of applying to graduate school
- Providing basic and advanced issues in the research process through presentations and discussions
- Refining the development of professionalism in the discipline
- Completion of an honors thesis proposal this semester to enhance the student's education and develop many skills, such as writing in APA format, critical thinking, public speaking and use of technology to support presentations. All of these should serve the student well in future endeavors.

Specific Goals/assignments: This semester students are required to:

- **Submit a formal, comprehensive written thesis proposal in APA format**
- **Give an oral presentation to defend the thesis proposal to the faculty committee**
- **Submit IRB forms (if required for your project).**
- **Promote the development of professionalism in the discipline**

Expectations:

- The instructor is a resource available to you upon request. Ask for help when you need it. A qualified graduate TA is also available as an additional resource.
- Class participation and discussion are essential for a complete educational experience. **Class attendance should be a priority and is essential to successfully meeting the goals of the course.** The work completed during this semester is typically predictive of successfully completing the Honors Program.
- Students should be able to comprehend, critique, and discuss class readings and student presentations. All readings should be completed before they are covered in class.
- Students should be prepared to discuss topical issues related to class material and readings. Oral defense of ideas and ability to provide feedback are as important as skills used in written materials.
- Students should demonstrate a high level of sensitivity and respect towards other classmates, particularly when personal experiences or differing opinions are being shared.
- Students should develop professional communication skills through formal presentations and through informal interaction with fellow classmates and faculty committee members.
- Students should make significant progress on their projects, and must complete the proposal process with a complete faculty committee by the end of the semester. If the requirements are not met, dismissal from the program is likely.

Grading: The final grade is based on a 100-point scale. **Please note: students must earn an average grade of 3.5 across the three honors classes in order to graduate with honors.** (93-100% = A, 90-92% = A-, 88-89% = B+, 84-87% = B, 80-82% = B-, 78-79% = C+, 70-77% = C, 60-69 = D, below 60 = F)

Specific Breakdown of Grading:

10 points: Graduate School Personal Statement and CV

10 points: Feedback on graduate school statements

15 points: Assigned Presentation Topic

10 points: Research proposal practice presentation- in class grade

20 points: Formal research proposal presentation – Faculty committee grade

25 points: Thesis proposal (written paper)

10 points: Class Participation, professionalism and thesis progress

100 points: TOTAL

Last Day to Add (Full-Semester Course) September 6th, 2011
Last Day to Drop (Full-Semester Course) September 30, 2011
Withdrawal Period (Full-Semester course) October 3rd – 28th, 2011

Honor System: The Honor Code of George Mason University is strictly enforced in this course. It is a student's responsibility to be familiar with the Honor Code and to abide by it at all times.

Specific Assignments:

Graduate School Statement (10 points):

Each student is required to submit a graduate school personal statement/goal statement that describes why he/she would like to attend a particular type of program (area and degree sought) and the characteristics/qualities that the student can bring to that program. Alternatively, students may use the personal statement requirements from a graduate school of their choice. Students are encouraged to discuss their personal statements with faculty members, community professionals, and/or other students. The student alone is responsible for writing this statement, but ideas for this statement may be gathered from many sources. In addition, students are required to submit a CV, which is useful for graduate school applications.

Personal statements should be a maximum of about two pages, double-spaced and typed. Students should bring 5 copies of their written statement to class on the scheduled due date in order to distribute them to four classmates and the instructor. Each student will be responsible for reading and providing feedback on the papers of 4 classmates and for completing a self-evaluation. Feedback forms will be provided by your instructor. Personal statements, construction of a CV and the process of applying to graduate school will be discussed in class.

Papers will be graded based on the following: thoughtfulness, organization, and support for main ideas, creativity and spelling/grammar. Late papers will be penalized two points for each day beyond the deadline. A paper submitted after the start of class on the assigned date will be considered one day late. Late papers should be placed under my door in DK 2045. Please do not e-mail papers unless you clear that first with the instructor.

Feedback on Graduate School Statements (10 points):

Students will provide written feedback on four classmates' graduate school statements. Forms will be provided during class that will guide students in providing appropriate feedback. Each completed feedback sheet will be worth two points, with a possible total of eight points for submitting four feedback sheets. The remaining two points will be earned by each student completing a feedback sheet on his/her own paper, after receiving written feedback from classmates. This self-evaluation should focus on how the student's original personal statement can be improved based on the input provided from classmates and from the knowledge gained by reading classmates' papers. (The instructor will provide a copy of the feedback form)

Assigned Presentation Topic (15 points):

Each student will choose a presentation topic from a list provided by the instructor. The student is responsible for gathering information on that topic and presenting it to the class. Information can be culled from a variety of sources, including, but not limited to, library research, internet searches, class notes, interviews with faculty members and/or interviews with graduate students. It is important that most of the information come from sources such as faculty and professionals and some times from graduate students but less from websites. The instructor is also available to provide assistance. **DO NOT seek this information by mass e-mails to faculty to have questions answered!** Rather, try to make appointments with at least one or two faculty members to gather information. Students should discuss their presentation with the instructor prior to speaking to the class. The presentation of the information should take between 15 - 30 minutes. If appropriate, the student should provide ancillary materials for each student in class and the instructor (a total of 19). Students must submit a reference list to the instructor, including the names of any persons interviewed and any additional sources used. These topics are expected to provoke class discussion, so each student presenter should be prepared to engage in classroom interaction about the topic. Grades will be determined based on quality, clarity, accuracy, and quantity of information presented. Other students may be asked to provide feedback which will be used to help assign grades to their classmates. It is expected that other students attend and facilitate discussion as well.

Written Thesis Proposal (25 points)

Students are expected to propose their honors project plan to their committees before the end of the semester. In order to complete this process, each student will need to complete a formal written proposal that includes a thorough introduction (literature review leading to proposed study), hypotheses, Method section (including participants, materials/apparatus and procedure sections), and a brief plan for data analysis. It is expected that the Method will be nearly completely finalized prior to the proposal defense. The written thesis proposal will usually range in length from 12 - 20

pages. A complete reference section is expected to be included. Since this is a thesis, the Introduction section should be somewhat more thorough than what might be used for a publication submission. **(It is my experience that a thorough coverage of the literature enhances the student's knowledge base and creates a scholarly approach to the topic.)** **(Please note: Students may not present their proposal to the committees without having completed a formal written proposal. The written proposal must have been approved by their committee prior to the proposal defense. It is expected that drafts will be furnished to the advisor and instructor throughout the semester and ample time given to faculty for feedback. Papers must be submitted to all committee members at least 7 days prior to the formal defense.**

The student's advisor will usually serve as the primary source to help determine the appropriate length, content, and timing of the proposal. However, students are also encouraged to utilize the other committee members as resources of information/support during this process. As the instructor, Dr. Chrosniak is the second committee member on all committees and is available to read rough drafts of this paper with adequate time. In addition, the instructor will work with the student and mentors with regard to program requirements as needed. In addition, the TA for this class will also be an excellent resource.

Research Proposal Presentation to class (10 points)

Prior to the formal proposal, students will present their research plan to the honors class. This presentation should be a "practice run" of the formal proposal presentation to the faculty committee. In this way, students will have an opportunity to receive feedback on their presentation prior to their actual proposal meeting. However, a student may choose to combine the practice presentation to the class with the formal proposal but this is generally not advisable. The formal proposal presentation usually takes place during the class meeting. However, this is not always possible as schedules will need to be coordinated among the student and the three committee members. The practice presentation should be about 30 minutes with time for questions. Often the formal presentation is a bit longer but should not exceed about should be no longer than 35 minutes, including time left at the end for questions and feedback if it takes place during the class meeting time. **The "practice" presentation to the honors class will be worth a maximum of 10 points.**

Formal Research Proposal to committee (20 points):

The instructor will assign the grade for the practice presentation to the honors class, and the student's committee will assign the grade for the formal proposal presentation. Grades will be assigned based on knowledge of the relevant research, clarity, accuracy, and style of the presentation. Audio-visual materials should be used, and the responsibility for getting needed equipment is the student's. (Tips: If you use PowerPoint slides or overheads, please make sure that the font is large enough to be legible to all audience members. Consider bringing hand-outs of the slides for audience members or at least for your committee.) Students in the class may be asked to provide feedback, which may be used to help assign grades to their classmates. Again, feedback for other students should show sensitivity and be constructive.

Students should cover the following topics in their proposal presentation:

- Brief introduction of previous research (What has been done before?)
- How the proposed study fits into the research that has already been done (e.g., How does this study "fill a gap" or answer an unanswered question?)
- The hypothesis/hypotheses of the proposed study (What do you expect to find?)
- The method that will be used to answer the posed questions (i.e., Who are the participants? What are the specifics of the design? What are the materials? How will you conduct the research? How will you collect data?)
- Brief overview of statistics that will be used to analyze data (How will you determine whether your hypothesis was supported?)

Class Participation & Progress (10 points):

Class participation and thesis progress will constitute 10% of the final grade in the course. Participation points will be assessed based on **frequency of class attendance and the quality (not quantity) of contributions to class discussion.** Students will lose **two points** for each class absence, starting with the third absence. **Students are also expected to arrive to the class on time.**

Students' progress on their theses will also be taken into consideration in determining this portion of the grade. Progress is demonstrated by improving thesis drafts, participation in all assignments and overall improvement in the critical thinking skills. Students are expected to propose to their committee members prior to **the last day of class.** It is crucial that a student plan backward in order to finish the Honors Program requirements on time. Please be aware that a late proposal will compromise a student's ability to gather data in a timely and efficient manner. Therefore, the following bonuses and penalties will apply:

- +1 point = successful proposal to committee prior to December 9th, 2011
- +2 points = submission of all IRB forms prior to December 10th 2010

- - 3 points = proposal to committee after December 16th, 2010
- - 5 points = proposal to committee after December 20th, 2011

Honor Code:

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this:

Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. When completing all assignments, quizzes students are required to follow the guidelines of the GMU Honor Code as described in the GMU catalog. All papers and assignments are expected to be the student’s own work and should not be copied from any source. Please be sure that you are familiar with the GMU Honor Code as described in the catalog.

Incompletes:

A grade of “Incomplete” is rarely assigned. These are assigned only in cases of a real emergency and when the student has only a small amount of work left to finish. An incomplete is not allowed if a student has not demonstrated substantial progress prior to the end of the semester. Requests for a grade of incomplete must be submitted in writing to the instructor.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703- 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged at the beginning of the semester through that office.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

8/29	Getting started and Administrative issues Discussions of “backward” planning and professionalism Status Report assigned
8/31	Status Report due: Topic, progress and committee decisions Sign-up for presentation topics/thinking about proposal dates
9/5	Labor Day- No Class
9/7	Presentation 1 Discussion
9/12	Presentations 2 and 3 Discussion of personal statements and CVs Proposal Drafts due (optional but important)
9/14	Presentations 4 and 5
9/19	Presentation 6 and 7 Personal statements and CVs due Feedback forms assigned
9/21	Writing Workshop or Discussion
9/26	Presentations 8 Feedback forms on classmates' personal statements due: Discussion
9/28	Presentation 9 Self-evaluation of personal statement due; Discussion
10/3	Presentations 10 and 11
10/5	Presentations 12 and 13 Discussion and catching up on various topics

10/10	No Class – Fall Break
10/11	Presentations 14 and 15 (Note: This is a Tuesday Meeting)
10/12	Presentations 16 and 17
10/17	Writing Workshop or Research Proposals
10/19	Discussion or Research Proposals
10/24	Discussion or Research Proposals
10/26	Discussion or Research Proposals
10/31	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/2	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/7	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/9	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/14	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/16	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/21	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/23-27	Thanksgiving Break-No Class
11/28	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/30	Discussion or Research Proposals
12/5	Discussion or Research Proposals
12/7	Reception for new Honors students hosted by current Honors students (Attendance Required)
12/9	(Last day for proposals without penalty)

Any changes in the schedule or changes in assignments will be announced ahead of time in class.

ASSIGNED PRESENTATION TOPICS:

20 - 30 minutes in length

Please sign up for one presentation topic and date.

Presentation 1:

Who should you ask to write your letters of recommendation for graduate school? Does the title and position of the writer really matter? What is the best way to approach your chosen letter writers? How much time should you provide to your writers? What items or information should you provide to your letter writers? Please be very specific? How should this information be provided?

Presenter _____

Presentation 2:

What is a personal statement for graduate school? How long should it be? What should be included in this statement? What contribution does this statement make in terms of acceptance into a program? What are some things that should not be included in this statement? Why?

Presenter _____

Presentation 3: What is a CV? What information is included in a CV? How is it different from a resume? What is the appropriate way to organize a CV? When do you use a CV versus a resume?

Presenter _____

Presentation 4:

What is the honors thesis proposal process? What does it mean to have a "proposal defense?" What will your committee expect from your proposal? What separates an excellent presentation from a mediocre one? How do you reserve electronic equipment for presentations? How does your honors thesis proposal compare to the process for graduate students? What things can you do to make your presentation exceptional?

Presenter _____

Presentation 5:

What is the difference between a Master's graduate program and a Ph.D. graduate program? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? Are there differences in the funding you receive?

Presenter _____

Presentation 6:

What is the HSRB? Why do we have the HSRB? How do you get HSRB approval? What are the IRB deadlines for Fall and Spring? You will need to provide information about/examples of the forms required for IRB approval.

Presenter _____

Presentation 7:

What are the procedures for testing participants in the Psychology Department at GMU? Describe ways to "run" participants. Who oversees the human subjects research pool in the psychology department? What are the rules for recruiting participants? Are there limits as to how many participants you can test in a semester? How do you use the departmental website? (Note: this presentation should be specific to our department regulations and to Sona Systems.)

Presenter _____

Presentation 8:

Who should you listen to if your faculty committee members disagree with one another about your project? What if you disagree with a recommendation of one of your committee members? How does one negotiate the politics of pleasing a committee? You do want to talk with graduate students and faculty members to get firsthand information on this topic.

Presenter _____

Presentation 9:

What factors need to be considered before designing your own survey? What is the value of using a previously published survey? What are some costs and benefits of using a Likert scale? What is the best way to design a survey in order to give an adequate choice of responses? Do more choices require more subjects? Use clear examples to support your presentation.

Presenter _____

Presentation 10:

Discuss how you get permission to test animal subjects at GMU. What are some of the tasks faced by animal researchers in contrast to human researchers? What are some strengths and weaknesses of each approach?

Presenter _____

Presentation 11:

How are graduate classes different from undergraduate classes? What skills are necessary to do well in graduate classes? You may want to procure some sample syllabi from graduate level classes. What other types of things are expected in graduate school that are not typically required in undergraduate programs? What are the graduation rates for graduate programs relative to undergraduate programs?

Presenter _____

Presentation 12:

Discuss some differences between correlational and experimental data. How is correlational research analyzed differently than experimental research? What conclusions can be drawn from each? Where can students find statistical analyses packages on campus? What is/are the best package(s) to use? Who can provide statistical assistance if needed?

Presenter _____

Presentation 13:

What is the best way to present data and ideas to your committee? Discuss some of the ways that graphs and figures of research findings may be misleading to people. What are some of the considerations for researchers when creating graphs, pictures, even tables?

Presenter _____

Presentation 14:

What are the different ways that research can be presented to the public? What is the difference between a talk and a poster at a conference? What does it mean to publish research? Are you allowed to present the same research at multiple conferences? Can you present research at a conference after it has been published?

Presenter _____

Presentation 15:

How do you determine who will be an author when presenting or publishing a research project? Is everyone on your committee automatically an author? Is your advisor an automatic author? Are other people who assist with a project automatically authors? Be sure to explain why or why not. How might you acknowledge assistance from others if they are not authors?

Presenter _____

Presentation 16:

What psychology conferences are being held in the academic year 2011-2012 (national, regional and local as well as undergraduate conferences)? Where and when will these conferences be held? In other words, what opportunities will be available for honors students to present their research? (Please include events as GMU Undergraduate Research Symposium). What funding opportunities are available for undergraduate students (e.g., through Psi Chi)?

Presenter _____

Presentation 17:

What will happen next semester in Honors III? What will be expected of students, and how will grades be determined? How is the defense of your research project similar to and different from the proposal of your research project? What is a reasonable timeline for presenting your research project to your committee next semester? What is a reasonable timeline for presenting and/or publishing your project?

Presenter _____