

San José State University
Psychology
PSYCH 280, General Seminar, Fall 2026

Course and Contact Information

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Course Description

Current psychological literature in selected fields and the development of a specific topic by the student.
Prerequisite: Undergraduate major in psychology (or equivalent). Note: This course satisfies graduate-level
GWAR in this master's program. Letter Graded

Course Format: In-person & Online

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

*Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on Canvas Learning Management System course login website at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU on Spartan App Portal <http://one.sjsu.edu> to learn of any updates. **For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/canvas/student_resources)** (http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/canvas/student_resources)*

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Welcome to the General Seminar of the Research and Experimental (REx) Psychology MA program. In this graduate course we will examine current psychological literature in selected fields which will lead to the development of a potential thesis topic by the student. In a larger sense though, this course is meant to lay the foundation for a successful graduate career, culminating in a thesis which contributes new knowledge to the discipline of psychology. Next steps for the student may be to pursue a PhD, or to use the skills and knowledge to pursue a career in another field. To this end, the course will focus on three broad goals: Have students...

1. ... develop the analytical and critical thinking skills needed to understand and evaluate psychological research, broadly construed (theoretical reviews of the literature, experiments, correlational studies, studies which use multiple regression and path analyses techniques, longitudinal studies, meta-analyses).

2. ... develop and deeply explore research interests, one of which may become the topic for his or her thesis.
3. ...develop skills and knowledge of resources for future career paths (PhD or career pursuits)

The course is structured to develop skills needed for a successful graduate experience, but to get the most out of this class – and graduate school in general – students should work to take control and initiative in their own learning.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs):

Program learning outcomes (PLOs) are skills and knowledge that students will have achieved upon completion of the MA in Research and Experimental Psychology degree. Each course in our curriculum contributes to one or more of these PLOs. The PLOs for the degree are:

1. Advanced Knowledge Base in Research and Experimental Psychology. Students completing the Research and Experimental Psychology MA program will be able to demonstrate advanced knowledge of the major theoretical perspectives and research methods across areas of experimental psychology (e.g., Developmental, Social, Cognitive, and Physiological).

2. Research Skills and Scholarship. Graduates of our program will possess an advanced level of competence in research methods, statistical techniques, and technical writing skills. Students completing the Research and Experimental Psychology MA program are required to complete a thesis. The thesis will demonstrate:

2.1 creative problem-solving in the design and implementation of empirical research.

2.2 project management skills in the implementation of empirical research.

2.3 advanced competency in the statistical analysis and interpretation of empirical research findings.

2.4 communication (oral and written) of research findings at a professional level.

3. Career Enhancement. Students completing the Research and Experimental Psychology MA program will achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master's in psychology in the public or private sector.

Required Texts/Readings

APA Style Manual

Additional readings (i.e., articles) will be posted on Canvas and listed below.

Library Liaison

Christa Bailey, Email: christa.bailey@sjsu.edu

Course Requirements and Assignments

Online course structure

This class will have **both** IN-PERSON (i.e., weekly in-person regular meetings) and SYNCHRONOUS parts (Zoom meetings, also weekly). This means we will both be meeting via Zoom (Thursday) and in person (Tuesdays).

Activities

Activities are an important part of this class and attending class in person/synchronously on Zoom requires

active participation. Activities are meant as a space for you to apply the theories and findings from the psychology of prejudice to the real world.

Attendance

Timely attendance and participation in the weekly meetings are essential for success in the course. I will do my best to foster an environment where all students feel free to express their ideas. If you miss the class meetings, you will miss important material that will be covered on the exams. You are responsible for all announcements, assignments, lectures, and other materials from the twice-a-week meetings whether you are there or not. If you miss a meeting, you should try to get missed notes from a classmate.

Course Readings

Readings should be done before each class. Useful discussions follow only when everyone has completed the readings thoroughly and thoughtfully.

Discussion

A major goal of this course is that students will develop the skills to evaluate, apply, and ultimately communicate their knowledge and insights about psychology. Students are expected to contribute to class discussions. Much of the class is devoted to developing the skills to identify strengths and limitations of theoretical and empirical articles in psychology. To this end, students will be expected to participate in discussions of each day's readings and may be asked to turn in a response journal for the readings. At minimum, students should be ready to discuss and comment on each article's

1. hypotheses and background theory leading to the hypotheses,
2. manner in which the hypotheses were tested,
3. understanding of the main results and whether they supported the hypotheses,
4. evaluation of the strengths and limitations of the research design, and
5. questions, comments, insights, applications, ideas for further research, and so forth.

Literature Exploration Papers

Another major goal of this course is that students will develop ideas for their thesis. To this end, students will write 3 Thesis Exploration Papers. In each paper, the student will review several papers relevant to a research question, describe a single "focus article" in detail, and then propose a follow-up study that would extend the area of research. The first paper will be 3-5 pages, double spaced, APA 7 Edition style. The second paper will have higher expectations, 5-10 pages, double-spaced, APA 7 Edition style. The third and final paper will have the highest expectations in terms of writing quality and content, 12-15 double-spaced pages, APA 7th Edition style.

Literature Exploration Presentations

Students will give a 12 minute presentation for each of the literature exploration assignments. The first 4 minutes of the presentation should be devoted to theoretical background to help the audience understand the background and context of the study. The next 4 minutes of the presentation should review a focus article and discuss the methods, results, and conclusions from the article. The last 4 minutes of the presentation should include a "pitch" for a follow-up study that would either address shortcomings in the original research article or else extend the findings of the article. After each 12 minute presentation, there will be a 5 minute period of questions and discussion with the class.

***ALL written assignments need to use 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, in APA style.

Final Examination or Evaluation

The final exam will be cumulative.

Grading Information

Grading

Assignment	Grade
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Activities/Assignments:

Lit exploration presentations 10 pts each

Participation 10 pts

Exams: 30 pts

Papers:

Lit exploration papers 10 pts for first 2 papers

Lit exploration Final Paper 20 pts for the final paper

Determination of Grades

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>A plus</i>	<i>96 to 100%</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>93 to 95%</i>
<i>A minus</i>	<i>90 to 92%</i>
<i>B plus</i>	<i>86 to 89 %</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>83 to 85%</i>
<i>B minus</i>	<i>80 to 82%</i>
<i>C plus</i>	<i>76 to 79%</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>73 to 75%</i>
<i>C minus</i>	<i>70 to 72%</i>
<i>D plus</i>	<i>66 to 69%</i>
<i>D</i>	<i>63 to 65%</i>
<i>D minus</i>	<i>60 to 62%</i>

Classroom Protocol

Late assignments

An assignment turned in after the due date (and time) will receive a 10% penalty per day late. If you do not complete the exam by the deadline, you will receive a zero on it. There are no exceptions to this rule except for emergencies with official documentation (e.g., doctor's note). Note the deadlines in the class syllabus and plan accordingly.

Electronics & Zoom protocol

Cell phones, mp3 players, and all other electronic devices should be turned off during synchronous class meetings on Zoom. Texting or answering calls during class is not acceptable. Please turn your VIDEO ON during all Zoom meetings.

Academic Honesty

You are held to the highest standard of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. You may never use the ideas or work of another person without proper citation (i.e. noting the name and source according to APA style). The work you turn in for all assignments should always be your own. I am interested in your original ideas, as well as your ability to properly cite others' ideas. Keep in mind that plagiarism does not necessarily have to be intentional to be serious. When in doubt, cite!

Contact

I check my email on a daily basis and should respond to most queries within 24 hours. Please feel free to talk to me before/after class, or make an appointment for office hours.

Accessibility

Any student needing academic adjustments or accommodations should talk with me by the end of the second week of the term.

University Policies (Required)

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant information to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. is available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) at (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>). Make sure to visit this page, review and be familiar with these university policies and resources.

In the following pages, you will find an outline of the topics and readings we will be covering. Please note that the syllabus may be updated during the semester to reflect changes in course readings, shifts in lecture topics, etc. You will be notified each time a change takes place.

Course Schedule

Course Schedule (subject to change with fair notice made during class/via Canvas)

Week/Lesson/Module	Week of:	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	8/20 Thurs (online) 8/25 Tues (in-person) 8/27 Thurs (online)	Introductions & ice breakers; Syllabus, MA overview, Q&A Create accounts on LinkedIn, Explore Google Scholar, Explore citation management software
2	9/1 9/3	Discuss Heppner & Heppner (2004) Article Select a literature review article and discuss its effectiveness
3	9/8 9/10	Aronson & Mills (1959) Discussion 5 min Presentation of an Article that Cites Aronson & Mills (1959)
4	9/15 9/17	Faculty presentations I & II
5	9/22 9/24	<i>Christa Bailey @ MLK Library 213</i> Literature search tutorial
6	9/29 10/1	Concise writing tutorial Lit explorations presentations #1
7	10/6 10/8	Lit explorations presentations #1 Continued
8	10/13 10/15	Alumni visits: industry Alumni visits: academic
9	10/20 10/22	Lit explorations presentations #2 Continued
10	10/27 10/29	<i>Citation Network Analysis Tutorial @ MLK Library 213</i> Internal & external validity
11	11/3 11/5	Review & Midterm (online)
12	11/10 11/12	
13	11/17 11/19	Lit explorations presentations #3 Continued
14	11/24-26	THANKSGIVING

Week/Lesson/Module	Week of:	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
15	12/1 12/3	Lit explorations presentations #3 Continued Final exam online