

Psychology 492: Advanced General (Capstone) Winter, 2025

Section 06: MWF 10:00 – 10:50 am, ASH 2107

Section 05: MWF 11:00 – 11:50 pm, ASH 1204

Section 03: MWF 12:00 – 12:50 am, ASH 2113

Instructor: Dr. Michael B. Wolfe
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Office Hours: MWF 1:00 to 1:50 or by appointment

Required texts:

Journal articles available through PsycINFO or Blackboard.

Prerequisites:

PSY 300, Senior standing

Course objectives:

This course is designed to be a seminar-style course for psychology students who are near graduation. The seminar nature of the course means that you will read primary articles, mostly from psychology journals, and we will spend many of our class periods discussing the articles themselves, and the general issues that are raised by the articles. There will be little to no lecturing about the articles on my part.

Throughout the semester, we will have a general focus on how to interpret and use primary psychology research to address issues outside of the research context itself. In more technical language, we will discuss how different types of validity are relevant to studies, including the generalizability of research findings beyond the parameters of specific studies. We will examine several topics with these general issues in mind. A few threads will run through our discussions, including theoretical vs. applied lines of research, what a confound does to a study, and how to address situations in which the preponderance of evidence does not align with many people's views about issues.

Class periods during the first two-thirds of the semester (approximately) will consist of class discussion of the articles that we are reading and the issues they raise. In the last third of the semester, student teams will present research related to a specific topic within psychology, and discuss the extent to which psychological research related

to that topic has generated conclusions that are (or are not) useful. Each presentation will be followed by class discussion, led by the team that presented.

It will be critical in this class that you do the reading for each class period before class, and come to class prepared to discuss the reading for that day. Many of the points in the class (described below) will be assigned so as to ensure that you do the reading and are prepared before class.

Objectives: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Identify concepts associated with major theoretical perspectives and empirical findings in the discipline.
- 2) Engage in the application of major theoretical perspectives and empirical findings in the discipline.
- 3) Describe alternative theoretical perspectives within the discipline and, where possible, integrate/synthesize across these perspectives.
- 4) Recognize various sources of bias in psychological research, and how these can affect the interpretation or usefulness of research findings.
- 5) Analyze and explain interdisciplinary approaches to psychological questions.
- 6) Recognize and produce an appropriate level of professional-style writing.

GVSU course policies:

This course is subject to the GVSU policies listed at <http://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies>

At this website you can find all policies related to such topics as academic integrity, disabilities, inclusion, and discrimination. Please note that you are responsible for knowing and following the policies that are listed here. It is a good idea to read through them to familiarize yourself with them.

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance is mandatory, because seminar courses do not function unless students come to class consistently. Mandatory attendance includes discussions of readings as well as discussion of student presentations. I will pass around a roll sheet in order for me to keep track of who is in class. Your participation grade will be based both on attendance and on your level of participation in class. Attendance and participation will be combined into a single grade out of a possible **150** points.

For the participation part of the grade, you will be evaluated on the amount and thoughtfulness of your contributions to class discussion. There is not a particular type of comment I am looking for. What I look for is evidence that you have read the articles

and thought carefully about them. If the article is empirical (describes experiments), you should be able to summarize the methods and results of the studies. For any article, you should think carefully about the main points and implications of the research discussed. You can feel free to ask me about your participation at any point.

As part of class participation, we will typically break into teams at the beginning of class. I will give each team a particular question that addresses some aspect of the article we are discussing that day. Each team will discuss the question amongst themselves, then report to the class what they concluded about the question. The team's response will then serve as a discussion point for class-wide discussion. I will provide more information about this procedure in class.

Writing assignment for each reading:

The purpose of the written assignment for each article is to ensure that you read the article carefully and thought about it before class. For each article that we read, you should write 50-100 words that includes:

1. A brief description of the methods for the experiment(s). You do not need to write a lot of detail. Think carefully about the aspects of the participants, materials, and procedure that are essential to understanding what the experimenters did, and summarize that. Think of the task this way: if you were to describe the study to a friend of yours, what would you say? Be concise, accurate, and write in plain language.

2. A brief summary of the results of the experiment(s). Do NOT include the statistics from the article. Tell in plain language what happened with the dependent variable(s) in the experiment(s). You should describe results for whatever aspects of the study you described in the methods. That is, if there were several variables and you left some of them out of the methods, that's fine. But only describe results for the methods that you described.

3. In ONE SENTENCE, what is a question you have about the article that you would like for us to discuss in class? This can be something that confused you, a question about how to interpret the results, something about what the point of it was, or whatever else you would like to discuss.

Note: For the writing, assignment, you may not quote the article. Write everything in your own words. You also must write information that is not included in the abstract. That is, do not read the abstract, then go straight to the writing assignment.

The writing assignment for each article must be turned in on Blackboard by 5:00 am on the Monday of the week we are discussing them. Assignment grades for each week will be 10, 7, or 5. The lowest writing assignment grade will be dropped, so the total possible points for them will be 80.

Examination:

There will be one exam given in this course, which will take place on **March 21**. The exam will consist of essay questions that are designed to assess your understanding of the articles and issues we have discussed. One week before the exam I will hand out a set of six essay questions. On the day of the exam you will write your answers in class to a subset of three questions that I will select.

You are expected to be present for the exam. A make-up exam will **only** be given in the case of an injury or illness, or if there is a death in the family. You must notify me within 24 hours of the exam, and you must be prepared to provide documentation regarding your situation. A make-up exam will be given as soon as possible after the exam, and may be essay or oral at my discretion.

Paper and Presentation Project

Paper:

Students will work in small teams on an issue within psychology. Your task will be to summarize several articles that relate to the issue, and analyze the articles in terms of their theoretical and applied contributions. Then, you will construct an argument about the extent to which psychological research in your chosen area has contributed something useful to some area of society. You may either conclude that psychology has or has not made a useful contribution, depending on the state of the research literature in your chosen area.

Fairly early in the semester, I will form the class into small teams (typically three people each) depending on your meeting availability. The purpose of the team is to work together to share research articles and discuss the issues that arise within your topic. You will each write your own paper, however. The paper should be a maximum of 13 pages, and should provide an in-depth scholarly treatment of the issue you are discussing. I will also encourage you to make time to discuss your paper with me ahead of time.

These are the basic parts that your paper should have:

1. An APA formatted title page.
2. An introduction to the issue or question that you are discussing. In the introduction, you should set up the topic and explain to the reader why this topic is important or worth exploring. This part of the paper will also tell the reader what the rest of the paper will cover.
3. A review of relevant literature that describes the research that has been done relating to your topic. You should discuss both theoretical work and what practical or applied work has been done.
4. Construct an argument in which you claim that the state of research on your topic does or does not offer suggestions that would be useful to people beyond those who conduct the research. If you conclude that the research does offer useful

information, to whom and in what way is this information useful. If not, do you have any suggestions for how psychology might conduct research relating to your topic that could be useful?

The paper should be written in APA format, and should include at least ten references to the literature that you have drawn on in summarizing the literature and making your conclusions. You should make use of headings and sub-headings to help organize the sections of the paper. Include an APA formatted References section at the end. The paper should be no more than 13 pages (not including references.) Finally, when writing your paper, you should make minimal (if any) use of quotations from the articles you discuss.

Each student will write your own paper. I anticipate that that the literature you cite and conclusions you reach will be similar for members within a team, but you **must** write your own paper.

The paper is due **April 16**, and is worth **100** points.

Team presentation:

The team that you work with will present the research related to your issue and your conclusions. Your presentation should last 20 minutes, with the remaining class time devoted to your team leading a discussion of the presentation, and the issue in general. In the presentation, your team should address points 2, 3, and 4 that are listed above for the paper. As part of the presentation, each member **must present and explain data** from at least one study. The data can be either a Figure or Table, and it can be original data from a paper (such as an image of a Figure) or something you made from the original data.

We will spend one class period discussing how to give a good research presentation, and I will say more about the presentation at that time. We will also have class time that is devoted to me meeting with each team individually to discuss your presentation and paper. The presentation will be worth **75** points. The presentation grade will be split between 35 points that are assigned to the team as a whole and 40 points that are assigned to each individual team member separately. The purpose of assigning a team grade is to ensure that the members of the team work together to make a presentation that is coherent across presenters, and not just three people making points that are unrelated to each other.

Each team is required to go to the GVSU Speech Lab for a consultation with one of their speech experts. This requirement is worth 10 points. The Speech Lab is a great resource for improving presentation skills. When you meet with the consultant, they will email me with a summary of what you discussed. When I receive the email from the consultant, I will record the 10 points. You get the full 10 points for going, so it is not dependent on what you discuss or what the consultant reports. You can schedule your consultation at: <https://www.gvsu.edu/speechlab/>

Before you give your presentation, you should send me an email message in which you assign a letter grade to the other members of your team with a short explanation of the grade that you assign. The grades and explanations will be strictly confidential. This is a way for me to get a little more information about the effort that has been put forth by each team member. I will take these student-assigned grades into consideration when assigning the presentation grades.

Grading:

Your final grade for the course will be a combination of the scores on each of the sets of questions, class attendance and participation, the exam, your role in the team presentation, and the final paper.

Here are the number of points that will be assigned to each aspect of the course:

Attendance and class participation	150
Written questions about readings	80
Exam	100
Group presentation and discussion	85
Paper	100

Letter grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

93 – 100%	A
90 – 92%	A-
87 – 89%	B+
83 – 86%	B
80 – 82%	B-
77 – 79%	C+
73 – 76%	C
70 – 72%	C-
67 – 69%	D+
60 – 66%	D
0 – 59%	F

Tentative Schedule of Topics

Week of	Topic
1/6 – 1/10	Intro / opening discussion / psychology “pre test” Read this article before class Wednesday: http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2014/april-14/teach-your-students-to-be-better-consumers.html
1/13 - 1/17	Generalizability and Ecological validity Banaji & Crowder (1989) Hirsch (2002)
1/20 – 1/24	1/20 – Martin Luther King Day (No Class) Issues in Conducting Psychology Research Vazire, Schiavone, Bottesini (2022) Boot, Simons, Stothart, & Stutts (2013)
1/27 – 1/31	Memory Roediger & Karpicke (2006) Rohrer & Taylor (2006) Yawarski & Ibrahim (2001)
2/3 – 2/7	Education Toftness, Carpenter, Geller, Lauber, Johnson, & Armstrong (2018) Sana & Yan (2022) Katsioloudis & Fantz (2012) Explore this website as much as you can: https://vark-learn.com/
2/10 – 2/14	Psychology and Law Hasel & Kassin (2009) Morgan III, Southwick, Steffian, Hazlett, & Loftus (2013) Watch this TED talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_loftus_how_reliable_is_your_memory Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughns, & Lynn Johnson (2006)
2/17 – 2/21	2/17 - How to give a research presentation 2/19 – Work day: Meet with team in class 2/21 - Implicit Bias Lai et al., (2016) Experiment 1 Take the “race” Implicit Association Test (and any others you’re interested in): https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html
2/24 – 2/28	Implicit Bias Lai et al., (2016) Experiment 2 Vulevitch & Payne (2019)

	Nair, Mosleh, & Kouchaki (2024)
3/3 – 3/7	Spring Break – have fun!
3/10 – 3/14	Beliefs and Reasoning Wolfe & Williams (2018) Ditto et al., (2019) Hornsey (2020)
3/17 – 3/21	Cell Phone Use While Driving 3/17 - Strayer, Castro, Turrill, & Cooper (2022) 3/19 - General discussion 3/21 - Exam
3/21	5:00 PM. – Drop deadline with grade “W”
3/24 – 3/28	Presentation meetings (no regular class meetings)
3/31 – 4/4	3/31 - Presentation meetings (no regular class meetings) 4/2 & 4/4 - Presentations
4/7 – 4/11	Presentations
4/14 – 4/18	Presentations
	Paper due on Wednesday (4/16) at 5:00
Finals week	Section 06: Monday, Apr. 21 at 10:00 to 11:50 am Section 05: Wednesday, Apr. 23 at 10:00 to 11:50 am Section 03: Wednesday, Apr. 23 at 12:00 to 1:50 pm Note: There will be no final exam. We will use this time for a discussion of the course and a presentation make-up day (attendance required).

Note: Questions are turned in on Blackboard by 6:00 am on the Monday of the week in which each article is listed.

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