

PSY489: Collaborative Research in Moral Psychology

Spring 2020

Class Meetings: Mondays, 1:30–4:20, LSP 130

Research Team Meetings: Weekly, Time/Location TBD

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Office Hours: Mondays from 10:30–11:30 and Thursdays from 1:00–3:00, or by appointment

Course Description

Students will conduct experimental research on relevant theoretical issues within the field of moral psychology. Topics may include investigations of the scope of moral concern, manifestations of moral virtues, childhood acquisition of moral beliefs, dispositions toward prosociality and fairness, contributions of emotions to moral judgment, and other related areas that reflect student interest. Techniques for designing, conducting, analyzing, and presenting empirical research will be discussed, practiced, and implemented.

Course Objectives

This class does not focus on imparting existing information. In contrast, you will be generating new information. Instead of *learning* moral psychology, you will be *doing* moral psychology. This is similar to an apprenticeship, in which you are acquiring the requisite tools of the researcher's trade. Specifically, your task is to become a true scientist by broadening the field's knowledge about a question that has not yet been fully answered. In collaboration with 1–2 peers, you will spend the semester proposing a novel empirical hypothesis that is informed by the current literature, creatively designing a research methodology to test your hypothesis, and collecting data to yield answers about the veracity of your hypothesis. This will culminate in an oral or poster presentation to the Psychology Department and an APA-style manuscript detailing the motivation, procedures, results, and implications of your research project. Throughout this process, you will build new skills in critical thinking, analysis, and writing. You will also enhance your leadership skills, your self-confidence, and your ability to effectively work in a group setting.

Course Requirements

As detailed below, you will be assessed by your performance on the following assignments (1,000 points total):

Class Participation	Effective Teamwork	HSR/IRB Protocol	Peer Reviews	Team Presentation	Paper Drafts	Final Paper
100 pts.	100 pts.	50 pts.	100 pts.	150 pts.	100 pts.	400 pts.

The hands-on, product-driven nature of this course necessitates that class meetings are structured differently than lower-level psychology courses. For this course to be most productive, most classes will involve working through specific issues tailored to each team's research project. In some cases, you will be helping other teams. In other cases, you will be collaborating with your teammate(s) to brainstorm, troubleshoot, and move forward in achieving goals at each step of the research process. Some weeks will involve more outside work than others, and Prof. Rottman reserves the right to require extra team meetings in order to provide additional individualized feedback.

There are no required textbooks for this course. However, the 6th Edition of the APA *Publication Manual* will be available for loan, and it is highly recommended that you regularly consult this useful guide (or a copy of the new 7th Edition) as you progress through various stages of the research process. All required readings will be available as PDF files on the Canvas course website. Rubrics will be distributed to explain grading criteria for each assignment.

Grading

Letter grades will be assigned as follows (decimals will be rounded to the nearest whole number):

A 93–100	A- 90–92	B+ 87–89	B 83–86	B- 80–82	C+ 77–79
C 73–76	C- 70–72	D+ 67–69	D 63–66	D- 60–62	F 0–59

Please note: You are not your grade. Your grade is an assessment of your mastery of course material; it is not an assessment of your worth as a human being.

Assignments

Class Participation

This class requires your active engagement, dependable support, and constructive feedback. Therefore, consistent attendance is mandatory, and it is absolutely crucial that you come to every class and team meeting prepared to make progress on your research project. You are expected to be punctual and fully prepared for each class/meeting. If you have a valid reason for being absent or late, it is your responsibility to immediately notify your teammate(s) and Prof. Rottman with some options for making up lost time. However, this will only be excused in exceptional circumstances, and written documentation may be requested. Please respect a diversity of opinions and questions, and remain constructive and considerate in your interactions, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Effective Teamwork

At three points during the semester, you will assess each member of your team (including yourself) on your overall contributions in consistently pulling your weight as part of a cooperative research group. You and your teammate(s) are expected to contribute equally in all tasks. Neither free riding nor domineering will be tolerated.

Human Subjects Research Protocol

Because you will be recruiting human subjects as participants, a board of reviewers will need to ensure that your testing procedures are ethical. In this application, which you will write and submit as a team, you will describe your research protocol in sufficient detail for others to evaluate its ethical soundness. It is not permissible to recruit or test human subjects until the ethics committee has approved your application, so it is crucial that this protocol is well written and thorough in order to avoid delays in the research process. Barring exceptional circumstances, all members of your team will receive the same grade on this assignment.

Peer Review

An essential component of the research process involves having one's work assessed by colleagues. In order to publish a paper in an academic journal, it must undergo rigorous peer review. Reviewers evaluate manuscripts at multiple levels, from basic mechanics (e.g., grammar, clarity) to more essential issues (e.g., novelty of hypotheses, interpretation of data, exhaustiveness of literature review). You will have an opportunity to review the Introduction and Method sections written by two members of other teams, and to receive feedback from two of your classmates.

Talk or Poster Presentation

Presenting work in talk or poster format is a crucial component of disseminating research to broad audiences. In order to allow you to engage with this element of the research process, you will be required to present your findings at the Psychology Research Symposium during the evening of April 28th. Barring exceptional circumstances, all members of your team will receive the same grade on this assignment.

Empirical Research Paper

Your primary assignment in this course is to produce an APA-style manuscript that provides a compelling and exhaustive explanation of the motivation, design, findings, and conclusions of your empirical research. This paper should closely mimic the published empirical journal articles that you will be citing in your paper's Introduction. The APA's *Publication Manual* provides an excellent breakdown of what each section of your paper should contain. Your paper will be submitted in several stages (for details, see the Semester Schedule). You are also encouraged to submit outlines or drafts of each section for ungraded feedback before any of the due dates. While you will be designing and conducting the research collaboratively, **the entirety of your paper should be written independently**. The Introduction and Discussion sections should each be a minimum of 1,000 words in length. The Methods and Results will vary in length depending on the study you choose to conduct, and should be sufficiently long to provide readers with a complete understanding of your procedure and analyses (such that an independent researcher could replicate your work). The entirety of your paper (excluding references) should be between 3,000 and 6,000 words in length. The final submission should be uploaded to Canvas on May 5th.

Course Policies

Grading Policy

The objective of this course is to train you as a scientist, not to constantly put you to the test. Thus, the bulk of your grade will involve an evaluation of the successful completion of your research project and the associated paper. In order to ensure that you have every opportunity to earn a high grade while acquiring the requisite skills of a researcher, you will have multiple opportunities to submit various components of your paper for feedback. You may also submit a draft of any assignment one week in advance in order to receive comments and a preliminary grade. Additionally, you may submit a rewrite of any draft up to two weeks after receiving a grade, and your grade will then be updated in accordance with the quality of the best submission.

If you receive a grade that is inconsistent with what you believe you should have earned, you have a week to set up an appointment to appeal your grade. When scheduling this appointment, you must submit a written statement explaining your case. After one week has passed, all grades are considered final (unless you decide to submit a rewrite the following week).

Policy on Late Assignments

You will lose 10% for every day that an assignment is late. However, you have three “free gifts” that you can use at any time: the opportunity to take a 24-hour extension on any non-collaborative assignment. (These may be used in conjunction if desired.) In extreme cases when unexpected and unavoidable circumstances prevent you from completing an assignment on time, please inform Prof. Rottman immediately, and he will use his discretion to determine whether to waive or reduce the grade deduction.

Policy on Electronic Devices

This class will require frequent use of laptops (e.g., when you are working with data, conducting online literature searches, or otherwise engaged in work requiring specialized software or internet access). In order to maximize your success and minimize the possibility for distractions, you should only use electronic devices during times when they are necessary. Exceptions will be granted for students with compelling reasons for using a laptop or other device to take notes.

Academic Integrity

I take academic honesty **very** seriously. (After all, you’re taking an advanced class on morality; you should know that dishonesty is wrong!) You risk severe consequences by committing acts of plagiarism (i.e., representing someone else’s work as your own), cheating, falsification, impersonating, or other similar offenses, including facilitating another student in committing an act of academic dishonesty. Penalties for these offenses will be carefully assessed on a case-by-case basis, and may include receiving a failing grade in the course or expulsion from F&M. Please refer to the Franklin & Marshall College Catalog for additional details.

Academic Accommodations

I strive to provide an environment that is equitable and conducive to achievement and learning for all students. As such, I invite you to speak with me about your individual learning needs so that we can discuss how this course can best accommodate them. In addition, formal academic accommodations are available for students who require them. Please schedule an appointment with Prof. Rottman during the first week of class to discuss any accommodations that have been supported by appropriate documentation and approved by the Office of Student Accessibility Services. All information will be kept confidential.

Other Tips

This class will be intensive. You will be expected to consistently keep up with the required work, which may require extensive outside time during certain points in the semester (e.g., data collection). However, Prof. Rottman is here to help you succeed. He will be available to talk in his office during the times listed at the top of the syllabus, by appointment, and anytime when his door is open. If you have any concerns or confusions regarding the course material and assignments, or if issues arise that have the potential to interfere with your success in the course, please be in touch as soon as possible. Your fellow students can also be great resources; reaching out to them can be a fun and collaborative way to learn. In particular, swapping paper drafts with your classmates to receive informal peer evaluations is an acceptable and encouraged practice to improve your writing. Additionally, please feel free to take advantage of the many resources that Franklin & Marshall has to offer! For example, the Writing Center (located on the second level of Diagnothian Hall) can assist you with writing and other academic skills. Librarians will also be a crucial resource for this course. Finally, a number of resources are available to support your wellbeing, including the Student Wellness Center Counseling Services (located in the LGH Wellness Center in College Square), DipCares, and the House Deans.

Semester Schedule

Components of this schedule are subject to change in order to best suit the needs of specific research projects. All assignment submissions are due by 11:59pm on the Sunday before class. Assignments that are underlined and italicized are group projects; assignments that are in normal type are individual projects.

Date	Class Topic	Assigned Readings (to read before class)	Assigned Submissions (due at 11:59pm on the Sunday before class)
1/27	Avenues of possible research within moral psychology	Greene, J. D. (2015). The rise of moral cognition. <i>Cognition</i> , 135, 39–42.	
2/3	Building atop previous research to further the field	McGuire, W. J. (1997). Creative hypothesis generating in psychology: Some useful heuristics. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> , 48, 1–30.	<u><i>Brainstorm of ten testable hypotheses</i></u>
2/10	Operationalizing variables and designing studies	Stanovich, K. (2013). <i>How to think straight about psychology</i> (pp. 37–52, 107–121).	<u><i>Plans for study design</i></u>
2/17	Ethical issues in conducting human subjects research	Chambliss, D. F., & Schutt, R. K. (2013). <i>Making sense of the social world: Methods of investigation</i> (pp. 39–58).	Draft of Introduction
2/24	Constructive critiques of research designs	Excerpt from Kosslyn, S. M., & Rosenberg, R. S. (2001). <i>Psychology: The brain, the person, the world</i> .	<u><i>Draft of human subjects research protocol</i></u> ; First teamwork evaluation
3/2	Tips and techniques for scientific writing	Pinker, S. (2014). <i>The sense of style: The thinking person's guide to writing in the 21st century</i> (pp. 27–76).	<u><i>Final human subjects research protocol</i></u>
3/9	Preparation for beginning data collection	Field, A., & Hole, G. J. (2003). <i>How to design and report experiments</i> (pp. 258–277).	Draft of Method
*** SPRING BREAK ***			
3/23	Editing, revising, and the importance of peer review	Roberts, L. W., et al. (2004). How to review a manuscript: A “down-to-earth” approach. <i>Academic Psychiatry</i> , 28, 81–87.	<u><i>Detailed plans for participant recruitment and testing</i></u>
3/30	Troubleshooting		Peer review of Introduction and Method; Second teamwork evaluation
4/6	Data entry and statistical analysis		<u><i>Empty data file and data analysis plan</i></u>
4/13	Graphical visualizations of research data		Heavily revised draft of Introduction and Method
4/20	Presenting the results of scientific research	Pelham, B. W., & Blanton, H. (2003). <i>Conducting research in psychology: Measuring the weight of smoke</i> , 2 nd ed. (pp. 310–329).	Draft of Results and Discussion
4/27	Practicing presentations	Ariely, D. (2009, February). Our buggy moral code. <i>TED</i> . [https://bit.ly/372FINx] (video) Banaji, M. R. (2018, January). Mind bugs. <i>TED</i> . [https://bit.ly/2Rg71ys] (video)	<u><i>Talk or poster presentation</i></u> ; Third teamwork evaluation
4/28	*** PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM: 7:00pm – 10:00pm ***		
5/5	*** Final research paper due at 11:59pm ***		