SYLLABUS
PSYCHOLOGY 3RM3: RESEARCH METHODS
Department of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour
McMaster University
FALL Term 2014

Course time and location: MR 3:30pm; T 4:30pm in MDCL/1102

Professor:
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Phone: Do not phone me.
Office: PC-415A
Office hours: Available by appointment; see Avenue for announcements about schedule office hours.

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Please note: This syllabus – including scheduling, topic order, topics themselves, and assessment strategy – is subject to change if circumstances warrant (e.g., TA loss, “snow days”).

Table of Contents.
Course Description
Readings
E-mail and Website Policies
Policy on Recording Lectures
Assessment
Test-Taking Policy
Missed Tests Policy
A Note on Final Marks Calculations
A Note on Academic Integrity
Dates, Topics, and Readings (Schedule; page 4)

Course Description. This course is designed to introduce you to research methods in psychology. We will discuss basic foundations in empirical thinking, and major research designs used by psychologists, including both experimental and non-experimental designs. By the end of term, you will have the background necessary to assess, interpret, and do research.


E-mail Policy. E-mails must originate from a valid McMaster account. Note that Avenue and mcmaster.ca cannot “talk” to one another. That is, Avenue will reject mcmaster.ca emails, and vice versa. Therefore, emails from Avenue must go to Avenue only, and emails from mcmaster.ca must go to mcmaster.ca only. I recommend that you never send an email from the Avenue system: that way, all emails will reach their destination.

Email sent from third-party providers (e.g., hotmail, cogeco, google) will be ignored. McMaster has this policy for two important reasons: (1) to ensure that we know with whom we are communicating; and (2) to teach the professional use of e-mail. Remember: E-mails to your professors are professional communications. They should (1) include correct spelling and punctuation, (2) have an informative subject line, and (3) be brief.
**Website Policy.** You are expected to check our course website on *Avenue to Learn* regularly for announcements, updates, discussion board postings, and other valuable information. It is your responsibility to keep up with the information provided on this site.

Use of the website’s **discussion boards** is strongly encouraged, and, in the case of non-private inquiries (e.g., questions about course content and the running of this course, but not emails reporting illness or other private matters) is preferred to email communication, due to the high volume of email I typically receive. Questions asked on the discussion boards give other students with the same questions the chance to see the answer (and therefore not have to ask the question themselves). Discussion board questions also provide a learning experience for students who wish to answer these questions themselves.

Please see the top of each discussion board for directions on how to use the board. Posts that ignore these directions will be deleted. The professor reserves the right to ban students from the course website if they use the board inappropriately (e.g., posting inappropriate comments).

Finally, students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

**Policy re. the Recording of Lectures.** If you feel that recording lectures will help you perform optimally in the course, then feel free to do so. You are especially encouraged to record lectures if you find my pacing a bit fast. HOWEVER: Consider the lectures **copyrighted material**: you cannot post recordings anywhere online, including on our *Avenue* website.

**Evaluation.** Your final mark will be based on two midterms (@ 30% each) and one cumulative final exam (@40%). Tests will cover lecture materials and assigned readings, even readings not discussed in class.

This is the first year 3RM3 has been taught. Therefore, I can only give you a tentative description of how you will be tested. Tests will be comprised of some mix of multiple choice (MC), fill-in-the-blanks, and brief written responses. Items will be a mixture of fact-based questions (e.g., “what is the definition of X?” or “what is the key term used to describe Y?”), conceptual questions (e.g., “why is concept X important?” or “how do you know that a researcher can draw conclusion Y?”), and applied questions (e.g., “given what you know about topic A, how would you design a study to test behaviour B?” or “Researcher X failed to include Y in their design. Is this a problem? Explain.”).

For test dates, see below, under “schedule”.

**NB:** The instructor reserves the right to alter the evaluation scheme if circumstances warrant (e.g., TA loss).

**Test-Taking Policy.** Electronics must stay in your bag, turned off. If a phone rings or vibrates during a test, you will be penalized 5% off your **final grade in the course**. The only things allowed on your desk and/or outside of your bag during testing sessions are pens, pencils, erasers, something to eat or drink if needed, tissues if needed, and your student ID.

**Missed Tests.** Report your absence to McMaster right away!! Email jmostovich@mcmaster.ca right away (this is where your MSAF goes as well), too. “Right away” means within 2 days of your absence. Otherwise, accommodations may not be granted. (Note: Make-up tests are held one week after the original test, during class time; hence the need for speedy communication re. absences.) No requests for special consideration will be accepted after two weeks’ time has elapsed (i.e., you will receive a mark of zero on the missed midterm).
**How to report an absence:** The McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) can be used to report some (but not all) absences. Please make yourself familiar with the ins and outs of using this form by going to [http://www.mcmaster.ca/health/](http://www.mcmaster.ca/health/) and [http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/](http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/). The MSAF can be used, once per term, if you are absent from the university for a medical reason lasting fewer than 5 days. **Longer absences or absences due to non-medical reasons must be reported to your Faculty or Program office, with documentation.** Note that relief from term work may not necessarily be granted, regardless of how it is reported.

**What if you miss the make-up test?** If you miss the make-up test due to a prolonged illness or prolonged family crisis (or similar), then you must report your absence for both the test and its make-up to your Faculty or Program office; otherwise, you will receive a mark of zero on the missed work. If you can provide an acceptable excuse for having missed the make-up, then either (a) an alternate make-up assignment will be designed for you or (b) the 30% value of the midterm will be added to the 40% value of the final exam, resulting in a 70% final. If you miss both midterms and their makeups, then you will fail this course (you cannot have a 100% final). You are advised to seek academic counseling if this happens to you.

**Final Grade Calculations.** Your final grade will be converted to a letter grade, according to the following scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage (Grade)</th>
<th>Percentage (Grade)</th>
<th>Percentage (Grade)</th>
<th>Percentage (Grade)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100 (A+)</td>
<td>77-79 (B+)</td>
<td>67-69 (C+)</td>
<td>57-59 (D+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-89 (A)</td>
<td>73-76 (B)</td>
<td>63-66 (C)</td>
<td>53-56 (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84 (A-)</td>
<td>70-72 (B-)</td>
<td>60-62 (C-)</td>
<td>50-52 (D-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0-49 (F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The instructor reserves the right to adjust final marks up or down, depending on overall performance in the course. Students who do not pass the cumulative final, or whose final exam mark is their lowest mark in the course, will not have their mark adjusted up under any circumstances.

**Note as Well:** I do not do favours for one student that I do not also do the whole class. Your final mark is your final mark, unless a marking or mathematical error has been made. Special favours to one student are unfair to the multitude of students who neither ask for nor get those same favours. Therefore, if you are concerned about your final mark, it is your responsibility to visit with me or with one of your TA’s, well in the advance of the final exam, for study help.

**Academic Integrity.** You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g., a grade of zero (0) on an assignment, loss of course credit with a notation on the transcript (“grade F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on academic dishonesty, please refer to Mac’s Academic Integrity Policy, at [http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).
DATES, TOPICS, AND READINGS
This schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced on our course website.
The most likely change is the timing of topics around midterms.

Basic structure of the course. Below, you will find a list of topics (with associated readings listed in blue) that I expect to cover this term. This syllabus does not contain exact dates other than those associated with tests. I do this in order to allow us flexibility in timing of topics. I will keep you updated on where you should be in your readings on the news section of our website. I will also remind you of which topics will be covered on each test.

A note on the readings. Extra readings may be assigned as we go (these will be posted on Avenue; it is your responsibility to keep track of any added content by keeping up to date on the website). Plan carefully so that you do not find yourself “cramming” the readings at the last minute. Please note that I will not always explicitly discuss a given reading. Read and learn all readings anyway.

A note on dates and deadlines. The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Test dates.

Midterm 1: Thursday 2 October (during class time, rooms TBA)
Midterm 2: Tuesday 4 November (during class time, rooms TBA)
Final Exam: To be scheduled by the Registrar

Topics and Readings.

Unit 1. Foundational Concepts in Research Methods.
  ▪ Module 1: What is Empirical Thinking? Ch. 1
  ▪ Module 2: Why is Empirical Thinking Better Than Other Forms of Thinking? Ch. 1
  ▪ Module 3: How Science Progresses: The Theory-Data Cycle. Ch. 2
  ▪ Module 4: Three Scientific Claims and How to Evaluate Them. Ch.’s 4 & 14
  ▪ Module 5: Defining and Measuring Variables. Ch. 5
  ▪ Module 6: Research Ethics. Ch. 3
  ▪ Module 7: Conducting Psychological Research. Ch.’s 2 & 4

Unit 2. Non-Experimental Research Designs.
  ▪ Module 1: Correlational Research
  ▪ Module 2: Observational Research Ch. 6
  ▪ Module 3: Survey Research Ch. 7

Unit 3. Experimental Research Designs.
  ▪ Module 1: Single Factor Designs Ch.’s. 8 & 9
  ▪ Module 2: Factorial Designs Ch. 10
  ▪ Module 3: Quasi-Experimental Designs Ch. 11
  ▪ Module 4 (if time): Single-Case Designs Ch. 11