

The University of Iowa  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Department of Psychology

## **Research Methods in Psychology - 031:010**

Spring, 2012

Tues & Thurs, 2:00-3:15, W290 Chemistry Bldg  
<http://www.psychology.uiowa.edu/faculty/mordkoff/Methods/>

*Policies relating to this course are governed by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.*

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### **Description of Course**

This course is an introduction to the methods of empirical science as they apply to psychology. The objective is to provide students with the rudimentary skills needed to understand original research reports and to design and execute psychological research. Specific topics are centered on the four types of validity and include the nature of data and error, experimental design and control, correlational methods, and some advanced topics. This approach emphasizes both the frequent conflict between the four types of validity and the cumulative nature of empirical science, showing how studies often build upon one another and how a series of studies successively constrain the possible answers to theoretical questions. Grades are based on several mid-term exams, a final exam, and many homework assignments. Lectures are given by the professor; discussion sections are led by the TAs.

### **Prerequisite(s)**

031:001: Elementary Psychology  
22S:025: Elementary Statistics and Inference (or equivalent)

### **Text(s)**

none – all readings will be on the website: <http://www.psychology.uiowa.edu/faculty/mordkoff/Methods/>

### **Grading System**

Grades will not be curved against other students in the course, but the difficulty of the exams will be designed such that the distribution of grades approximates that suggested by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: 18% As, 36% Bs, 39% Cs, 5% Ds, and 2% Fs. Any student earning at least 90% (without rounding) of all of the available points will receive at least an A-; 80% guarantees a B- or better; 70% gets a C- or better; and at least 60% of the available points must be earned to pass the course (with a D- or better). While +/- grading will be used, to be consistent with the policies of the College, it should be noted that a grade of A+ will only be given in extraordinary situations.

## Exams, Assignments, and Percentage of Final Grade

A large majority of the final grade is determined by exams concerning material from the readings and lecture. The remainder is determined by assignments that are due in section.

**Exams (85% of total).** There will be three, non-cumulative, mid-term exams (see below for dates and values) and one, semi-cumulative, final exam. (Approximately two thirds of the final will concern things that came up in an earlier part of the course.) These exams will cover material from the text and lecture, using definitions, multiple-choice, and short-answer questions.

**Other assignments (15% of total).** There will be a variety of homework assignments given in section. The due-dates and values of these assignments will be described on a separate syllabus to be distributed in section during the second week of the semester.

## Abbreviated Calendar with Critical Dates (full calendar on website)

Part I (1/17 - 2/9)	Psychological Data	<b>Exam #1 – Thurs 2/9 – 15% of final grade</b>
Part II (2/14 - 3/8)	Experiments	<b>Exam #2 – Thurs 3/8 – 20% of final grade</b>
Part III (3/20 - 4/12)	Correlational Studies	<b>Exam #3 – Thurs 4/12 – 20% of final grade</b>
Part IV (4/17 - 5/3)	Advanced Issues	<b>Final – TBA exam week – 30% of final grade</b>

## Other Course Policies

**Course attendance.** Attendance in lecture is strongly suggested, but not required. (There is no need to contact the instructor with regard to missed lectures.) Students are responsible for all material presented in lecture even if they miss the lecture for a very good reason. Attendance in “section” meetings is required and attendance will be taken. Students should contact their section TA as soon as possible (in advance being preferred) with regard to missed section meetings. There will be a penalty (of 1% of final grade per class) for more than one unexcused absence from section.

**Participation in class discussions.** Students are expected to participate in the “section” meetings. Asking questions in lecture is encouraged, but not required.

**Timely completion of assignments.** Late assignments for section will be penalized (10% of their value per day) unless a documented excuse is provided.

**Honors designation.** Contact the instructor before the first exam.

## University Examination Policies

**Missed exam policy.** University policy requires that students be permitted to make up examinations missed because of illness, mandatory religious obligations, certain University activities, or unavoidable circumstances. Excused absence forms are available for download from the Registrar web site: <http://www.registrar.uiowa.edu/Student/FormsforStudents/tabid/79/Default.aspx>. This form can also be used for excused absences from section.

**Final examinations.** An undergraduate student who has two final examinations scheduled for the same period or more than three examinations scheduled for the same day may file a request for a change of schedule before the deadline (which is April 20<sup>th</sup>) at the Registrar's Service Center, 17 Calvin Hall, 8-4:30 M-F, (384-4300).

The University of Iowa  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Policies and Procedures

### **Administrative Home**

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall or see the Academic Handbook. [www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/)

### **Academic Fraud**

Plagiarism and any other activities where students present work that is not their own are cases of academic fraud. Academic fraud is first reported to the departmental DEO and, then, often to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Services who enforces the appropriate consequences.

### **Making a Suggestion or a Complaint**

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor and the departmental DEO. Formal complaints must be made within six months of the incident.

### **Accommodations for Disabilities**

A student seeking academic accommodations should register with Student Disability Services and meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. For more information, visit this site: [www.uiowa.edu/~sds/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/)

### **Understanding Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Visit [www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu](http://www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu) for definitions, assistance, and the full University policy.

### **Reacting Safely to Severe Weather**

In severe weather, the class members should seek shelter in the innermost part of the building, if possible at the lowest level, staying clear of windows and free-standing expanses. The class will continue if possible when the event is over.

### **Student Classroom Behavior**

The ability to learn is lessened when students engage in inappropriate classroom behavior, distracting others; such behaviors are a violation of the Code of Student Life. When disruptive activity occurs, a University instructor has the authority to determine classroom seating patterns and to request that a student exit immediately for the remainder of the period. One-day suspensions are reported to appropriate departmental, collegiate, and Student Services personnel (Office of the Vice President for Student Services and Dean of Students).

*Note: The instructor of this course considers the use of cell-phones or text-messaging devices to be inappropriate classroom behavior. Unless a student has already received permission from the instructor, all such devices must be turned off or somehow disabled during class.*