

# PSYCH 490: Senior Seminar in Psychology

Evan D. Bradley, Instructor

Fall 2015, Penn State Brandywine



## 1 Basics

### 1.1 Class

**day** TR

**time** 8:30–9:45am

**place** Main 215

**www** <https://psu.instructure.com/courses/1660384>

### 1.2 Instructor

**email** [evan.d.bradley@psu.edu](mailto:evan.d.bradley@psu.edu)

**phone** 610.892.1458

**office** Main Hall 207D

**hours** TR 10:00–11:30am, 1:00–1:30pm; or by appointment

**www** <http://www.evanbradley.net>

## 2 Course

### 2.1 Overview

This course serves as a research capstone experience for the psychology program; thus, we will attempt to put into action many concepts you have learned in other psychology courses in order to pursue topics of individual and collective interest. The primary work of the course will be the development and completion of an individual research project on a topic or your choosing (selected in consultation with the instructor), including written and other components. You will also engage in collaborative work and discussion surrounding fundamental and current issues in psychological research.

### 2.2 Objectives

#### 2.2.1 Learning Goals

After taking this course, you should be able to:

1. Assess the current state of knowledge in psychology (and related fields) in relation to a specific question/debate;
2. Critically evaluate research studies, individually and in relation to one another;
3. Interrelate psychological theory, research design, and methodology, and appreciate challenges to the research process;
4. Identify avenues and methods of research which could be used to address outstanding questions in psychology.

#### 2.2.2 Academic Goals

In addition to acquiring specific points of knowledge, it is my hope that by participating in the course, you will improve your academic skills in a number of areas which will benefit you in your future studies. After taking this course, you should improve your ability to:

1. locate and assess the relevance of scholarly research sources;
2. read primary and secondary research literature and interpret their findings;
3. synthesize multiple sources of information into a coherent view of a topic;
4. communicate scientific information to others (scientists and non-scientists) effectively using a variety of media;
5. apply scientific reasoning to social/behavioral phenomena;

### 2.3 Prerequisites

You should have already taken PSYCH 301W: Basic Research Methods before taking this class—if not, please see me. For Fall 2015, **you should be taking this class only if you plan to graduate this term**; if you are not, please see me.

## 2.4 Materials

There is no required textbook; readings are listed in the reference list, and will be provided to you electronically.

### 2.4.1 Canvas Pilot

This course is participating in a pilot program for Canvas, a new course management system which is being evaluated to replace ANGEL. I appreciate your patience with this process. We will cover some of the basics of using Canvas throughout the course as we learn the process together. The university will seek your input on your experience using Canvas.

## 2.5 Assignments

Below is an overview of the types of assignments you will complete; specific instructions for each assignment will be provided.

### 2.5.1 Homework/Reading Questions

The goal of these assignments is to help you prepare for and/or reflect on what happens in class. Typically, you will be asked to answer questions about an assigned reading, or to formulate your own questions for class discussion.

- Reading Question assignments are listed in the course schedule as “*Topic Qs*”; **you must complete 8 of 9 of them.**
- **Additional homework may be assigned.**
- You are encouraged to discuss your assignments with other students, but you must turn in your own work.

### 2.5.2 Classwork

This is not a lecture course, so my goal is to keep the time where I am talking in front of the class to the minimum necessary; to that end, we will complete many individual and small-group activities during class time for which you will receive credit, including writings, mini-presentations, and peer-editing.

- Major classwork assignments are listed in the schedule, but **additional classwork may be assigned.**
- Classwork assignments may be made up or excused for **approved absences only.**
- Some classwork assignments may include **preparation to be completed before class.**

### 2.5.3 Research Project

You will complete an individual project designed to address a specific concern or ongoing debate in psychology. The topic will be based around the 2014 Edge.org question, “**What scientific idea is ready for retirement?**” Components include:

- participation in an **online forum** exploring ideas and refining your topic;
- a **proposal** explaining your topic, its significance, and the goals of the project;
- an **annotated bibliography** outlining the research literature relating to your topic;
- a **research paper** detailing your topic, its significance, major research findings, and advancing your argument;
- an **essay** version of the paper designed to inform and persuade the general reader;
- **two presentations**: one pitching your proposal, and one summarizing your findings.

There will also be many smaller milestones throughout the term (such as drafts) which form part of your classwork grade.

**Idea Forum** To help you develop your topic, we will explore responses to the Edge.org question by eminent scientists through an online forum which runs in parallel to our in-class work.

- Due dates for Forum posts are listed in the schedule; you must complete **5 of 6** assigned posts, **including the first.**
- Due dates indicate dates for initial posts—see forum for details of reply components.

**Writing Studio** You are required to visit the Writing Studio at least once for consultation on your paper (at any stage). More information about the Writing Studio can be found at <http://brandywine.psu.edu/16692.htm>.

### 2.5.4 Guest Speakers

We will have the opportunity to hear first-hand about research being conducted by Brandywine Faculty. Homework and classwork will be assigned in conjunction with each guest speaker, including:

- before the lecture, reading a representative example of the speaker’s work, or a related piece of research;
- posing a question to the speaker after completing the assigned reading and before the lecture (**for 4 of 5 guests**);
- introducing the speaker to the class based on their cv (**one time**; in groups/pairs).

## 2.6 Grades

### 2.6.1 Grading Scheme & Assignment Weighting

Each assignment carries a different weight in determining your overall grade (see table).

Your grade for the course will be determined based on a hybrid norm- and criterion-referenced grading scheme. *Criterion* refers to the fact that should you achieve a certain score, you will earn a corresponding grade (see table); *norm* refers to the fact that I take the class distribution of scores into account when assigning grades. This is not grading ‘on a curve’ *per se*, in that it is possible for everyone in the class to get an A, or for everyone to get a C; this simply means that I may adjust the cutoffs for each letter grade at my discretion, depending on the overall distribution of scores. I will only adjust these cutoffs downward—that is, you are guaranteed to receive a grade at least as high as that listed in the table corresponding to your score, but you may receive a higher grade. I also take individual improvement over the course of the semester into account.

category	assignment	weight	
project	60%	idea forum (5 × 2%)	10%
		proposal	5%
		pitch	5%
		bibliography	5%
		paper	20%
		presentation	5%
		essay	10%
		<i>Writing Studio</i>	2%
homework	20%	reading Qs (8 × 2%)	16%
		<i>others as assigned</i>	4%
classwork	10%	project drafts/editing	
		WEIRD reply	
		press article	
		<i>others as assigned</i>	
guests	10%	guest Qs (4 × 2%)	8%
		guest intro	2%

score ≥	grade ≥
93%	A
90%	–
87%	+
83%	B
80%	–
77%	+
70%	C
60%	D

### 2.6.2 Extra Credit

You may also have the opportunity to attend psychology talks or participate in research outside of class for a small amount of extra credit (along with the completion of a related written assignment). More details will be provided as opportunities become available. **Extra credit opportunities will not be assigned in-lieu of satisfactory performance on regular class assignments, or as a substitution for missing/late work.**

### 2.6.3 Grade Appeals

I am human, and I do make mistakes when grading assignments. If you feel I’ve made a mistake, or been unfair in grading your work, or if you’d just like further explanation so that you can improve your work, please speak to me; **be prepared to justify your appeal—grade cutoffs and improvement adjustments are not subject to appeal!**

### 2.6.4 Missed/Late Work

It is important to stay up-to-date with readings and assignments. I have done my best to design the course to be flexible and manageable, but with the schedule mostly set by design, it is easy to fall behind quickly. Please let me know early on if you are having trouble with any particular assignment, or the workload in general. You must complete all assigned work in a timely fashion in order to receive full credit.

#### Important guidelines:

- Assignments will be penalized 5% (a half-letter grade) for each 24 hours late.
- Late work will not be accepted more than two weeks after the original due date.
- Some assignments (*e.g.*, preparation for or participation in class) will not be accepted late.
- All outstanding assignments at the end of the term (the last day of class) will receive a zero.

## 3 Policies

### 3.1 Attendance

Attendance is **required**. That said, I will not routinely record attendance, nor assign any part of your grade just for showing up; however, your understanding of course concepts will surely suffer due to poor attendance, and you will miss the chance to participate in discussion and other graded class activities. If you miss class, please contact me (and your classmates) as soon as possible to find out what you've missed. Makeup opportunities for in-class work (if possible) will be permitted at my discretion for **approved absences only** (documentation may be required—see <http://www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/classabs.pdf>). **If you know you are going to miss class, it is better to speak to me beforehand to make arrangements than to ask for help after missing something important!**

### 3.2 Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is of the utmost importance in the academic world. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses, and ignorance is no excuse; therefore, I urge you to become familiar with the University's Code of Conduct (<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/conduct/codeofconduct/>) and statement on academic integrity (<http://www.psu.edu/dept/oue/aappm/G-9.html>), and encourage you to seek my advice if you are unclear about any part.

*All students are expected to act with civility and personal integrity; respect other students' dignity, rights and property; and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their own efforts. An environment of academic integrity is requisite to respect for self and others and a civil community. Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty include cheating or copying, plagiarizing, submitting another person's work as one's own, using Internet sources without citation, fabricating field data or citations, "ghosting" (taking or having another student take an exam), stealing examinations, tampering with the academic work of another student, facilitating other students' acts of academic dishonesty, etc.*

Students charged with a breach of academic integrity will receive due process and, if the charge is found valid, academic sanctions may range from a grade of *F* for the assignment to a grade of *F* for the course, depending on the severity.

### 3.3 Academic Accommodations

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, it is Penn State's policy to provide reasonable academic adjustments for students with documented disabilities. Any student who thinks he/she may need an accommodation based on a disability should speak to me and contact Sharon Manco at 610.892.1461 or [sam26@psu.edu](mailto:sam26@psu.edu). This notification should occur by the end of the first week of the semester. Please visit [www.equity.psu.edu/ods/](http://www.equity.psu.edu/ods/) for complete information.

### 3.4 Instructor Availability

The best way to get in touch with me outside of class is by email. My usual policy is to answer student emails within 24 hours; I will, however, do my best to answer emails sent before the close of business (usually 5pm) the same day, but I make no guarantees. Of course, you can always ask questions during or after class, or schedule a time to meet in person.

### 3.5 Campus Closure/Delayed Opening

In the event of a weather emergency, you may obtain official information on the status of classes by doing one of three things:

1. Sign up for PSUAlert <https://psualert.psu.edu/psualert/>
2. Check the Penn State Brandywine website for announcements [www.bw.psu.edu](http://www.bw.psu.edu)
3. Follow the Facebook page and watch for alerts [www.facebook.com/PennStateBrandywine](http://www.facebook.com/PennStateBrandywine)

Classes may be announced as canceled, or there may be an opening delay for day classes (in which case, we will not meet). Specific make up dates and times will be announced for any missed classes. These may be in person classes, or alternative/online make-up assignments. **The same attendance policies apply to official make-up classes.**

### 3.6 Classroom Technology

Please silence your cell phone before entering lecture or discussion, and **please refrain from texting during class!** If you experience an emergency requiring you to receive/make a call/text, please be polite and quietly excuse yourself from the classroom before doing so. Laptop computers should be used for note-taking purposes only. **I reserve the right to limit computer use in the classroom if it becomes disruptive to the learning process.**

## References

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## Schedule

Below, you will find the preliminary schedule for the course. **The schedule is subject to changes and additions.** I'll alert you to changes in plans, but please check the course website frequently for updates to readings and assignments. **Please read the assigned material before the day for which it is assigned.**

week	day	unit	topic(s)	reading(s)	due	
1	T 8/24	Ideas		Syllabus	Preliminary Survey	
	R 8/26		Bad Ideas?	Lilienfeld et al. (2015); <i>Edge.org</i> readings	Forum	
2	T 9/1		Stupidity	Schwartz (2008); Holmes (2015)	Stupidity Qs	
	R 9/3		Danger	Pinker (2007); Casadevall et al. (2013); Risen (2015)	Danger Qs; Forum	
3	T 9/8		<i>Guest:</i> Pauline Guerin	Guerin article & CV	Guest Q/Intro	
	R 9/10		<i>Guest:</i> Joshua Marquit	Marquit article & CV; <i>Edge.org</i> readings	Guest Q/Intro; Forum	
4	T 9/15		Ideas	Alon (2009a); Anderson (2015)	Ideas Qs	
	R 9/17		<i>Guest:</i> Kristin Goessling	Goessling article & CV; <i>Edge.org</i> readings	Guest Q/Intro; Forum	
5	T 9/22		Numbers	Wilson (2013); Frenkel (2013)	Numbers Qs	
	R 9/24		<i>Guest:</i> Dana Martin	Martin article & CV; <i>Edge.org</i> readings	Guest Q/Intro; Forum	
6	T 9/29		Progress	Srivastava (2009); Shneider (2009); Might	Progress Qs	
	R 10/1		<i>Guest:</i> Jennifer Zosh	Zosh article & CV; <i>Edge.org</i> readings	Guest Q/Intro; Forum	
7	T 10/6		Proposals	Kwok (2013); Uyen (2013); Kaspari (2012)	Proposal Draft	
	R 10/8				Proposal; Pitch	
8	T 10/13	Tools	Researching	<i>Library Instruction</i>	Preliminary Sources	
	R 10/15		Writing	Stemwedel (2007); Orzel (2007)	Outline; Midterm Feedback	
9	T 10/20	Issues	Methods	Allain (2013); Horvath (2013); Swan (2015)	Methods Qs; Illustration	
	R 10/22				Annotation Drafts	
10	T 10/27		Metapsychology	Bower (2013); Adler (2014); Das (2015)	Metapsych Qs; Bad Arguing	
	R 10/29				Annotated Bibliography	
11	T 11/3		Validity	Waters (2013); Henrich et al. (2010) replies	Validity Qs; WEIRD reply	
	R 11/5				Section Draft	
12	T 11/10		Communication		Brookshire (2014); Sumner et al. (2014); Yong (2013)	Communication Qs; Press article
	R 11/12					Paper
13	T 11/17				Ferguson et al. (2014); Samarasinghe (2015)	Essay Draft
	R 11/19					Essay
<i>Thanksgiving Break</i>						
14	T 12/1		Presentations		Alon (2009b); Kohn (2003); Pullum; Shewchuk	Presentation Draft
	R 12/3					Presentation
15	T 12/8				SRTE; Course Feedback	
	R 12/10					