Description

This course will serve as a graduate overview to research methods in social psychology. There are two main goals for this course. First, the course will serve to familiarize students with diverse research methods in social psychology. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the course will help students to think flexibly and critically towards different methodological approaches to social behavior and the interdependence of theory and method. These goals will be accomplished in the context of considering your own research. As such, the course will function more as a “workshop” than a traditional course, with a heavy emphasis on understanding methodological issues within the context of a real research project.

The guiding organizational framework of class discussion will be the steps in the research process as described in the first chapter of Sansone, Morf and Panter (2004) Handbook of Methods in Social Psychology. We will be working our way through this process, using the chapters from the Handbook, and supplemented with other readings. More specifically, you will work your way through a set of questions about your research project (see starting page 3), until you have a complete outline of the project that you will submit at the end of the semester. For each step in the process (associated with a particular set of questions), you will do the appropriate background reading. You should come to class with at least one question for discussion, based on what you read (you should email the question to me no later than the day before at 5). You should also come to class ready to present how you propose to answer those questions in the context of your own research.

An essential part of this process is to learn to critically evaluate your own and others’ research ideas, to maximize the research’s potential. Thus, an additional critical role in this “workshop” is for you to read, listen to and provide critical feedback on others’ research. Note that “critical” does not mean “negative”—the point is to try to make sure that your colleague has had the chance to anticipate as many of the issues that they may need to address ahead of time, while they can do something about it! In addition to providing feedback to each other as part of the weekly discussion, there also will be three class periods set aside for you to work in groups to critically evaluate your classmates’ outlines (as completed up to that point) in a more structured way. Each member of the group will first independently evaluate the outlines of the assigned students, and then the group members will discuss their evaluation with each other, and write an overall summary of the group feedback. In their role as reviewers, the group needs to provide comments on the strengths of the proposal; areas needing clarification; suggestions for strengthening the project, and so on. The set of students whose
outlines the group evaluates will rotate over the semester, so that by the end of the semester each group will have provided feedback to each student.

As the student receiving the feedback, you will be expected to carefully consider the points raised, and write a cover note when submitting the next version that summarizes the points from the feedback and explicitly notes how you addressed the concerns, or explains why you chose not to address those concerns.

**Evaluation.** Given the approach we will be using in the class, your grade in the course will be based on three things. First, you will be graded on the discussion and assignments in class (essentially the questions you raise for discussion and what you present about your own project.) The second is the level of discussion and critical feedback that you provide other students on what they propose. And finally, you will submit at the end of the semester an outline of your proposed research, following the steps listed above, and incorporating any revisions that you decided to make after presentation and discussion at various points along the way (along with cover note about whether/how addressed concerns raised in previous review of outline). As most of the questions do not have “right” or “wrong” answers, grades will be based on the degree to which what you present thoughtfully and accurately reflects the concerns and issues raised in the readings and previous discussion, with methodological decisions reflecting a reasonable, thoughtful approach to answering your stated research questions. **Because the final outline should incorporate much of the work done over the semester, it will count for 50% of your final grade. Your weekly presentations will count for 20%, and your (group’s) feedback on others presentations will count for the final 30%.**

**Americans with Disabilities Act Policy**
The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services (http://disability.utah.edu/), 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

**Student Rights and Responsibilities**
All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code, detailed in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, beginning with the verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee. Student Rights and Responsibilities: http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html
Questions to answer on your research project

1. What is the real world phenomenon or phenomena you’re interested in?
   Is it about a pattern of behavior that you (or others) have noticed?
   If so, what is the pattern? Who exhibits it? Under what circumstances?
   Why is it interesting to you?
   Why would it be interesting to someone else?
   What has already been said/studied/proposed about the pattern of behavior by other researchers?
   What has already been said/studied/proposed about the pattern of behavior by your own previous work?
   What about the pattern of behavior is what you’re interested in? Examples:
   - What it suggests about underlying psychological processes?
   - Whether it can be changed/modified?
   - Whether it is stable over time?
   - Whether it is true for everyone?

2) Depending on answers to questions about phenomena, what are the research questions you want to answer?

3) Are there specific hypotheses (e.g., about directions of effects)? Or is the direction of expected effects not known?

4) Who are the participants?

5) Will they be randomly selected from the population?

6) Of what population are they assumed to be representative? What size sample will give you sufficient power?

7) What kind of method will be used?
   a) Are the data primarily descriptive? If so, what is being described?
   b) Are the data primarily about whether one set of pre-existing (non-manipulated) variables can predict another set of pre-existing variables?
      If so, were variables collected at same point in time? Or did the collection of one set precede the other?
Are there any variables included to “control” for the influence of factor(s) that may predict one set of variables, but are not relevant to hypothesized relationships between the sets of variables?

c) Are there “treatments” or factors you will vary?
   If so, are participants randomly assigned to condition?
   How many “treatments” (factors) are there (i.e., how many factors will you vary?)?
   If more than one factor, do you expect the effects of each factor to be independent of the other(s)? If not, how do you expect the effects of one factor to depend on another?
   What is each “treatment” condition compared to? Are you comparing the effects of different levels or amounts of each “treatment” (factor), or are you comparing presence v. absence?
   Are there control groups? What do the “control groups” control for?

8) What are the primary conceptual variables (or constructs)?

9) How will these primary conceptual variables be operationalized (if independent variable) and/or measured (if predictors and/or dependent variables) in the study?

10) How reliable are these measures?

11) How are the ethical concerns for participants addressed in your study?

12) What statistics will best test your hypotheses?

   Are you comparing group averages?
   Are the groups naturally occurring (e.g., gender) or the result of experimental manipulation?
   Are you predicting one set of pre-existing variables from another, without comparing groups?
   Are you comparing the predicted relationships between variables found in one group to those found within another group?
   Are the groups discrete (in the group or not) or relative/continuous (higher v. lower)?
   Are you looking at interactions between variables (moderators) in predicting an outcome?
   Are there hypothesized mediators through which effects are proposed to occur?

   **Given your answers, what kinds of analyses fit best? What will your data look like?**

13) Assuming that the hypotheses are supported, to what extent can you say that something caused the effects (internal validity)?

14) Assuming that the hypotheses are supported, how well do the results generalize to the real world? (external validity)
15) Assuming that the hypotheses are supported, what would be the next step?

16) What if the hypotheses are not supported? Why might that happen?
**Readings**: There is no required text for this class. Instead, there are weekly readings, copies of which are posted online. As noted below, the readings include individual papers and several chapters from the following three books:


**Tentative schedule and weekly assignments:**

Jan. 12th. Overview of the class and identifying social psychological phenomena
Example: Ethical dilemmas for self-driving cars

Jan. 19th. The “Replicability crisis”: What is it? Does it matter?

Open Science Collaborative project report in Science (2015)
OSC response to Gilbert, et al
Gilbert et al response to OSC response


Assignment: identify one article from your area of interest; has it been replicated? Is it likely to replicate? In what detail are the methods and results reported? Were there “unexpected” findings? Be prepared to briefly present the article to class and discuss

Jan. 26th. Asking social psychological research questions and generating hypotheses:
Reading assignment:


Class discussion assignment: Bring in drafts of answers to Questions 1-3

Feb 2nd. Identifying about whom you’re asking those questions -- (Assume true for everyone? Or systematic differences?) What size sample will give you sufficient power?
Reading assignment:
Shoda, Y. (2004). Individual differences in social psychology: Understanding situations to understand people, Understanding people to understand situations. In Sansone, et al. (pp. 117-141)

Class discussion assignment: Bring in drafts of answers to Questions 4-6

Feb. 9th. **First round of critical reviews** (email me your latest answers to questions 1-6 no later than Tuesday, Feb. 7th, at noon. I will then assign a subset to each group to review on the 9th).

Weeks V-XI. Identifying the “best” way to examine those research questions
**Method of asking**

(Feb. 16th) Correlational and Non-experimental Methods
Reading assignment: Aronson et al. Chap 5.; Sansone et al., Chapter 12 (Mark)
Class discussion assignment: Bring in draft of answers to Question 7 (a)
and (b)
(Feb. 23rd) Experimental Methods
Reading assignment: Sansone et al. Chap 11 (Haslam); Chap 13 (West)
Class discussion assignment: Bring in draft of answers to Question 7 (c)

**Measures for asking**

(March 2) Quantitative
Reading assignment: Aronson et al. Chap. 8; Sansone et al. Chap 7 (Wegener); Chap 9 (Kihlstrom)
Class discussion assignment: Bring in draft of answers to Questions 8-10

(March 9) Qualitative
Reading assignment: Sansone et al., Chap 8 (King)
Class discussion assignment: Bring in draft of answers to Questions 8-10

March 16th. NO CLASS (Spring Break)

March 23. **Second round of critical reviews** (email me your latest answers to questions 1-10 no later than Tuesday, March 21st, at noon. I will then assign a subset to each group to review on the 23rd).

March 30th. **Ethics of methods used**
Reading assignment:
NYTimes article 1_18_09
Sansone et al., Chap 3 (Kimmel)
Class discussion assignment: Bring in draft of answers to Question 11
Weeks XII-XIV. Making sense of what you collected: What analyses match the hypotheses?
What would the results mean

April 6th. Statistics overview
Reading assignment: Rosnow Chap 11, 12 and 13

April 13th. Correlations v. comparing groups
Reading assignment: Rosnow Chap. 14;
Class discussion assignment: Bring in draft of answer to Question 12-14

April 20th. Interactions and mediation -
Reading assignment: Baron & Kenny, 1986; Sansone et al. Chap. 10 (Hoyle)
Rucker, preacher et al
Class discussion assignment: Bring in draft of answer to Question 12-14

April 27th (meet instead of during Finals week). Third round of critical reviews (email me your latest answers to questions 1-12 no later than Tuesday, April 25th, at noon. I will assign the subset to review on the 27th).

Finals week. On Tuesday of finals week (by midnight), you will need to email me the final version of your answers to the set of questions about your research project, along with cover sheet detailing whether/how you addressed concerns raised in reviews. Note that the final outline will also include your thoughts about next steps and why the findings might not support your initial ideas (these items will come up throughout the semester as we discuss decisions made at different points in the process; for final outline, you should sum up these ideas to answer items 15-16).