

**Senior Seminar
PSY 4990, CRN 10988
Spring 2012
Syllabus**

Credit hours: 3

Class time: Tuesday 11:00 AM – 1:45 PM

Class location: Reed Hall 249

Instructor: Elena Stepanova, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Psychology

Email: estepanova@fgcu.edu

Phone: 239-590-1513

Office: Modular 1, Rm. 9

Office Hours: 2:00- 4:00 PM, Monday and Tuesday, and by appointment

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Students will learn to consolidate, integrate and apply discipline specific knowledge to issues within Psychology and the Liberal Arts. Senior standing is expected.

LEARNER OUTCOMES:

- Demonstrate knowledge of Schools of Thought in Psychology and how these schools differ in terms of their explanations of human behavior.
- Demonstrate knowledge regarding research techniques and analysis of data for various psychology disciplines.
- Using electronic teaching tools, such as Power Point, prepare and deliver informative and novel background presentations on various topics in psychology
- Identify and be able to discuss peer reviewed research studies.
- Create a grant proposal worthy of submission to a national/local funding agency

REQUIRED TEXT:

Hock, R. R. (2009). Forty studies that changed psychology (6th ed.). Pearson/Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

This course will be based on the graduate seminar model where each student will be responsible for delivering information and running a discussion of assigned journal articles for the rest of the students. Each week a different pair of students will present information on a specific topic in psychology. Each week all students will be responsible for reading and having a working knowledge of the articles assigned for that week.

Each of you will take one half class period to present information on the topic of your choice. At the start of the semester you will choose a “base” article from the text, Hock (2009), and make that the basis of your presentation. Each presenter will post on ANGEL the original version of the article. The presenter will also choose another peer reviewed journal article for the class to read and provide the reference and post the electronic version to ANGEL, at least one week before their presentation. If your files are too big to be placed on ANGEL, please email them to all members of the class. On the day of a presentation, the discussion leader will deliver a 25-30 minute Power Point lecture on the background of the topic selected, with minimal reference to the articles read for the course. The rest of the hour will be filled by the student leading a discussion of the articles assigned to the rest of the class to read. Make sure you have a thorough understanding of the articles and your topic so that you are able to answer any questions the class may have. This activity will be worth a total of 25% of your grade (100 points) for the presenter.

ATTENDANCE AND SYNOPSIS PAPERS:

Attendance is MANDATORY. Each week’s attendance, participation and synopsis papers will be worth 25% (100 points) of the final grade. You are expected to have read and taken notes on the articles assigned for that week, and to actively participate in the discussion. In order to facilitate your participation, you will turn in **before** each class period (via a drop box on ANGEL) a synopsis paper related to the readings for EACH article (i.e., you will need to turn in two forms *per presentation, four per class session*). These synopsis papers will include summary, method, results, conclusion, and your questions and discussion issues for class. A template for synopsis form is placed on ANGEL. Late synopses will not receive credit. You may want to have a copy of these as they should help you in remembering the key details of the articles you have read during the discussion section of the class. **If you do not attend class on a given day, you will receive 0 points for that day.**

***Missing more than three (3) class meetings will result in an automatic failure for the course. This included the 1st day of class. If you need to miss class, make sure you do not do so more than 3 times total throughout the semester.**

GRANT PROPOSAL:

For your writing project for this course I would like you to prepare a research proposal for an experiment on the topic you chose for the presentation. The aims of this exercise are to help develop your skills as a researcher by learning to identify questions that are both important to ask and possible to answer, and your skills as a writer by learning how to “sell” your ideas to others.

This proposal will first be submitted as a midterm assignment (due date: **March 13th**); I will evaluate it and make suggestions for changes or improvements. Independently of the instructor’s evaluation, your peers will also evaluate your work, anonymously, and will judge its fundability. To improve your final submission, you will have feedback from your instructor and peers. Your final and second submission should be revised according to feedback you received. Each submission is worth up to 100 points (25%) for a total of 200 points (50%) for the grant proposal.

The grant proposal should be for an experiment that includes independent and dependent variables. The experiment can be on any aspect of your topic, including a study you could not realistically carry out here at FGCU (e.g. a study of neural responses). You may also choose a different topic other than your presentation topic. However, you must come up with your own novel research question, and not a question that has already been adequately addressed in the literature or which you are already working on. Of course, a question which you feel was inadequately addressed because of a methodological or conceptual flaw would be suitable. I would be happy to discuss potential research questions with you.

The proposal should be written as a formal grant application, following APA style guidelines, and should include the following sections:

1. **Background and Significance:** This section should provide a concise review of the relevant literature to address what we already know about the problem, what questions we do not know, and why these questions are important to answer. The background should make it clear to the reader that you have a critical understanding of the literature, while the significance should make it clear that the question you are asking is exciting and would represent a real advance of knowledge (5 pages).
2. **Plan of Study:** This section should lay out the actual experimental design. What specific measures will you make and why? How will you analyze your results? What potential problems do you foresee in your design and what alternative measures can you use to address them? This section should make it clear to the reader that the experiments needed to answer your research question can be done and that you have the ability to carry it out (3-5 pages).

3. References: provide a list of references that are cited in the text. This list should make clear that you are familiar with the papers relevant to your question and that you can be selective and focused in identifying pertinent papers.
4. Budget: prepare a rough but realistic budget for the supplies, technology, expert salary, etc..
5. Appendices: Any attachments relevant to the proposal. This may include any assessment scales, questionnaires, stimuli, directions, that you plan to give to your participants. Refer to these in the text of the proposal as either 'Appendix A etc.', 'Figure 1 etc.', 'Table 1 etc.', or 'Graph 1 etc.'.

Review of Proposals

Your proposal must be turned in **March 13th**, so that it is available for others to review. Please turn it in via the ANGEL drop box with a cover page giving your name and the title of the paper. The remaining pages should include the title only so that it can be reviewed anonymously.

For the review, we will break into several “study sections” which will each review and score the proposals from the other groups. Each proposal will be discussed and ranked by each member of the group on a scale from 100 (best) to 0 (poor). The scores will be based on your determination of 1) how important the question is to study; 2) how feasible is it to answer with the proposed methods. In other words, you should prioritize the proposals to ask which ones you think are most worthy of funding. In addition to the score your group should prepare a ½ page summary statement that critiques the proposal. Was the proposed question too far-fetched (poorly related to existing knowledge) or too boring (i.e. you can predict the outcome from what we already know)? What is wrong with the methods (e.g. were they really testing what they wanted to, and were there adequate controls)? This critique should aim to help the person to improve the research by helping to identify potential flaws or obstacles. I will collect and tally the anonymous scores for your paper and return these to you. *Note – these scores will not be used for your grade. I will evaluate the papers separately for this.*

In a typical grant cycle on about 15% of the applications might get funded. This means only about 2 in a class our size. Thus as a reviewer you have to be very vigilant in your evaluations in order to determine which are most worthy. It also means that as an applicant you have to be very persuasive to convince the panel that your work should be funded.

What if you are not funded? This can be the worst moment in research, but often an outside eye can identify problems you've missed, and there are few if any in the field who have not had a grant rejected. It's important to use the feedback you receive to seriously evaluate how you can improve your ideas and how to present them more convincingly. However, it's also important to be persistent. Many good ideas might be

missed, for example because they are ahead of their time. Thus you should not be deterred by a negative review, and instead use it to help make your research stronger. Your final revised grant proposal is due the last day of class, **April 17th**.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and participation (includes synopsis papers): 25% (100 points)

Presentation: 25% (100 points)

First Draft of Grant Proposal: 25% (100 points)

Final Paper/Grant Proposal: 25 % (100 points)

GRADING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Grades will be assigned as follows:

100-93% = A

92-90% = A-

89-87% = B+

86-83% = B

82-80% = B-

79-77% = C+

76-73% = C

72-70% = C-

69-60% = D

59% and below = F

COURSE CALENDER:

Students will be asked to provide five rank-ordered topics from Hock they would like to present on **January 17th**. The instructor will inform students about their assigned topic and presentation date by **January 24th**. Complete course calendar will be provided by **January 24th**. Please note that the instructor will present one of the topics and facilitate discussion at the beginning of the course to provide a model for the future presentations. Also note that one class session will be devoted to grant proposals peer-critique, and at least two class sessions will be devoted to grant proposal preparation and revision.

PLAGIARISM/CHEATING:

Plagiarism and/or cheating are considered by FGCU to be serious acts of academic dishonesty. Minimally, a ZERO for papers or exams will be assessed, and, in some cases, such actions may lead to an F for the course AND disciplinary action by the school.

Plagiarism can occur when you copy material and do not appropriately document the source, implying that the words/ideas are your own. Please be sure to give credit where credit is due. If you have any doubts about plagiarism please contact me.

The university policies regarding issues of honesty can be found in the FGCU Student Guidebook under the *Student Code of Conduct* and *Policies and Procedures* sections. All students are expected to study this document which outlines their responsibilities and consequences for violations of the policy. The FGCU Student Guidebook is available online at <http://studentservices.fgcu.edu/judicialaffairs/new.html>

DISABILITIES:

Florida Gulf Coast University, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the university's guiding principles, will provide classroom and academic accommodations to students with documented disabilities. If you need to request an accommodation in this class due to a disability, or you suspect that your academic performance is affected by a disability, please see me or contact the Office of Adaptive Services (<http://studentservices.fgcu.edu/adaptive/>). The Office of Adaptive Services is located in Howard Hall 137. The phone number is 239-590-7956 or TTY 590-7930. You can e-mail Adaptive Services at adaptive@fgcu.edu

STUDENT OBSERVANCE OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS:

All students at Florida Gulf Coast University have a right to expect that the University will reasonably accommodate their religious observances, practices, and beliefs. Students, upon prior notification to their instructors, shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith. Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence. Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances. Where practicable, major examinations, major assignments, and University ceremonies will not be scheduled on a major religious holy day. A student who is to be excused from class for a religious observance is not required to provide a second party certification of the reason for the absence.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

Friday, January 13, 5 pm - last day to drop/withdraw via Gulfline with 100% Refund.

Friday, March 23, last day to drop/withdraw without academic penalty.

Friday, April 27, last day to apply for grade forgiveness.

OTHER POLICIES:

- Use of cell phones and PDAs in the class is not permitted, unless there is an emergency justification for such use. In that case, cell phones should be set to vibrate during class periods.

- Texting is not permitted in class.
- Students are allowed to bring laptops to class and use them for educational purposes only (e.g., reviewing your synopsis papers). Emailing, instant messaging, social networking, gaming and other irrelevant activities are not permitted.
- Please make it to class on time. However, should some unforeseen circumstances hinder your prompt arrival, the instructor would prefer you arrive late than miss class altogether. Please, do not make tardiness a habit!
- If I need to contact the class for any reason, it will be by email. It is your responsibility to ensure that you receive your email from your FGCU account.
- Please do not wait until the last minute to contact the instructor regarding questions you have about assignments. Always check the syllabus and materials on ANGEL for an answer to your question before contacting the instructor.