

Psychology Honors II
Fall, 2006

Instructor/Facilitator: Dr. Linda Chrosniak

Office: David King Hall 2051

Phone: (703) 993-4139

e-mail: lchrosni@gmu.edu

Office Hours: Mon: 1:30-2:30 p.m., Fri. 12:30-1:30, and by appointment

Text:

- Material to support the development of the honors project is available in the Honors Director's office.
- Additional reading materials will be distributed throughout the semester during class, including papers submitted by classmates.

Course Objectives: This course will support the development of individual honors projects and the process of applying to graduate school. Basic and advanced issues in research construction will be examined. In addition, completion of an honors thesis proposal this semester will enhance the student's education and develop many skills, such as writing skills, critical thinking, public speaking and use of technology to support presentations (e.g., PowerPoint). All of these should serve the student well in future endeavors. The specific goals for this semester are to defend the thesis proposal and submit IRB forms (if required for your project).

Expectations:

- The instructor is a resource that is available to you upon request. Ask for what you need. In addition, I have available to you a qualified graduate student TA to be an additional resource.
- Class participation and discussion are essential for a complete educational experience. **Class attendance should be a priority and is essential to successfully meeting the goals of the course.** The work completed during this semester is typically predictive of successfully completing the Honors Program.
- Students should be able to comprehend, critique, and discuss class readings and student presentations. All readings should be completed before they are covered in class.
- Students should be prepared to discuss topical issues related to class material and readings. Oral defense of ideas and ability to provide feedback are as important as skills used for written presentations.
- Students should demonstrate a high level of sensitivity and respect towards other classmates, particularly when personal experiences or differing opinions are being shared.
- Students should develop professional communication skills through formal presentations and through informal interaction with fellow classmates and committee members.
- Students should make progress on their honors projects, and should complete the proposal process with the complete faculty committee by the end of the semester.

Grading: Final grades will be based on a 100 point scale. Please note that a student must earn an average grade of 3.5 across the three honors classes in order to graduate with honors.

(93-100% = A, 90-92% = A-, 88-89% = B+, 84-87% = B, 80-82% = B-, 78-79% = C+, 70-77% = C, 60-69 = D, below 60 = F)

Specific Breakdown of Grading:

- 15 points: Graduate School Personal Statement
- 10 points: Feedback on graduate school statements
- 15 points: Assigned Presentation Topic
- 10 points: Research proposal - in class grade
- 20 points: Formal research proposal - committee grade
- 20 points: Thesis proposal (written paper)
- 10 points: Class Participation & Thesis Progress

100 points: TOTAL

Last Day to Add (Full-Semester Course) September 12th 2006

Last Day to Drop (Full-Semester Course) September 29th, 2006

Effective Withdrawal Period (Full-Semester course) Sept. 30 – Oct. 27, 2006

Honor System: The Honor Code of George Mason University will be strictly enforced in this course. It is a student's responsibility to be familiar with the Honor Code and to abide by it at all times.

Graduate School Statement (15 points):

Students will be required to submit a graduate school statement that describes why he/she wishes to attend a particular type of program (area and degree sought) and the characteristics/qualities that the student can bring to that program. Alternatively, students may use the personal statement requirements from a graduate school of their choice. Students are encouraged to discuss their personal statements with faculty members, community professionals, and/or other students. The student alone is responsible for writing this statement but ideas for this statement may be gathered from many sources.

Papers should be 2-3 pages, double-spaced and typed. Students should bring 5 copies of their papers to class on the scheduled due date in order to distribute them to four classmates. Each student will be responsible for reading and providing feedback on the papers of 4 classmates and for completing a self-evaluation (see feedback on graduate school statements for additional details). Personal statements and the process of applying to graduate school will be discussed in class.

Papers will be graded based on the following: thoughtfulness, organization, and support for main ideas, creativity and spelling/grammar. Late papers will be penalized two points for each day beyond the deadline. A paper submitted after the start of class on the assigned date will be considered one day late. Late papers should be placed in my mailbox (Chrosniak) in David King Hall or submitted during class time. Please do not e-mail papers or slide them under my office door.

Feedback on Graduate School Statements (10 points):

Students will be expected to provide written feedback on four classmates' graduate school statements. Forms will be provided during class that will guide students in providing appropriate feedback. Each feedback sheet will be worth two points, with a possible total of eight points for submitting four feedback sheets. The remaining two points will be earned by each student completing a feedback sheet on his/her own paper, after receiving written feedback from classmates. This self-evaluation should focus on how the original statement can be improved based on the input provided from classmates and from the knowledge gained by reading classmates' papers.

Assigned Presentation Topic (15 points):

Each student will choose a presentation topic from a list provided by the instructor. The student is responsible for gathering information on that topic and presenting it to the honors class. Information can be culled from a variety of sources, including, but not limited to, library research, internet searches, class notes, interviews with faculty members, or interviews with graduate students. The instructor is also available to provide assistance. **DO NOT send out a mass e-mail to faculty to have questions answered!** Rather, try to make appointments with at least one or two faculty members to gather information. Students should discuss their presentation with the instructor prior to speaking to the class. The presentation of the information should take between 15 - 30 minutes. If appropriate, the student should make hand-outs of the material for each student in class (a total of 11). Students must submit a reference list to the instructor, including the names of any persons interviewed and any additional sources used. These topics are expected to provoke class discussion, so each student should be prepared to facilitate classroom interaction about the topic. Grades will be determined based on quality, clarity, accuracy, and quantity of information presented. Students may be asked to provide feedback which will be used to help assign grades to their classmates.

Written thesis proposal (20 points)

Students are expected to propose their honors project ideas to their committees before the end of the semester. In order to propose, each student will need to complete a written proposal that includes a thorough introduction (literature review leading to proposed study), hypotheses, methods section (including participants, materials/apparatus and procedure sections), and a brief plan for data analysis. It is expected that the method will be nearly completely finalized prior to the proposal defense. The thesis paper will usually range in length from 10 - 25 pages. Since this is a thesis, the Introduction section should be more thorough than what might be used for a publication submission. **It is my experience that a thorough and detailed coverage of the literature enhances the student's knowledge base and creates a scholarly approach to the topic.**

The student's committee chair will serve as the primary advisor to help determine the appropriate length, content, and timing of the proposal. However, students are also encouraged to utilize the other committee members as resources of information/support during this process. As the instructor, Dr. Chrosniak is the second committee member on all committees and is available to read rough drafts of this paper as long as adequate lead time is provided to her.

Research Proposal to class (10 points)/ Formal Research Proposal to committee (20 points):

Prior to the formal proposal, students will present their research idea to the honors class. This presentation should be a practice run of the formal proposal to the committee. In this way, students will have an opportunity to receive feedback on their presentation prior to their formal proposals. However, if any student wishes to combine the presentation to the class with his/her formal proposal, he/she is welcome to invite his/her committee to join the regularly scheduled class, during which the formal proposal defense will take place. Class presentations should be no longer than 40 minutes, including time left at the end of the 40 minute period for questions and feedback.

The “practice” presentation to the honors class will be worth a maximum of 10 points.

The formal proposal to the committee will be worth an additional 20 points. The instructor will assign the grade for the presentation to the honors class, and a student's committee will assign the grade for the formal proposal presentation. Grades will be assigned based on clarity, accuracy, and style of the presentation. Audio-visual materials should be used, and the responsibility for getting needed equipment is the student's. (Tips: If you use PowerPoint slides or overheads, please make sure that the font is large enough to be legible to all audience members. Consider bringing hand-outs of the slides for audience members.) Students in the class may be asked to provide feedback which may be used to help assign grades to their classmates.

Students should cover the following topics in their proposal presentation:

- Brief introduction of previous research (What has been done before?)
- How the proposed study fits into the research that has already been done (e.g., How does this study “fill a hole” or answer an unanswered question?)
- The hypothesis/hypotheses of the proposed study (What do you expect to find?)
- The method that will be used to answer the posed questions (i.e., Who are the participants? What are the specifics of the design? How will you collect data?)
- Brief overview of statistics that will be used to analyze data (How will you determine whether your hypothesis was supported?)

Class Participation & Progress (10 points):

Class participation and thesis progress will constitute 10% of the final grade in the course. Participation points will be assessed based on **frequency of class attendance and the quality (not quantity) of contributions to class discussion**. Students will lose two points for each class absence, starting with the third absence.

Students' progress on their theses will also be taken into consideration in determining this portion of the grade. Students are expected to propose to their committee members before the **last day of class**. It is crucial that a student plan backward in order to finish the Honors Program requirements on time. Please be aware that a late proposal will compromise students' ability to gather data in a timely and efficient manner. Therefore, the following bonuses and penalties will apply:

- +1 point = successful proposal to committee prior to the last day of class and submission of all IRB forms prior to the last day of exams
- - 3 points = proposal to committee after the last day of class
- - 5 points = proposal to committee after the last day of exams

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703- 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged at the beginning of the semester through that office.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

8/28	First day of class: Getting started and discussion
8/30	Status report from students - topic and committee decisions
9/4	No Class - Labor Day
9/6	Deadline to sign up for an assigned topic presentation day
	Discussion on writing personal statement
9/11	Presentations 1-2
9/13	Presentations 3-4, Personal statement due
9/18	Feedback forms on classmates' personal statements due , Discussion
9/20	Presentation 5, Self-evaluation on personal statement due

9/25	Writing workshop/Discussion or Research Proposals
9/27	Presentations 6-7
10/2	Presentations 8-9
10/4	Discussion or Research Proposals; Last day to select proposal day
10/9	No Class – Fall Break
10/10	Presentations 12-13 (Note: This is a Tuesday meeting day!)
10/11	Writing workshop or discussion
10/16	Presentations 10-11
10/18	Presentations 14-15
10/23	Discussion or Research Proposals
10/25	Discussion or Research Proposals
10/30	TBA
11/1	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/6	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/8	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/13	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/15	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/20	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/22	No Class: Thanksgiving Break
11/27	Discussion or Research Proposals
11/29	Discussion or Research Proposals
12/4	Discussion or Research Proposals (Last day for proposals without penalty)
12/6	Reception for new Honors students hosted by current Honors students

Any changes in the schedule or changes in assignments will be announced ahead of time in class.

ASSIGNED PRESENTATION TOPICS:

15 - 30 minutes in length

Please sign up for one presentation topic and date.

Presentation 1:

Who should you pick to write your letters of recommendation for graduate school? Does the title and position of the writer really matter? What is the best way to approach your chosen letter writers? How much time should you provide to your writers? What should you provide to your letter writers?

Presenter _____

Presentation 2:

What is the honors thesis proposal process? What does it mean to have a "proposal defense?" What will your committee expect from your proposal? What separates an excellent presentation from a mediocre one? How do you reserve electronic equipment for PowerPoint presentations? How does your honors thesis proposal compare to the process for graduate students?

Presenter _____

Presentation 3:

What is the difference between a Master's graduate program and a Ph.D. graduate program? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? Are there differences in the funding you receive?

Presenter _____

Presentation 4:

How do you "run" human subjects at GMU? Who oversees the human subjects research pool, and what are the rules for recruiting subjects? Are there limits as to how many subjects you can run in a semester? How do you use the departmental website?

Presenter _____

Presentation 5:

What is the IRB? How do you get IRB approval? What are the IRB deadlines for Fall and Spring? You will need to provide information about/examples of the forms required for IRB approval.

Presenter _____

Presentation 6:

Who should you listen to if your honors committee members disagree with one another? What if you disagree with a recommendation of one of your committee members? How does one negotiate the politics of pleasing a committee? You may want to talk with graduate students to get firsthand information on this topic.

Presenter _____

Presentation 7:

What are factors that need to be considered before designing your own survey? What is the value of using a previously published survey? What are some costs and benefits of using a Likert scale? What is the best way to design a survey in order to give adequate choice of response? Do more choices require more subjects?

Presenter _____

Presentation 8:

How do you get permission to run animal subjects at GMU? What are some of the tasks faced by animal researchers in contrast to human researchers? What are some strengths and weaknesses of each approach?

Presenter _____

Presentation 9:

How are graduate classes different from undergraduate classes? What skills are necessary to do well in graduate classes? You may want to procure some sample syllabi from graduate level classes. What is the difference between a vitae and a resume?

Presenter _____

Presentation 10:

What is the best way to present data and ideas to your committee? How can graphs be used to mislead people about research findings? What are some of the considerations for researchers when creating graphs/pictures?

Presenter _____

Presentation 11:

How is correlational research analyzed differently than experimental research? Where can students find statistical analyses packages on campus? What is/are the best package(s) to use? Who can provide statistical assistance if needed?

Presenter _____

Presentation 12:

What are the different ways that research can be presented to the public? What is the difference between a talk and a poster at a conference? What does it mean to publish research? Are you allowed to present the same research at multiple conferences? Can you present research at a conference after it has been published?

Presenter _____

Presentation 13:

How do you determine who gets to be an author when presenting or publishing a research project? Is everyone on your committee automatically an author? Is your advisor an automatic author?

Presenter _____

Presentation 14:

What psychology conferences are being held in the year 2007? Where and when will these conferences be held? In other words, what opportunities will be available for honors students to present their research? (Please include events as GMU, such as Innovations 2007.) What funding opportunities are available for undergraduate students (e.g., through Psi Chi)?

Presenter _____

Presentation 15:

What will happen next semester in Honors III? What will be expected of students, and how will grades be determined? How is the defense of your research project similar to and different from the proposal of your research project? What is a reasonable timeline for presenting and/or publishing your project?

Presenter _____