

**PSYCHOLOGY 5420/6420: RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
SPRING, 2021**

Instructor: Dr. Carol Sansone
Office: 811 Social-Behavioral Sciences Building
Office Hours: By appointment
Email: carol.sansone@psych.utah.edu
Class web page: See CANVAS

Description

This course will serve as a graduate and advanced undergraduate 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 and issues 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.** [NOTE: If you are not currently working on your own research, you can select a journal article published within the past 5 years, and propose a follow-up study. It is best, however, if there is someone you can work with to discuss the issues as you develop the project ideas. If you choose this option, check with me first.]

The course will thus 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 first do the appropriate background reading. You will then work to apply the knowledge coming from the readings and class discussions to the relevant issues of your own research project. Actively thinking about and working through these steps is essential for developing your final research project outline. To facilitate this, the class is structured such that every week you will:

- **Post by 8 p.m. *the day before class* at least one question based on the readings for that week**
- **Post by noon on *the day of class* a draft of how you propose to answer the relevant outline questions for that week in the context of your own research, and a specific statement about what you would like feedback on from the class.** (be prepared to share on Zoom)

Note that I expect that your proposed answers will very likely change as your project outline continues to develop and you think about and incorporate feedback from the class. Thus, these weekly assignments

are not evaluated in terms of whether you have the “correct” answers, but rather in terms of whether you are working on it!

Additionally, 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, a second 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 two class periods set aside for you to work as a group to critically evaluate your classmates’ outlines (as completed up to that point) in a more structured way (the reviewing assignment).**

Peer Reviewing assignments

For the weeks of peer reviewing, you will need to post your submission for review **no later than noon on the Sunday preceding class.** Each student will then independently evaluate (probably 3) of the outlines of the other peer submissions; these individual reviews are to be submitted in Canvas by noon on the day that class meets (save these files with the name of the person whose submission you are reviewing; do not identify yourself within the review). When the class meets, the group will discuss their evaluations (with the person whose work is being discussed stepping out) 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. Students will complete individual reviews for students’ submissions, and participate in the group discussion.

In addition, one student will be responsible for writing the overall summary of the group discussion after the class has discussed each student’s outline, with a second student providing feedback. The primary reviewer will submit the finalized group summary in the appropriate Assignment on their Canvas page within two days after the class meets. I will then send the student who was reviewed the individual reviews and group summary by Friday of that week.

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.

20% Class participation (100 total potential points)—submitting weekly question on readings, providing input, comments and feedback in class [WILL DROP ONE LOWEST GRADE]

Grading scheme (per class)

9-10 points Submitted question on readings, and provided more than one substantive comments/feedback to others in class

7-8 points Did not submit question on readings, but provided at least three substantive comments/feedback to others in class; OR, submitted question on readings, and provided one substantive comment/feedback in class

5-6 points Submitted question on readings, but made no substantive comments during class; OR, did not submit question on readings, but made one substantive comment in class
4 or lower Did not provide satisfactory levels of participation

20% Research project development (100 total possible points)—weekly drafts of answers to questions from outline, and specific question to ask the class

Grading scheme (per week):

10 points Posted draft answers to relevant question(s) for research project AND stated specific question for which want feedback from the class

0 points Missing

30% Peer reviewing (150 total possible points)

For individual reviews, for round 1 (3 @ 20 points) and for round 2 (3 @ 20 points), and 15 points each for two group summaries

Grading criteria for individual reviews:

19-20 points Provides clear summary of positive points, and clear summary of points that not clear, need expansion; identifies potential problems, and provides suggestions for improvement

17-18 Points Provides clear summaries of positive points and points that need improvement; does not provide suggestions for improvement

15-16 Points Identifies only the positive points, or only points that need improvement; does not provide suggestions for improvement

14 points or lower Missing many key points of review; includes inappropriate comments, or critiques based on personal opinion, not on literature or best practices

Grading criteria for group reviewer work

14-15 points Clearly summarizes the main points of the reviews and recommendations of group discussions; distinguishes between points that were raised across reviewers and those raised only by subset

12-13 points Summarizes the main points recommendations, but does not distinguish between those where consensus versus those raised by subset, or recommendations could be clearer

10-11 points Summarizes some of the main points and recommendations, but omits a key point

9 points or lower Missing many key points, summary based on personal opinion, etc.

30% Final research project outline (150 total possible points)--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.

- For 5420, answers to questions 1-14, along with cover letter
- For 6420, answers to questions 1-16, along with cover letter

Grading scheme:

140-150 points Responsive to previous reviewer feedback; answers to questions are clear, correct (e.g., methods consistent with questions; analysis plan consistent with questions and methods); external and internal validity discussed; for 6410, next steps are discussed

130-139 points One of the above criteria is missing, incomplete, or unclear

120-129 points Two of the above criteria are missing, incomplete, or unclear

119 or lower Problems for several of the criteria

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 (thoughts, feelings) 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 (thoughts, feelings) 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?
- If multiple interests, could these be organized into program of research?

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?

- Is the relationship between the set of variables being assessed only once? Or looking at the relationship over time?
- 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), such that it affects the outcome similarly regardless of changes in another factor? 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?
- Are you looking at whether the treatment/factor changes something, or looking at effects at a single time point?

d) Can you/are you using pre-existing data sets?

- Does the data set allow you to show associations between variables that are relevant to your research questions?
- Does the data set allow you to say something causal?
- Would the data set be used for confirmatory or exploratory purposes?

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 (i.e., not manipulated) from another, without comparing groups?
- Are you comparing the relationships between variables found within one group to those same relationships found within another group?
- Are the groups discrete (i.e., 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?

- Are you looking at whether things change over time? Are these changes expected to vary as a function of another variable (e.g., interact with characteristics of the person or the context)?

Given your answers, what kinds of analyses fit best? *What will your data look like (provide example tables or figures)?*

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)

FOR STUDENTS IN 6420:

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 books:

Aronson, E., Ellsworth, P.C., Carlsmith, J.M., & Gonzales, M.H. (1990). *Methods of Research in Social Psychology* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Sansone, C., Morf, C.C. & Panter, A.T. (Eds.). (2004). *Handbook of Methods in Social Psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tentative schedule and weekly assignments:

Jan. 20th. Overview of the class and the “Replicability crisis”: What is it? Does it matter?

Reading Assignment:

Open Science Collaborative project report in Science (2015)

Funder, D. C., Levine, J. M., Mackie, D. M., Morf, C. C., Sansone, C., Vazire, S., & West, S. G. (2014). [Improving the dependability of research in personality and social psychology: Recommendations for research and educational practice](#). *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 18, 3-12.

[Psychology, Science, and Knowledge Construction: Broadening Perspectives from the Replication Crisis](#), Patrick E. Shrout and Joseph L. Rodgers, *Annual Review of Psychology* 2018 69:1, 487-510

For further info and background, here is page with resources from SPSP:

<https://www.spsp.org/publications/guidelines-resources#1>

Jan. 27th. Identifying social psychological phenomena and generating research questions

Reading assignment (submit question on readings):

Sansone, C., Morf, C.C., & Panter, A.T. (2004). The research process: Of big pictures, little details, and the social psychological road in between. In Sansone, et al. (pp. 3-16)

Uchino, B., Thoman, D.T., & Byerly, S. (2010). Inference patterns in theoretical social psychology: Looking back as we move forward. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 4/6, 417–427.

APS Observer: Preregistration 101 [Nov. 30, 2016]

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/research-preregistration-101>

Research Project Development assignment: Submit drafts of answers to Questions 1-3 and specify what you would like feedback on

Feb 3rd. 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 (submit question on readings):

Miller, J.G. (2004). Culturally sensitive research questions and methods in social psychology. In Sansone, et al. (pp. 93-116).

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)

Henrich, J., Heine, S., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 33(2-3), 61-83. doi:10.1017/S0140525X0999152X

Anderson, C. A., Allen, J. J., Plante, C., Quigley-McBride, A., Lovett, A., & Rokkum, J. N. (2018). The MTurkification of Social and Personality Psychology. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167218798821>

Research Project Development assignment: Post drafts of answers to Questions 4-6 and specify what you would like feedback on

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

Method of asking

(Feb 10th) Correlational and Non-experimental Methods

Reading assignment (submit question):

Aronson et al. Chap 5.; Sansone et al., Chapter 12 (Mark)

Research Project Development assignment: Submit draft of answers to Question 7 (a) and (b) and specify what you would like feedback on

(Feb. 17th) Experimental Methods

Reading assignment (submit question):

Wilson, T. D., Aronson, E., & Carlsmith, K. (2010). The art of laboratory experimentation. *Handbook of social psychology* (5th edition, pp. 51-81).

Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. **pp. 51-72 only**

Sansone, et al., Chap 13 (West)

Research Project Development assignment: Submit draft of answers to Question 7 (c) and specify what you would like feedback on

(Feb. 24th) Preexisting Data Sets

Reading assignment (submit question):

Weston SJ, Ritchie SJ, Rohrer JM, Przybylski AK. Recommendations for Increasing the Transparency of Analysis of Preexisting Data Sets. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*. September 2019:214-227.

doi:[10.1177/2515245919848684](https://doi.org/10.1177/2515245919848684)

E.g., <https://osf.io/gwofk/>

March 3rd. **First round of critical reviews** (submit for review your answers to questions 1-6 no later than **Sunday, Feb. 28th, at noon**)

Measures for asking

(Mar 10th) Quantitative and Qualitative

Reading assignment (submit question):

Aronson et al. Chap. 8;

Sansone et al., Chap 9 (Kihlstrom) ;

Reis, H. T., & Gosling, S. D. (2010). Social psychological methods outside the laboratory. *Handbook of social psychology* (5th edition, pp. 82-114).

Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Research Project Development assignment: Submit draft of answers to Questions 8-10 and specify what you would like feedback on

March 17th. **Ethics of methods used**

Reading assignment:

Sansone et al., Chap 3 (Kimmel)

Handbook chapter, 77-78

Joel, S., Eastwick, P.W., & Finkel, E.J. (2018). Open sharing of data on close relationships and other sensitive social psychological topics: Challenges, tools and future directions. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*.

DOI: 10.1177/2515245917744281

Class discussion assignment: Bring in draft of answers to Question 11

March 24th. **NO class meeting. Revise project so that ready to consider the matching analyses**

Weeks XII-XIV. Making sense of what you collected: What analyses match the hypotheses or exploratory goals? What would the results mean?

March 31st. Statistics overview and correlations v. comparing groups

Reading assignment (skim for review; no question required):

Rosnow Chap 11, 12, 13 and 14

Research Project Development assignment: Post draft of answers to Question 12-14 and specify what you would like feedback on

April 7th. Interactions and mediation -

Reading assignment (submit question):

Baron & Kenny, 1986 (read for logic); Sansone et al. Chap. 10 (Hoyle)

Rucker, D.D., Preacher, K.J., Tormala, Z.L., & Petty, R.E. (2011). Mediation analysis in social psychology: Current practices and new recommendations.

Social and Personality Compass, 5/6, 359-371. DOI: 10.1111/j.1751-9004.2011.00355.x

[For further reading: [Advances in Mediation Analysis: A Survey and Synthesis of New Developments](#), Kristopher J. Preacher, *Annual Review of Psychology* 2015 66:1, 825-852]

Research Project Development assignment: Post draft of answers to Question 12-14 and specify what you would like feedback on

April 14th *Research Project Development and Class discussion assignment:* Bring in draft of “results” (figures or tables), and evaluation of external and internal validity

April 21st **Second round of critical reviews** (post your latest answers to questions 1-12, along with cover letter of how you addressed the previous round of reviews, no later than *Sunday, April 18th, at noon.*)

Finals week. On *Sunday, May 2nd, by 5:00 pm*, you will need to **submit 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 **for students in 6410**, 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; **in the final outline you should sum up these ideas to answer items 15-16).**