

Capstone in Psychology
PY 450
Spring 2009

Instructor: Dr. Maria Hopkins
Office Location: Campbell Hall 328
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Email: mhopkins@uab.edu
Meeting Times: TBA
Office Hours: TBA
Required Textbooks:

1. Slife, B. (2006). *Taking sides: Clashing views in psychological issues* (14th ed.). Dubuque, IA: McGraw-Hill.
2. American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Course Website: www.uab.edu/academiccourses

Course Rationale:

A capstone course is the final class that completes a student's curriculum. Capstone classes provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate comprehensive learning in their major through some type of product or performance. In other words, a capstone is a class in which senior psychology majors are required to pull together what they have learned in their previous classes and use this integrating experience to demonstrate they are capable of doing what they should be able to do when they graduate from the program (e.g. write in APA, communicate effectively, abide by ethics, etc).

Course Objectives:

This seminar course gives students the opportunity to integrate their course work from a current Psychology 400-level course with an individual research project. Each student is responsible for the production, presentation, and defense of a research paper which addresses a specific topic. Research projects must demonstrate significant knowledge within the selected topic area, an understanding of its place in an integrated intellectual framework, and a high level of skill development. This course is also designed to develop students' critical thinking skills via the exploration of current controversial issues in the field of psychology. Furthermore, students will be exposed to field experiences to apply information that they have learned to the real-world setting. Toward these goals, by the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Communicate ideas effectively through written projects and oral presentations.
2. Demonstrate a breadth of knowledge in contemporary psychology.
3. Use critical and creative thinking skills necessary for analyzing, evaluating, and making decisions about issues in psychology.
4. Generate applications of psychology to individual and social issues.
5. Understand and abide by the ethics of psychology.
6. Demonstrated an understanding of themselves and others, acquire effective collaboration skills, and develop realistic ideas about how to pursue careers in psychology and related fields.

Course Requirements:

- (1) Research Paper.** As part of this course, you will be required to write an APA-style review paper in a particular area of psychology that you are currently learning about in a 400-level course this semester. Because this is a critical review paper, important criteria for grading will be evidence that you are not simply outlining or regurgitating the readings, but are attempting to synthesize them, organize them around a theoretical perspective, point out areas of controversy and most importantly, suggest a novel perspective or avenue for future research. There is no explicit page limit, but you will probably need 10 to 20 pages (double-spaced). A handout will be provided to you about this assignment.
- (2) Taking Sides Presentations and Homework.** There will be several assigned readings from the *Taking Sides* book. This book presents a series of controversial issues in psychology in a debate format, each with a pro and con essay. Throughout the semester, you will read 6 of these debates (some topics to be determined by the class) and participate in discussions on these issues. The purpose of these readings and discussions is to expose you to areas in which psychological science has not provided clear answers to important questions, to encourage you to think critically about these questions and apply and integrate the knowledge learned in this and other classes.

 - a. Presentations.** Each group will prepare an oral presentation on their assigned issue. During an in-class presentation, the group will present both sides (i.e., pros and cons) of the issue. In addition to the information provided in the textbook, information gathered from other resources (e.g., textbooks, scientific journal articles) must also be included. Each presentation should last approximately 45 minutes (30-40 minutes for presentation and 10-15 minutes for questions and comments from the class).
 - b. Homework.** So that you are fully prepared for the in-class discussions, you will answer several questions about each reading prior to the group presentations. The questions for the homework assignments are available on-line through WebCT. Each homework assignment is due at the beginning of class on the day of the group presentations.
 - c. Discussion questions.** To encourage student-led discussion, you will contribute two discussion questions for each issue. These questions should *not* be factual questions to which there is a clear right or wrong (yes or no) answer. Rather, the questions should encourage critical thinking, deeper analysis, or application. These questions must be submitted by beginning of class on the day of the group presentations.
- (3) Field Experience.** As part of your educational experience in this course, your group will participate in a guided field experience. The purpose of this experience is to provide an opportunity to learn, on a first-hand basis, some of the unique issues of psychology in a real-world setting. Two class sessions are set aside to assist you in meeting this requirement. Suggested field experiences are 1) spending time in a clinic or other facility serving children or adults with psychological issues, 2) volunteering in an agency that serves disadvantaged children or adults, 3) serving an organization that caters to the needy, or 4) some other approved experience that will expand your knowledge of real-world applications of psychology.
- (4) Professional Planning Portfolio.** You will create a professional planning portfolio that contains a Core section—completed by all students—and either an Employment section or a Graduate School section, depending upon your post-baccalaureate plans.

 - a.** The Core section will contain the following documents:

- i. A statement describing your immediate and long-term career and life goals, including an explanation of why these goals are appropriate in terms of your knowledge, skills, characteristics, values, and experiences
- ii. A current, accurate, and professional-appearing resume
- b. The Employment section will contain the following documents:
 - i. The results of a search for appropriate employment
 - ii. A professional-appearing cover letter that can be modified for specific job applications
- c. The Graduate School section will contain the following documents:
 - i. Results of a search for appropriate graduate programs
 - ii. A personal statement that can be modified for specific graduate programs

Course grade:

Your final grade and course assignments will be graded on the following scale and the grades will be calculated according to the points below:

Grading Scale	Grading Breakdown	
A=900-1000 points	Research Topic	25 points
B=800-899 points	Research References	50 points
C=700-799 points	Research Draft	100 points
D=600-699 points	Research Final Paper	200 points
F=< 600 points	Research Presentation	100 points
	Taking Sides Presentation	100 points
	Homework 5@15 points each	75 points
	Discussion 5@15 points each	75 points
	Field Proposal	25 points
	Field Presentation	100 points
	Field Reaction Paper	100 points
	<u>Professional Portfolio</u>	<u>50 points</u>
	TOTAL	1000 points

Dropping and Withdrawing:

The Office of the Registrar has set the last day to drop this course without paying full tuition and fees as TBA, 2009. The last day to withdraw from this course with a grade of “W” is TBA, 2009.

Severe Weather:

In the event of severe weather, the official source for UAB closing is WBHM, 90.3 FM.

Academic Integrity Policy:

“The Department of Psychology considers academic honesty and dishonesty to be very serious matters. The undergraduate and graduate catalogs present the university’s policy on Academic Misconduct, which the Department scrupulously follows. Note that academic dishonesty can take various forms, from cheating on an exam, to assisting someone else in cheating, to presenting someone else’s written material as your own. In general, the Department of Psychology will seek the most severe penalty for acts of academic misconduct that are detected. This is generally an ‘F’ in the course for a first offense and expulsion from the university for a second offense. For further details consult the catalog.”

Plagiarism is defined as “the act of stealing and using, as one’s own, the ideas, or the expression of the ideas of another.” This includes not only direct copying of the exact words another author used, but paraphrases of the ideas of another author without properly crediting the original. ***If you plagiarize in this class you will fail the course.***

Disability Related Accommodations:

If you are registered with Disability Support Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability but have not contacted Disability Support Services, please call 934-4205 or visit DSS at 516 Hill University Center.

Communication:

My intent is to be as accessible to you as possible. Please feel free to stop by my office any time. I am available by phone whenever I am in my office and you can leave voice mail if I am not. If you need quicker response, use email. Finally, check the course Web page – it is meant to be a resource to help you complete your projects.

NOTICE

E-mail policy

Please be aware that I will not discuss official business (e.g., coursework, course grades, academic advising, etc.) via email unless you use your UAB email address. This is mostly for the protection of your privacy. If, for instance, I get an email signed Mary Smith requesting sensitive information about her progress in my class, but it comes from hotgurl46@aol.com, I have no way of knowing whether it is really from Mary Smith or someone else.

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Assignments</i>
1	Introduction		
	Methods for Successful Research		
2	Ethical Principles	APA Chapter 1	
	Ethical Situations	Case Studies Handout	
3	Ethics in Psychological Research	Slife Issues 2 & 3	Homework & Discussion 1
	APA Style	APA Chapters 3-6	
4	Presenting Effectively		
	Group Preparation		Group Field Proposal
5	Taking Sides Presentations	Slife Issue TBA	Homework & Discussion 2
	Taking Sides Presentations	Slife Issue TBA	Homework & Discussion 3
6	Taking Sides Presentations	Slife Issue TBA	Homework & Discussion 4
	Taking Sides Presentations	Slife Issue TBA	Homework & Discussion 5
7	Individual Proposals		Research Paper Topic
	Individual Proposals		
8	Field Observations		
	Field Observations		
9	Spring Break		
	Spring Break		
10	Current Issues in Psychology	TBA	Field Reaction Paper
	Current Issues in Psychology	TBA	
11	Group Presentations		Research References
	Group Presentations		
12	Group Presentations		
	Group Presentations		
13	Careers in Psychology		
	Graduate School		Draft Research Paper
14	Research Presentations		
	Research Presentations		
15	Research Presentations		Professional Portfolio
	Research Presentations		
16	Research Presentations		
	Psychology Exit Exam		Final Research Paper

RESEARCH PAPER: GRADING RUBRIC

Title Page (5) _____

Page header; running head; clear and accurate title; name and affiliation

Abstract (16) _____

Clear summary (e.g. findings, conclusions/implications)

Introduction (20) _____

States purpose

Develops rationale for the importance of problem or issue

Literature Review (50) _____

Is focused on the issues presented in the introduction

Uses many clarifying headings

Summarizes each section before a new section is introduced

Analyzes research literature rather than simply reporting results of studies

Focuses on and analyzes a problem rather than only presenting a solution

Provides research citations for key elements of evidence and facts that support issues

References *relevant* research and theory

Discusses at least one alternative view of the problem and/or solution

Conclusion/Implications (45) _____

Doesn't merely summarize results but demonstrates an analysis of the issues. Explains why solutions would work.

Points out themes of general agreement

Points out contradictory findings.

Limitations, inconsistencies, problems

Theoretical and practical applications - future, applied, why important

References (24) _____

At least 12; in correct APA style

Overall Style (40) _____

Writing style is concise

Ideas are organized

APA Style

Spelling & grammar

Points deducted _____

Late or incomplete drafts or final paper; does not address reviewer comments

Total points earned (200) _____

Group Presentation Grading Rubric

Names:		Topic:
Criteria		
Quality of content	/20	
Logical sequence of presentation	/20	
Delivery of verbal presentation	/20	
Appropriate use of media	/10	
Handling of questions	/20	
Performance as a group	/10	
Possible Deductions		
TOTAL	/100	

Individual Presentation Grading Rubric

Name:		Topic:
Criteria		
Quality of content	/20	
Logical sequence of presentation	/20	
Delivery of verbal presentation	/30	
Appropriate use of media	/10	
Handling of questions	/20	
Possible Deductions		
TOTAL	/100	

Rubric for Assessing Group Members' Ability to Participate Effectively as Part of a Team

Group: _____

(Circle the appropriate score for each criterion for each member of your group.)

Member Rated (Be sure to rate yourself, too!)	Listening Skills	Openness to others' ideas	Preparation	Contribution	Leadership
	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4

Criterion	Unacceptable (1)	Needs Improvement (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)
<i>Listening Skills</i>	Does not restate what others say before responding; frequently interrupts; does not solicit contributions from others; is readily distracted; often converses with others when another team member is speaking	Rarely restates what others say before responding; often interrupts; rarely solicits others' contributions; does not make eye contact; at times converses with others when another team member is speaking	Often restates what others say before responding; usually does not interrupt; often solicits others' contributions; makes eye contact	Routinely restates what others say before responding; rarely interrupts; frequently solicits others' contributions; sustains eye contact
<i>Openness to others' ideas</i>	Interrupts others' articulation of their ideas; makes deprecatory comments and/or gestures	Interrupts others' articulation of their ideas; does not comment on the ideas	Listens to others' ideas without interrupting; responds positively to the ideas even if rejects	Listens to others' ideas without interrupting; responds positively to the ideas even if rejects; asks questions about the ideas
<i>Preparation</i>	Typically does not complete assignments; typically comes to team sessions without necessary documents and materials	Sometimes completes assignments; sometimes comes to team sessions with necessary documents and materials	Typically completes assignments; typically comes to team sessions with necessary documents and materials	Always completes assignments; always comes to team sessions with necessary documents and materials; does additional research, reading, writing, designing, implementing
<i>Contribution</i>	Rarely contributes; contributions are often peripheral or irrelevant; frequently misses team sessions	Sometimes contributes; quality of contribution is inconsistent	Usually contributes; quality of contributions is solid	Always contributes; quality of contributions is exceptional
<i>Leadership</i>	May volunteer to lead but does not follow through; misses team sessions, does not address outcomes or direction for sessions or projects, team members become anarchical	Resists taking on leadership role; in leading allows uneven contributions from team members, is unclear about outcomes or direction, does not make plans for sessions or projects	Is willing to lead; in leading is attentive to each member of the team, articulates general direction for each session and each project, attempts to keep team on schedule	Seeks opportunities to lead; in leading is attentive to each member of the team, articulates outcomes for each session and each project, keeps team on schedule, foregrounds collaboration and integration of individual efforts

Group Process Questions

Group: _____

Date: _____

1. Describe any communication problems within your group, or describe how well members of your group were able to communicate with each other.
2. Did you meet outside of class to establish goals and stay in tune with each other?
3. What worries you the most when working in groups?
4. Did you think you did your fair share?
5. Did others do their fair share?

Group Presentation Evaluation

Group: _____

1. Subject. Was the presentation informative? Did it have a clear focus? Was it well researched?

1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7
poor outstanding

2. Organization/Clarity. Was it easy to follow? Was there a clear introduction and conclusion?

1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7
poor outstanding

3. Preparation. Had the speakers rehearsed? Were they in control of the sequence, pacing and flow of the presentation? Did they make effective use of notes, without relying on them too heavily?

1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7
poor outstanding

4. Sensitivity to audience. Did the speakers maintain eye contact with all members of the class? Did they repeat the main ideas more than once? Did they make effective use of pauses, gestures, change in pace and pitch?

1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7
poor outstanding

5. Visual aids. Did the speakers make effective use of handouts, power point and/or the blackboard? Were visuals large enough to see easily?

1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7
poor outstanding

Positive Comments:

Advice for improvement: