

This is a sample syllabus only. The instructor may make changes to the syllabus in future courses.

**Capstone in Psychology  
PY 490-2C Spring 2015**

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<b>Meeting Times:</b>	11:00am - 12:15pm Tuesday and Thursday, room 320 Campbell Hall
<b>Office Hours:</b>	10:00-11:00am Wednesdays and by appointment
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<b>Course Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.uab.edu/canvas">www.uab.edu/canvas</a>

**Course Rationale:**

A capstone course is designed as the final class that completes a student's curriculum. The 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). This class is designed to make sure students are prepared upon graduation.

**Course Objectives:**

This course gives students the opportunity to integrate their personal areas of interest in psychology with an individual literature research project. Each student is responsible for the production, presentation, and defense of a review paper addressing a specific topic. The student must demonstrate significant knowledge of the selected topic area, an understanding of its place in an integrated intellectual framework, an analysis of the research in the selected area, and a high level of communication skills, both written and oral. This course is also designed to develop critical thinking skills and ethical reasoning via the exploration of current controversial issues in the field of psychology. Furthermore, students will have a service learning field experience to apply information they have learned to a real-world setting and learn from that real-world setting. Toward these goals, by the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Communicate both qualitative and quantitative information effectively through written projects and oral presentations.
2. Demonstrate breadth of knowledge in contemporary psychology.
3. Use critical and creative thinking skills.
4. Analyze, empirically evaluate, theorize, and draw conclusions about issues in psychology.
5. Generate applications of psychology to individual and social issues.
6. Understand and abide by the ethics of psychology.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of themselves and others, acquire effective collaboration skills, and develop realistic ideas about how to pursue careers in psychology and related fields.

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### **Course Requirements:**

- (1) Research Review Paper.** As part of this course, you will be required to write an APA-style review paper in a particular area of psychology that is of interest to you. 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 15 to 20 pages (double-spaced). You will need at least 15 references.
- (2) Presentations.** Students will do individual and group presentations. Some but not all are described below. The purpose of these are to expose you to areas in which psychological science has or has not provided clear answers to important questions, to encourage students to think critically about these questions, to review material learned previously, to apply and integrate the knowledge learned, and to improve your professional and personal presentation skills.

  - a. Personal experience.** Each student will prepare an oral presentation on their chosen area. You will include information learned from your service learning site and interview experiences. Current and appropriate information gathered from resources (e.g., textbooks, scientific journal articles) must also be included. Each presentation will last approximately 15 minutes.
  - b. Video analysis.** Students will do a group presentation on the experience of the results of their video analysis. Each presentation will last approximately 30 minutes.
  - c. Hot Topic in Psychology.** Students will prepare and present a group lecture on a hot topic in Psychology. Potential topics will be discussed in class. These presentations will be approximately 30 minutes in length.
- (3) Service Learning Experience.** As part of your educational experience in this course, you will participate in a 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 and how psychological principles are applied. 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. You will qualitatively report what you learned in a written paper and in a presentation.
- (4) Video Analysis.** This project will look at specific behaviors on different types of TV programs (e.g., soap opera, sit-com, law and order/detective show, children's cartoons, reality shows, etc) using systematic empirical observation. Rather than simply describing the actions of characters, you will collect empirical data on specific behaviors of the various characters. To begin, your group must first decide the behavior(s) to be observed (e.g. aggression, gender stereotypes, status of ethnic groups, etc) and how this behavior will be operationally defined. Your group will do an analysis of inter-rater reliability and then synthesize the

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individually collected data, analyze, and draw conclusions about the behavior(s) as it relates to the type of show. Your group will summarize the findings and report these via oral presentation and written report. The paper should follow APA style and should include an Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion section. Detailed instructions will be given to you about this project. Each group may choose to collect data in the real world instead of using recorded television shows.

**(5) 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. A general personal statement (that can be modified for specific graduate program and as cover letter for job applications)
- b. A current, accurate, and professional-appearing resume
- c. The results of a search for appropriate employment OR Results of a search for appropriate 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:

	<b>Grading Breakdown</b>	
A= 90+%	Research Review Paper draft	50 points
B= 80-89%	Research Review Paper Final	135 points
	Hot Topic in Psychology Lecture	100 points
C= 70-79%	Personal Experience Presentation	50 points
D= 60-69%	Service Learning Reaction Paper	50 points
F= <60%	Video Analysis Presentation	50 points
	Video Analysis Paper	100 points
	Professional Portfolio	
	Resume	25 points
	Personal Statement	25 points
	Search for Programs/Jobs	15 points
	TOTAL	600 points

**Dropping and Withdrawing:**

The last day to drop the course without paying full tuition and fees is January 12. The Last day to withdraw from the course with a grade of “W” is March 30.

**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*

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*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.

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Week	Date	Topic	Assignment
1	Jan 6	Introduction	
	Jan 8	Who are you?	
2	Jan 13	Academic and professional profiles Writing a Personal Statement	
	Jan 15	Resume Writing	
3	Jan 20	Careers in Psychology	Personal Statement due
	Jan 22	Graduate School Options	
4	Jan 27	Getting into Graduate School	Resume/CV due
	Jan 29	Job Search / Interview Skills	
5	Feb 3	Professional Communication	Search for Programs/Jobs due
	Feb 5	Review Paper & Research Paper	
6	Feb 10	Hot Topic Lectures	
	Feb 12	Hot Topic Lectures	
7	Feb 17	Hot Topic Lectures	
	Feb 19	Methods and Statistics Review	Service Learning Paper Part 1 due
8	Feb 24	Video Analysis Proposal	
	Feb 26	Video Analysis Proposal	
9	Mar 3	Data Analysis	Group Data due
	Mar 5	Data Analysis	
10	Mar 10	Writing Day	
	Mar 12	Video Analysis Presentations	Video Analysis Paper due
11	Mar 17	Video Analysis Presentations	
	Mar 19	Video Analysis Presentations	Review Paper Draft due
12	Mar 24	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
	Mar 26	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
13	Mar 31	Service Learning Observations	
	Apr 2	Service Learning Observations	
14	Apr 7	Personal Experience Presentations	Service Learning Paper Part 2 due
	Apr 9	Personal Experience Presentations	
14	Apr 14	Personal Experience Presentations	
	Apr 16	Personal Experience Presentations	
	Apr 21	<b>Exit Exam and Farewell 10:45 am - 1:15 pm</b>	Final Review Paper due