

**Psychology Honors III: Spring, 2012**  
PSYC 492, Section 001

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**Semester Objectives:**

- 1) Complete honors project/thesis.
- 2) Formally present an oral defense and written manuscript to faculty committee.
- 3) Create a professional-quality poster presentation for the 'Psychology Honors Showcase' (**Thursday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012**).
- 4) Submit final, approved and bound copy of manuscript to the Psychology Honors Program Director by **Wednesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012**.

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**Class Meetings:** Students are expected to keep the Honors Director apprised of their progress, including any difficulties that may arise. Students are responsible for maintaining contact (e.g. via e-mail and regular individual appointments) with the director throughout the semester. Periodic group (and individual) meetings will be held throughout the semester for students to meet with the director and other students. Students are responsible for the all information presented in the syllabus, in group meetings and in individual meetings. Students are expected to attend these meetings.

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**Grading:** Final grades will be based on a 100 point scale.

99 - 100 = A+	87 - 89 = B+	77 - 79 = C +
93 - 98 = A	83 - 86 = B	73 - 76 = C
90 - 92 = A-	80 - 82 = B-	70 - 72 = C-

**Specific Grading Breakdown:**

**20 points: Presentation of Honors Project at GMU Psychology Honors Showcase**

The Psychology Honors Showcase is scheduled for **Thursday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012**. Each student is expected to create a professional poster presentation describing his/her research project. Guidelines are included with this syllabus (see page 4) and are intended to follow the general, established guidelines for professional conference poster presentations. Grading will be based on the quality, clarity, accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness of presented information, in addition to the style of the poster.

**Students are responsible for any materials needed to display their posters and are expected to set up their posters *before 10:00 am on May 5<sup>th</sup>*. Between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm, students are required to be available to spend a minimum of one hour in the poster session area. Students should dress professionally and be prepared to answer questions and discuss different aspects of the project such as the design and analyses with faculty members, students or other visitors who stop by.**

**80 points: Honors Project/Thesis and Oral Defense**

To receive full credit, the following sequence of requirements must be completed by **Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012**.

- Submit 'final version' of written honors thesis to all committee members at least **10 days** before the oral defense. This is a crucial component of the process. **This submitted version of the paper is the basis for the final grade, although some revisions may be required at this time and prior to submission of the bound version.**
- Schedule oral defense date with all committee members.
- Reserve room and equipment (if necessary) for oral defense.
- Successfully present an oral defense of honors project/thesis to committee members.
- Students should provide a cope of note pages for the presentation for the faculty committee.
- At the defense, obtain committee signatures on 3 hard copies of cover page for final paper (see **page 4 for cover page template**). Student is responsible for bringing copies of the cover page to the defense.

Each student's committee members will assign the honors project defense grade. The grade will be based on three factors:

- 1) quality, accuracy, and professionalism of the oral defense - particular attention will be paid to the student's ability to handle questions asked by the committee members.

- 2) quality, accuracy, and timeliness of the written manuscript submitted before the oral defense (**Please note that the grade will be based on the paper at the time of the defense. The grade will not be based on any subsequent revisions that may be required.**)
- 3) student's **level of professionalism** throughout the whole semester (e.g., timeliness of draft/final paper submissions, following guidelines, attendance at meetings, frequent contact with major advisor and the Honors Program Director, quality of work, participation in conferences or other presentation opportunities, general professional attitude).

Additional Grading Considerations:

Presentation of the honors project at a professional psychology conference (e.g. GMU Undergraduate Research Symposium, or at a growing number of undergraduate conferences) will be considered favorably when the final grade is determined. Missed deadlines will result in grade penalties, to be determined by the student's committee.

**Students who obtain permission for an incomplete for any reason, other than a university-approved withdrawal, will be assessed an automatic 8-point deduction from the final grade. Failure to complete the honors project by the established deadline may also result in loss of eligibility for psychology honors awards.**

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**Oral Defense Format and Guidelines:**

- Professional dress is required
- Briefly remind the committee of the rationale for the project (should have been extensively covered in proposal)
- Briefly remind the committee of the method - note any change that occurred following the oral proposal
- Carefully and fully describe statistical analysis and results - consider the most attractive and accessible method to convey this information (make sure you clearly understand your analysis and results)
- Carefully and fully describe your interpretation of the findings and the implications of your results. Explain how your research "fits" or does not "fit" with previous research.
- Briefly explain limitations of the study, questions raised, and future directions
- Thank your committee and ask for questions

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**Paper Format and Guidelines:**

General: Paper should follow APA guidelines. References, tables, and figures should be included at the end of the manuscript per APA style.

Introduction: The introduction should incorporate committee feedback from the oral and written proposal.

Method: The method section should be changed **to past tense** following completion of the project.

Analysis & Results: This section should present the analysis and findings with statements indicating what the analysis tells you. (e.g., "This finding indicates that experimental group performed significantly better in both conditions relative to the control group."). Please note that the results are to be **interpreted** in the discussion section and conclusions can be discussed here. Statistics and results should be appropriately referenced.

Discussion: Results should be interpreted in this section and general conclusions can be made. Logical arguments should be used to interpret the data based on previous research and to demonstrate how the current project fits into existing research. Generally you should compare and contrast your findings with those studies mentioned in your introduction section. Plausible alternative interpretations should also be addressed. **The introduction and discussion section should complement one another.** They should contain similar themes, but not be identical. The introduction may need to be revised as the discussion section is written, to ensure their compatibility. Limitations and future directions should also be included in this section but **should not be the focus** of the discussion.

In terms of the written paper, during the semester: REVISE, REVISE, And REVISE.

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**Requirements for Graduating with Honors in Psychology:**

To graduate with honors, the following requirements must be completed by **Wednesday, May 9th, 2012**.

- Any revisions required by the committee at the oral defense must be incorporated into the final written manuscript.
- The student's advisor must approve the final version of the manuscript prior to submission. If committee members have requested to see the changes, those members also must approve the final version of the manuscript.
- A final bound copy of honors manuscript, including the signed signature page, must be submitted to the Honors Director by May 9th, 2012. A bound version should also be submitted to the student's advisor (or an electronic copy if preferred). Binding can be done relatively inexpensively at several sites. In addition an electronic copy should be sent to the Director of the Honors Program. For examples of past final papers, please see the director in DK 2045.
- **Important Note: Students must have a 3.5 grade point average across the three honors courses in order to graduate with honors.**
  - **Students must also have a 3.4 in Psychology and a 3.25 overall GPA to graduate with honors**

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**Awards:**

- Three peer-determined awards will be given at the 'Psychology Honors Showcase' (Best Honors Researcher, Best Honors Project, and Best Honors Poster).
- A faculty committee will select one recipient for the **“Outstanding Honors Project Award”** at the end of the semester.

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**Honor Code System:** The Honor Code of George Mason University will be strictly enforced in this course.

<b>Last Day to Add (Full Semester Course)</b>	<b>January 31st, 2012</b>
<b>Last Day to Drop (Full Semester Course)</b>	<b>February 24, 2012</b>
<b>Elective Withdrawal Period (Full Semester Course)</b>	<b>February 27<sup>th</sup> - March 30<sup>th</sup> 2012</b>
<b>Additional Information:</b>	

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

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**"Month of Final Defense/Thesis Submission " 2012**

**Poster Guidelines**

Posters should be professional in appearance and easy to follow. An effective poster will communicate important information simply and clearly. For examples, please see the posters currently displayed in the psychology department (DK Hall).

**Poster Content**

- Title
- Introduction and rationale for study
- Method
- Results
- Brief discussion/conclusion/implications (take home message: why is your study important?)
- Reference section (if needed)

**Poster Materials**

Generally by participating in the Undergraduate Research Symposium, students may have their posters printed free of charge. Please do not use any **heavy poster boards as they tend to fall off and damage the wall**. Posters are typically displayed in the department for one year. Design your poster to have the durability to remain posted for that length of time (including ink color). Students are responsible for providing any material needed to hang the poster for viewing and for having the poster displayed before 10:00 a.m. on the day of the Showcase.

**Title**

The title should be larger than the rest of the text. The student should be first author. The major advisor may be recognized as second author on the poster. Typically, committee members are not authors but if a committee member has contributed significantly to the conception or design of your project, you may recognize him/her with authorship. Committee members can be thanked elsewhere on the poster (e.g. a notation following reference section).

**Layout**

Your poster sections should be sequential and symmetrical. Make sure to clearly label each section to help direct the reader to the flow of information. Maintain a consistent style throughout the poster. Ideally, the poster should fit within about a 4 feet by 4 feet space. Take a look at posters around the department and see what is or is not clear and “appealing.”

**Text of Poster**

Font should be large enough and of a style to be easily legible to a person standing 1-2 feet from the poster. Make full use of your allotted space, but do not cram too much material on your poster. Be concise. Decide what is most important and convey that information. Make sure there are **NO** spelling or grammatical errors or any errors on figures or tables.

**Use of Color**

Use color to emphasize, differentiate, and add interest. Avoid focusing on style over substance. Both are important but in scientific poster substance is the top priority.

**Pictures, Charts, & Tables**

Pictures, figures, tables, charts or diagrams can be a compelling way to present data. A poster should be simple, interesting, and informative. Therefore, careful consideration should be made regarding the best format to convey results. Clearly label any objects that are used.

**Student Presenter**

Students should dress and behave professionally. Students should be prepared to direct viewers through the main ideas of the poster and/or to answer questions.

**Below is a title page/signature sheet that student's should use for the final written thesis.**

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**"THE TITLE OF YOUR PAPER"**

by

"Your Name"

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Paper submitted to the faculty of George Mason University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with

**HONORS IN PSYCHOLOGY**

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
"Name of Faculty Advisor", Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
"Name of Committee Member", Member

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Linda D. Chrosniak, Director