PSYC 4850: Special Problems/PSYC 4950 Independent Research: Psychology Thesis
2025-2026

PSYC 4850 Section 002 – information regarding PSYCH 4950 is for informational purposes only.

Contact Information:

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Course Description:

You will work towards a finished proposal (4850) or finished defense (4950) for an undergraduate thesis. With the guidance of me, your faculty mentor, you will work to develop your thesis proposal or defense that will include relevant literature, data analysis, results, and discussion, along with an oral proposal or defense.

Prerequisites:

In addition to the minimum requirements for PSYC 4950 (found here Thesis Opportunities | University of North Texas) students interested in doing a Psychology Thesis in the ASB lab must have worked as a Research Assistant within the lab for at least one semester, ideally two semesters.

Course Objectives:
The overall objective of the course is to develop a psychology thesis proposal or defense. After completing this course, you will have:

- For proposal:
    - Identified a research topic and articulated subsequent research questions or hypotheses.
    - Reviewed, evaluated, and synthesized existing theory and research relevant to a project.
    - Selected appropriate research methods for the given research question(s).
    - Identified potential limitations and ethical risks specific to their research design.
    - Formulated a plan with a realistic timeline to achieve desired research goals.

- o Located appropriate professional meetings and journals for the dissemination of research.
    - o Orally propose your thesis with at least two additional faculty members
- For defense:
    - o Executed your study with any variations as needed after input from committee members
    - o Complete data analysis
    - o Interpret and write results
    - o Formulate your discussion and limitations of the current study
    - o Orally defend your thesis to the committee no later than 4 weeks prior to the last day of scheduled classes.
    - o Revise thesis based on feedback from committee.

Textbook/Reading Materials:

There is no required textbook for this course. There are suggested readings and resources available to you to further develop your understanding of alcohol and sexual behavior research, as well as writing a manuscript.

It is highly suggested that you obtain the APA style manual.
- Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. (2020). Washington, D.C.: The American Psychological Association.

Materials:

You will need access to SPSS during this course. Please see here for information on access SPSS as a student - IBM SPSS | Computing for Arts and Sciences.

This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, you will need internet access to reference content on Canvas. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at Learn Anywhere (https://online.unt.edu/learn).

Attendance:

We will have regularly scheduled meetings, both in-person and virtual, throughout the semester. Meeting times will be scheduled based on our availability. Attendance to these scheduled meetings is required. However, if you are ill or there are unforeseen circumstances, please contact me as soon as you are able so we can reschedule.

Assignments:

- For proposal:
    - o Identify a research question

- o Outline of Introduction section
- o Draft of Introduction section (including Title page and Reference section)
- o Draft of Method and Analysis Plan
- o Draft of Abstract
- o Revise above drafts based on instructor's feedback
- o Finalize Proposal
- o Present proposal to committee
- o Revised Proposal
- For Defense:
  - o Draft of Methods and Analysis section
  - o Run analyses
  - o Draft of Results section (including any Tables and Figures)
  - o Outline Discussion section
  - o Draft of Discussion section
  - o Revise above drafts based on instructor's feedback
  - o Finalize Thesis
  - o Defend Thesis to committee
  - o Revise Thesis

Writing assignments will be submitted through Canvas where Canvas Turnitin are checked for both potential plagiarism (i.e., copying others' written work without proper citation or even one's own prior writing) and artificial intelligence (AI)-generated content (e.g., using ChatGPT). If a high percentage of prior written-content matching or probable AI-generated content is noted by Turnitin (35-40% or higher), then the amount of effort that the student devoted to completing the written assignment will come into question and ultimately may negatively affect your grade. You can receive resources for writing at the UNT Writing Center: Undergraduate In-person Tutoring | UNT Writing Center.

Expectations:

All writing will follow APA style guidelines.

Timeliness:
-Complete writings goals based on agreed upon scheduled deadlines. Communicate promptly with the instructor if the agreed upon deadlines need to be revised. If missing deadlines becomes a habit or otherwise problematic the instructor has the right to reduce your grade in the course.
-Be on time for meetings
-Timeliness when responding to instructor
        -This includes checking your email 5 days a week and responding to emails in 48 hours of receiving them
        -This includes checking the ASB lab Teams channel 7 days a week and responding to direct messages within 24 hours of receiving them
-Timeliness in reporting any concerns, problems, or difficulties
-Provide the instructor with adequate (2 weeks) notice of times when you will not be in lab (e.g., because of vacation, conferences, or other travel). If your absence becomes a

habit or otherwise problematic the instructor has the right to reduce your grade in the course.
-Two no-shows to meetings, will result in a drop of a full letter grade.

Respectful:
-Of instructor, graduate students, and the established reporting structure
-Of other research assistants
-Of research participants and their confidentiality
-Of the shared lab space

Appropriate Lab Behavior and Professionalism:
-Use computers and lab space for lab-related activities only
-Do not take lab-related activities outside of the lab space unless you received explicit permission from a graduate student or Dr. Garner to do so
-Positive and hardworking attitude
-Be responsive to feedback and incorporate feedback into future drafts
-Submit your own work and do not plagiarize or use generative AI to construct your written materials. If it is determined that a student has plagiarized or used generative AI to write their proposal or thesis, a failing grade will be issued and the violation will be reported to the Academic Integrity Database.

Constructive Criticism:
- Your thesis will result from an **iterative** process where, in order to develop a high quality product, the instructor will edit **multiple drafts** of the document that you prepare.
-We want this to be a learning experience. Thus, it is vital that you are able to understand and make changes when given constructive criticism.

Hours of Work per Week: minimum of 9 hours

Grading:

The student will be evaluated based on the student's ability and timeliness in completing the assignments outlined above, the quality of their writing, their responsiveness to feedback, and the quality of their oral proposal/defense.

Grading:
The student will receive a(n):
A – if the student fulfills all of the requirements and in a satisfactory manner
B – if the student fulfills the majority of the requirements in a satisfactory manner
C—if the student fulfills half of the requirements in a satisfactory manner
D—if the student fulfills less than half of requirements in a satisfactory manner
F—if the student fulfills very little of the requirements in a satisfactory manner

Course Schedule (tentative):

Week 1 – Introductions, expectations outlined, schedule for semester assignments created

Week 2-7 – Work on assignments, attend meetings

Week 8 – Check in on progress

Week 4-14 – Work on assignments, attend meetings

Week 12 – Committee meeting should be scheduled by this date

Week 13-16 – Meet committee, revise proposal or thesis

ADA accommodations:
The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify your eligibility each semester. Once your eligibility is confirmed, you may request your letter of accommodation. ODA will then email your faculty a letter of reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about your specific needs in the course.

You can request accommodations at any time, but it's important to provide ODA notice to your faculty as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. Keep in mind that you must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodations can be implemented in each class. You are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding your accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to ask you to discuss your letter during their designated office hours to protect your privacy. For more information and to access resources that can support your needs, refer to the Office of Disability Access website (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access).

Campus closure:

You will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing Campus Closures Policy (https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006).

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism:

Using other people's work without citations will be violating UNT's Academic Integrity Policy. Please read and follow this important set of guidelines for your academic success (https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003). If you have questions about this, or any UNT policy, please email me or come discuss this with me during our meetings.

Policy on GenAI use:

Prohibited Use: In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini is not permitted. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of outlines, drafts, and/or your proposal/thesis will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the Student Academic Integrity policy (https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003).