

PSYC 4951 Honors College Capstone Thesis

UNT Grief, Emotion, and Trauma (GET) Lab

Fall 2026

Contact Information:

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Student hours: By appointment

Course Description:

This course provides students with supervised experience conducting an independent major research project in psychological science under the guidance of a faculty member. Students will develop and complete an honors thesis in standard thesis format and present their work in an oral defense. Depending on the nature of the thesis project, students may also participate in relevant activities of the GET Lab, including literature review, study development, data management, data analysis, and other research-related activities.

Prerequisite(s):

Completion of at least 6 hours in honors courses; completion of at least 12 hours in the major department in which the thesis is prepared; approval of the department chair and the dean of the school or college in which the thesis is prepared; and approval of the dean of the Honors College.

This course may be taken only once for Honors College credit.

Learning Objectives:

- Develop an understanding of theoretical frameworks relevant to the student's honors thesis and, when applicable, the GET Lab's ongoing research projects.
- Gain foundational competence in research methodologies relevant to grief, trauma, and counseling psychology.
- Increase awareness of the research process, including study development, implementation, and data management.
- Develop skills in following research protocols and ethically working with human participants.
- Build practical skills in conducting literature reviews, data entry, data coding, and data analysis.
- Strengthen professional development skills, including timeliness, communication, collaboration, and responsibility within a research team.
- Develop, complete, and successfully defend an honors thesis under faculty supervision.
- Demonstrate competence in scholarly writing and the communication of research findings in standard thesis format.

Textbook/Reading Materials:

There is no required textbook for this course. However, suggested readings and resources are available to support the development of your understanding of research on grief, trauma, and other relevant topics in counseling psychology, as well as research methods and academic writing.

Students are expected to be familiar with APA style (<https://apastyle.apa.org/>) and to obtain the APA Style Manual for use in all research-related activities conducted in the lab.

Honors Thesis Research Responsibilities:

As an Honors Thesis student working with the Grief, Emotion, and Trauma (GET) Lab, the student will conduct a major research project under faculty supervision. Responsibilities will vary according to the stage and nature of the thesis project and may include literature review, study development, IRB-related preparation, data collection, data management, data coding, data analysis, scholarly writing, preparation of the thesis manuscript, and preparation for the oral defense. Specific tasks may vary depending on research project needs. Your grade will be based on how well you fulfill this agreement and the standards set below.

Beyond the letter grade, serving as a Research Assistant (RA) in the GET Lab may provide opportunities such as hands-on research experience, independent data analysis, conference presentations, completion of an honors thesis, and letters of recommendation. These experiences are especially beneficial for students planning to pursue graduate school.

However, access to these benefits is **not guaranteed** and is contingent upon each student's level of commitment, responsibility, and motivation to engage meaningfully in lab work and independent research. The expectations for all RAs are outlined below.

Expectations:

Carrying out specific lab related duties:

- Attend RA lab meetings
- Help conduct literature reviews
- Help in entering and cleaning data
- Help with setting up research-related materials, including Qualtrics surveys
- Help with participant recruitment
- Help ensure that the study materials are organized and properly prepared and set up for research appointments
- Proactively communicate with the team.
- Collaborate with other lab members when appropriate to support the student's thesis research.
- Assist with other research-related tasks as requested by the supervisor or graduate students

Timeliness:

- Ability to be on time.
- Turn in timesheets on time and/or complete timesheets documenting duties completed while in lab
- Timeliness when responding to requests from supervisor
 - This includes checking your email 5 days a week and responding to emails within 24 hours of receiving them
 - If a longer response is anticipated, please send a confirmation of receipt email and indicate when you expect to provide a full response.
- Can provide an appropriate time frame needed to run participants (if/when requested)
- Timeliness in reporting any concerns, problems, or difficulties
- Follow through on instructions given

- Provide your supervisor with adequate notice (e.g., at least 2 weeks') of times when you will not be in the lab (e.g., due to vacation, conferences, or other travel).
- Refrain from scheduling commitments that overlap with scheduled lab meetings or other required lab activities. If absences become habitual or otherwise problematic, your supervisor reserves the right to reduce your course grade, report this in the course/RA evaluation, or dismiss you from the lab.
- If there is a delay in completing assigned work without proactive effort or timely communication with the supervisor and/or the team, it may result in a full letter-grade reduction.
- Two unexcused absences from lab meetings, including failure to provide timely notification, or a pattern of frequent absences may result in a full letter-grade reduction and/or dismissal from the lab.

Respectful:

- Of direct supervisors, graduate students, and the established chain of command
- Of other research assistants
- Of research participants
- Of the shared lab space

Appropriate Lab Behavior and Professionalism:

- Maintain a positive, responsible, and diligent attitude toward assigned tasks.
- Use computers and lab space exclusively for lab-related activities.
- Do not conduct lab-related activities outside of the lab space without explicit prior permission from a graduate student or Dr. Yang.
- Protect confidential data and unpublished results; do not share lab data without permission.
- Maintain a professional appearance when working or representing the lab (e.g., at conferences). Clothing should be neat, appropriate to the setting, and accompanied by proper personal hygiene.

Accountability & Initiative

- Take responsibility for assigned tasks and follow through without repeated reminders
- Ask questions when unsure rather than proceeding incorrectly
- Notify supervisors promptly if unable to complete assigned duties

Confidentiality & Ethics

- Maintain strict confidentiality of participant information and research data
- Follow all IRB-approved protocols and lab policies regarding data security and ethical research conduct
- Report any potential ethical concerns or protocol deviations to a supervisor immediately

Constructive Feedback:

- We want this to be a learning experience. Therefore, you are expected to understand, accept, and act upon constructive feedback.
- Be receptive to feedback from graduate students and the PI, and treat constructive feedback as an opportunity for professional growth. Maintaining an open and nondefensive attitude is essential.
- Ask clarifying questions if feedback is unclear or if you need guidance on how to improve.
- Implement feedback in a timely and thoughtful manner.
- Demonstrate improvement over time based on previously given feedback.
- Respond to criticism professionally and respectfully, without defensiveness.

Hours of Work per Week: Approximately 10 hours/week

The student will be supervised by senior students/graduate students: _____

Grading:

The student will be evaluated based on progress toward and successful completion of the honors thesis, including the quality and timeliness of research activities, responsiveness to faculty feedback, completion of required thesis milestones, preparation of the written thesis in standard thesis format, and completion of the

required oral defense. The student is also expected to fulfill agreed-upon research and lab responsibilities throughout the semester.

- **A** — Consistently meets thesis milestones and research responsibilities in a timely and satisfactory manner, completes a high-quality thesis, and successfully completes the oral defense.
- **B** — Meets most thesis milestones and research responsibilities satisfactorily, with minor issues in quality, timeliness, or completion.
- **C** — Meets minimum expectations but demonstrates notable deficiencies in progress, quality, timeliness, or completion of thesis-related responsibilities.
- **D** — Fails to meet substantial thesis milestones or research responsibilities.
- **F** — Fails to complete the thesis and/or other major course requirements satisfactorily.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

According to the UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy (UNT Policy 6.003), the unauthorized use of any person or technology to complete an assignment, project, or paper is considered cheating. Unless explicitly authorized by the instructor, the use of AI tools is prohibited and may result in a violation of academic integrity (see UNT policy here).

In this class, including all activities conducted in this lab, the use of AI-generated content (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini) is strictly prohibited. If a student is found to have used AI, they will be dismissed from the lab immediately. If you become aware of any lab member's use of AI-generated content for research-related work, you are responsible for reporting it to the supervisor immediately. Failure to do so may result in the same disciplinary action, including dismissal from the lab.

ADA Policy

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of accommodation during faculty office hours (student hours) or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours (student hours) to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

Title 9 Policy

Please be aware that UNT policy (See <http://policy.unt.edu/policy/12-005>) based on Title 9 of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. § 1681(a); See <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/title-ix-and-sexual-assault>) entails a duty for institutional employees to report to the university any knowledge regarding recent events of sexual misconduct involving students or employees. Additionally, if you report any information indicating that you have been a victim of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking being a student or employee at UNT, I am required to report this information to concerned authorities as mandated by Texas State Law.

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004)

The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Campus Closures and Schedule Changes

In the event that university operations are disrupted due to an emergency or hazardous conditions threatening the safety, health, or welfare of the campus community, UNT may be required to cancel classes, suspend operations, or close the campus entirely. If a campus closure occurs, you will be notified through Eagle Alert, and I will post an announcement via Canvas. In such circumstances, the course schedule is subject to change in accordance with the Campus Closures Policy (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006>).

Appendix A. Regarding Requests for Letters of Recommendation

Students may wish to request letters of recommendation for applications to graduate programs, internship/research positions, scholarships, or related opportunities. While I am committed to supporting students in their academic and professional development whenever possible, I am unable to write letters of recommendation for all students due to the sheer volume of requests received each semester.

To ensure that any letter I provide is both meaningful and professionally responsible, requests will be **considered only if** all of the following conditions are met. A request may be considered if:

1. Completion of Two Courses Taught by Me or at Least One Year of Academic Association

You must have either completed at least two courses under my instruction with final grades of A, or worked with me through research or other academic activities for at least one academic year. This requirement allows me to evaluate your academic and research consistency. Preference will be given to students who show strong engagement, such as active participation, high-quality work, and commitment to coursework or research. Requests will not be reviewed before the semester ends and final grades are released, or if our academic association has been less than one year.

2. You Have Had Significant Interaction with Me

It is extremely important for me to know who you are as a person beyond your academic or research performance. I must be able to comment meaningfully on your character, work habits, and individual strengths. Therefore, I can only write letters of recommendation for individuals who have had significant interaction with me, to the extent that I can provide a genuine and informed recommendation. If you feel that I do not know you well enough, it is likely that I may not be able to write a strong letter of recommendation, and in such cases, I may choose to decline the request.

3. You Have Demonstrated Strong Overall Academic Performance

Your cumulative GPA reflects strong academic achievement. GPA is considered an indicator of sustained effort, perseverance, and readiness for future academic or professional opportunities. As reference letters represent professional judgment, I can only support students who are well qualified for the programs or positions to which they are applying.

4. You Have Provided At least One Month's Advance Notice

I only consider requests that are submitted **at least one month** prior to the earliest deadline. Requests that do not meet this timeline will **not** be considered. Students are strongly encouraged to submit requests well in advance.

5. You Have Shared the Following Materials with Me via Email

Your first request email **must** include all of the following:

- A current CV or résumé
- An unofficial transcript
- An essay or statement of purpose (if it is one of the required application materials)
- A list of programs, schools, positions, and/or scholarships you are applying to, along with the links and deadlines
- A brief statement explaining your interest in these opportunities (e.g., why you are applying for the opportunity) and why a letter from me would be relevant (e.g., what makes you think that my words or recommendation would persuade reviewers that you are a competitive candidate).
- A brag sheet summarizing your strengths, achievements, and relevant experiences.

Additional Notes

- All requests and correspondence must be professional, respectful, and clearly written.
- I reserve the right to decline any request at my discretion.
- I will only **consider** requests that meet the above criteria and for which I believe I can write a strong letter of recommendation.
- Meeting the above criteria does **not** guarantee that a letter will be written, as the number of letters I can provide each semester is limited.
- In most cases, I will only write letters that are submitted through official institutional or program portals and for which the student has waived their right of access.
- I do not share, preview, or discuss the contents of letters of recommendation with students.
- Follow-up requests after being informed that I am unable to write a letter are not appropriate or professional. Please do not submit additional requests.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Due
1	Introductions & Syllabus	- Read the syllabus, sign the confirmation form (see page 6), and upload the signed PDF syllabus to the Lab OneDrive folder. - Email Dr. Yang with the following: (1) a photo and (2) a bio (see the lab page for details).
2	Required Lab Trainings Due	CITI Training Certificate: Upload the CITI certificate file and update the Excel spreadsheet in the Lab OneDrive folder
3	Research Activities Specific instructions will be provided individually to each RA.	Specific due dates will be provided individually to each RA. RAs are responsible for meeting all assigned deadlines and maintaining up-to-date timesheets and/or Teams pages.
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16	Semester Wrap Up	

Confirmation

I, _____, confirm that I have thoroughly read and understood the contents of this syllabus. By signing below, I acknowledge and agree to comply with all course policies, expectations, and requirements outlined herein.

Signature: _____ Date: _____