

**Psychology 309H1: Research Specialization Practicum**  
Winter 2021

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**Office hours:** Tuesdays, 3:30-4:30pm via Zoom, or by appointment (contact [chair@psych.utoronto.ca](mailto:chair@psych.utoronto.ca) to schedule)

**TA:** Laura Tian, M.A.  
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**Office hours:** By appointment

**Class meetings:** Mondays 11:00-2:00pm via Zoom

**Course website:** Quercus via <http://q.utoronto.ca>

**Course prerequisites:**

PSY202H1 (Statistics II) or equivalent, any Psychology laboratory course (can take concurrently: PSY319, PSY329, PSY339, PSY359, PSY369, PSY379, PSY389), and acceptance into the Psychology Research Specialist Program. (*Standard Administrative Note:* Students must ensure that they have met **all** pre- and corequisites listed in the Psychology section of the A&S Calendar for a course or else the system will involuntarily remove you mid-semester without exception.)

**Course description:**

This course aims to help you begin your formal training as professional psychological scientists. This practicum course will allow you the opportunity to work on a prethesis research project for 6-8 hours per week within the lab of a Psychology faculty member to gain the experience needed to complete your thesis next year, to learn about research opportunities within the Department, and to prepare you for graduate study in psychology. Class activities will largely focus on equipping you for success as a psychological scientist by challenging you to develop better critical thinking, writing, and oral presentation skills. The specific weight and emphasis placed on these skills will depend on the existing preparation of the students in the course. Upon completion of the course, you will emerge as a better writer, better speaker, more insightful thinker, and an excellent candidate for continued study in a psychology graduate program!

**Class format:** Seminar with group discussion, individual and group presentations, “field” assignments, and laboratory work.

**Course components and assignments:**

- 1) Mini-thesis (40% of total grade)  
Each student will spend 6-8 hours per week working under the supervision of a St. George Psychology tenure-stream faculty member. Although specific assignments vary from lab to lab, all students will take an active role in the development or implementation of a research project. Students will present research ideas, methods, and results during class, and write a final paper describing their project before the end of the term.
  
- 2) Weekly writing assignments (30% of total grade)  
**Writing is a KEY component of this course.** Students will complete weekly writing assignments, analyzed for both substance and style, which will build your strength as a writer (a useful skill no matter where life takes you!).
  
- 3) Attendance and class participation (30% of total grade)  
The most valuable learning will occur in class, so you need to attend every meeting. If you will miss a class (or have missed a class), you should have a very good reason for your absence. We will expect you to participate in all class activities (even if they may seem silly or awkward—some will!) and to present in class almost every week.

### **Grading:**

PSY309 has a unique grading scheme. You gained permission to enrol based on your request for admission to the Research Specialist program in Psychology, which requires demonstrated academic excellence and commitment to obtaining a deep understanding of psychology. We therefore assume that you will do well in the course and, if you perform the required work conscientiously, you can expect a high grade and to continue in the Research Specialist program during your fourth year. Having said that, we go out of our way to deemphasize grades. You will submit written work on a weekly basis throughout the semester, make frequent oral presentations, and conduct a major laboratory research project. You can expect comprehensive feedback and corrections on all of this work but without specific grades assigned on each item (except for the mini-thesis project, for which the supervising faculty member will recommend a grade). At the end of the course, we anticipate assigning you a grade in the A range in response to conscientious effort, excellent performance, and perfect attendance. If you do not perform satisfactorily in the course, your grade will reflect that inadequacy. That said, worrying about grades often increases cognitive load and will therefore pose a distraction from the true task at hand: learning how to become an excellent psychological scientist. Please do not preoccupy yourself with grades but, rather, focus on honing your skills.

### **Contesting a grade:**

Everyone makes mistakes and if you think that a genuine (e.g., mathematical) mistake occurred in the evaluation of your work, you may want to inquire about it. Otherwise, as a social psychologist, I would advise you not to contest grades flippantly: Your instructors and TAs work very hard to grade course assignments and challenging their decisions implies criticism of that work, which will not typically endear you to them. If you do choose to challenge your marker's

evaluation, I'd encourage you to do so as diplomatically as possible and to follow the Faculty of Arts & Science's protocol ([http://calendar.artsci.utoronto.ca/Rules\\_&\\_Regulations.html](http://calendar.artsci.utoronto.ca/Rules_&_Regulations.html)).

**Late assignments:**

Late assignments will lose 10% per day (penalties waived for excused absences).

**Communications and Email with the instructor/TA:**

U of T requires all students to have a valid email address, which you must enter in the ROSI system and regularly monitor. When you email the TA or me, please include the course identifier in the Subject line with a concise and clear statement about the message's content (e.g., "PSY309: Question about final presentation"); this will increase the chances that the message isn't filtered into SPAM. *Importantly, emails with attachments will have to be deleted without opening due to virus and spyware concerns* (I've learned the hard way). Thus, you should submit assignments via Quercus rather than through email. Of course, before you email the instructor or TA, make sure that you have exhausted other resources at your disposal (e.g., syllabus, Google) to demonstrate your research skills and avoid embarrassment.

**Academic dishonesty and plagiarism:**

You wouldn't want a doctor who cheated in medical school to treat you and wouldn't want to perform an operation on someone if you didn't actually know how to do it! The University has therefore adopted strict policies to deal with cases of academic dishonesty (see [www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm](http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm)). You should review these often, as students found to have acted dishonestly almost always did so unintentionally (but this doesn't relieve the punishment exacted). If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behavior or appropriate research and citation methods, please seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or other institutional resources (see <https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/>). Moreover, knowing how to research and cite like a professional psychologist constitutes an important part of this particular course!

**Resources:**

*Accessibility Needs:*

The University of Toronto greatly values assuring that all students can equally access the educational opportunities available here. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom, or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: [disability.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:disability.services@utoronto.ca) or <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/> You will need to proactively arrange appropriate accommodations by coordinating with an accessibility advisor.

*Self Care:*

Learning is growth, and growth often involves pain. Moreover, the brain is finishing its development between ages 18-25. Its final rewiring means that one can have a jumble of complicated thoughts and feelings. Don't go it alone. The University has resources to help you

through these difficult periods of change. Visit [mentalhealth.utoronto.ca](http://mentalhealth.utoronto.ca) to see what supports are available, especially if you find yourself feeling distressed or overwhelmed.

*Language and Writing:*

The university has multiple resources to help you improve your writing. Whether you have natively spoken English all of your life or just started learning recently, take advantage of the University's writing resources to help you learn how to express yourself more clearly and efficiently: <https://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/>

**Course schedule:** Ad hoc, may change depending on students' collective needs

- Jan 10**      **Course Introduction and Overview**  
Goal: Students will learn about their new roles as Psychology Research Specialists, get to know one another, and discuss practical logistics of the course.  
Read Before Class: Nothing  
Prepare for class: Introduction presentations
- Jan 17**      **Presentation Skills**  
Goal: Students will review, discuss, and practice effective oral presentation skills.  
Read Before Class: Kosslyn, S. M. (2011). *Better PowerPoint*. Oxford University Press. (yes, the whole book—cover to cover!)  
Prepare for class: Presentations on Kosslyn's book
- Jan 24**      **Mini-Thesis Presentations**  
Goal: Students will present a roadmap for their upcoming mini-thesis work in their host labs.  
Read Before Class: Nothing  
Prepare for class:  
 1. Mini-thesis overview presentations
- Jan 31**      **Writing Skills I: Style and Substance**  
Goal: Students will discuss clear, concise, and captivating writing.  
Read Before Class:  
 1. American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). (pp. 111-131)  
 2. Strunk, W., Jr., & White, E. B. (2000). *The Elements of Style* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pearson Education, Inc. (yes, the whole book—cover to cover!)  
Prepare for class:  
 1. APA style presentations  
 2. 1-page mini-thesis proposal
- Feb 7**      **Writing Skills II: Components of a Research Paper**

Goal: Students will review and discuss how to compose and structure an APA-style research paper

Read Before Class:

1. American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). (pp. 29-50, 153-194)
2. Kording, K., & Mensh, B. (2016). *Ten simple rules for structuring papers*. Retrieved from [biorxiv.org/content/early/2016/12/14/088278.full.pdf+html](http://biorxiv.org/content/early/2016/12/14/088278.full.pdf+html)

Prepare for class:

1. APA structure presentations
2. Mini-thesis Introduction section
3. Peer feedback on mini-thesis proposal

**Feb 14**      **Writing Skills III: Reporting and Referencing**

Goal: Students will discuss how to adequately and properly describe one's methods and results.

Read Before Class: American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). (pp. 195-354)

Prepare for class:

1. APA reference presentations
2. Mini-thesis Method section
3. Peer feedback on mini-thesis Introduction section
4. Appointment confirmations for faculty interviews

**Feb 21**      **Reading week**

Goal: Relax, reset, restore!

**Feb 28**      **Life as an Academic Psychologist**

Goal: Students will discuss life as a psychology professor based on their interviews of faculty.

Read Before Class:

1. Pang, A. S.-K. (2018). *Rest*. Basic Books. (yes, the whole book—cover to cover!)
2. Jaremka, L. M., Ackerman, J. M., Gawronski, B., Rule, N. O., Sweeny, K., Tropp, L. R., Metz, M. A., Molina, L., Ryan, W. S., & Vick, S. B. (2020). Common academic experiences no one talks about: Repeated rejection, impostor syndrome, and burnout. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *15*(3), 519-543.

Prepare for class:

1. Faculty interview presentations
2. Peer feedback on mini-thesis Method section

**Mar 7**      **Applying to Graduate School**

Goal: Students will discuss the graduate school application process, when and how to get started, and learn about the lives of psychology graduate students.

Read Before Class:

1. American Psychological Association. (2007). *Getting in* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). (Ch. 3-5)
2. Appleby, D. C., & Appleby, K. M. (2006). Kisses of death in the graduate school application process. *Teaching in Psychology*, 33(1), 19-24.
3. Lord, C. G. (2004). A guide to PhD graduate school: How they keep score in the big leagues. In J. M. Darley, M. P. Zanna, & H. L. Roediger III (Eds.) *The Compleat Academic* (pp. 3-16).

Prepare for class:

1. 1-page faculty interview summary

**Mar 14**

**No class**

Goal: Catch-up on mini-thesis projects

**Mar 21**

**Presentations of Mini-Thesis Projects I**

Goal: Students give a 20-minute presentation of the (near) final summary of the research they have conducted in their host labs this semester

Prepare for class:

1. Final presentation
2. 2-page graduate school personal statement
2. Peer feedback on 1-page faculty interview summary

**Mar 28**

**Presentations of Mini-Thesis Projects II**

Goal: Students give a 20-minute presentation of the (near) final summary of the research they have conducted in their host labs this semester

Prepare for class:

1. Final presentation
2. Peer feedback on graduate school personal statement

**Apr 4**

**Presentations of Mini-Thesis Projects III** Goal: Students give a 20-minute presentation of the (near) final summary of the research they have conducted in their host labs this semester

Prepare for class:

1. Final presentation
2. Final manuscript describing mini-thesis research