

# Research Specialization: Thesis

PSY 400H • 2023-2024 • Many Tuesdays, 2-5PM

The goal of this course is to provide you with an intensive apprenticeship in psychological research, one that prepares you for graduate study in Psychology. In the process of collaborating with faculty, you will acquire (or sharpen) the skills required for conducting and presenting research. These skills include literature reviews, writing, public speaking, designing experiments, and collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. Class activities and assignments are focused on equipping you for success as a psychologist, with a special emphasis on critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills. Upon completion of this course, you should be ideally poised to continue your studies in a Psychology graduate program.

Even if you never become a psychologist—even if you never go to graduate school—this course should be of value. Regardless of what you do in life, there is great value in improving your skills in writing, presentation, and critical thinking. Also, we'll have fun.

## The first question: Should I be in this course?

Honestly, getting into this course is kind of a thing. You need to be enrolled in the PSY Research Specialist program, and you need to have completed PSY309H1, and one of PSY319H1/PSY329H1/PSY339H1/PSY359H1/PSY369H1/PSY379H1/PSY389H1. There are, I've been informed, *no exceptions* to this.

Please note that (a) you can't take the course if you've taken PSY400Y or PSYC98Y3, (b) students enrolled in PSY400 are expected also to take PSY 409 and that (c) this course is not eligible for the CR/NCR option.

## Ok, I'm in. Do I need to read the syllabus?

You do want to know what we're up to this year, where the classes are, when the classes are, how you'll be graded, and so on, right? There is some important stuff here! (Having said this, you can skip pages 5-7 ...)

## Where and when is the course?

SS 560

We are meeting on Tuesdays, from 2-5 (actually, 2:10-5), but *we are not meeting every week*. There is a tentative schedule below of our meeting times, but this really is tentative (it's possible that we'll add a class), so please leave this early Tuesday afternoon time open.

## Who is the professor?

Me! Professor Paul Bloom. My email is [paul.bloom@utoronto.ca](mailto:paul.bloom@utoronto.ca). My webpage is [paulbloom.net](http://paulbloom.net). Office hours by appointment.

## How do we communicate?

Over email—I'll email you, you'll email me. Don't bother with Quercus.

## Tell me something about the readings

They'll all be available online; I'll provide the links and/or send you PDFs. I also highly recommend these books as **optional additional reading**.

Barbara Sarnecka's, "The Writing Workshop" is for PhD students, but provides excellent, detailed advice for anyone who is engaged in academic writing.

<https://www.amazon.ca/Writing-Workshop-Better-Happier-Academia/dp/1733484604>

Paul Silva's, "How to write a lot" is a short guide for academics—well-written and very useful.

[https://www.amazon.ca/How-Write-Lot-Practical-Productive/dp/1433829738/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=how+to+write+a+lot&qid=1662236261&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.ca/How-Write-Lot-Practical-Productive/dp/1433829738/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=how+to+write+a+lot&qid=1662236261&sr=8-1)

Oliver Burkeman's, "Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals" is a thoughtful and humane discussion of how to be productive—and why you shouldn't worry too much about it.

[https://www.amazon.ca/Four-Thousand-Weeks-Management-Mortals/dp/0735232466/ref=sr\\_1\\_4?crid=1YEXW4C0DDKC7&keywords=oliver+bukman&qid=1662211452&s=books&sprefix=oliver+bukman%2Cstripbooks%2C58&sr=1-4](https://www.amazon.ca/Four-Thousand-Weeks-Management-Mortals/dp/0735232466/ref=sr_1_4?crid=1YEXW4C0DDKC7&keywords=oliver+bukman&qid=1662211452&s=books&sprefix=oliver+bukman%2Cstripbooks%2C58&sr=1-4)

## Very tentative schedule

Date	Topic	Details
Sep 12	Welcome & Overview	Just show up!
Sep 19	The State of Psychological Science & Research Ethics	<a href="https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/science-isnt-broken/#part1">https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/science-isnt-broken/#part1</a> <a href="https://www.dropbox.com/s/x6fr3c1xt9czi6x/bloom-crisis.pdf?dl=0">https://www.dropbox.com/s/x6fr3c1xt9czi6x/bloom-crisis.pdf?dl=0</a> <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/magazine/when-the-revolution-came-for-amy-cuddy.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/magazine/when-the-revolution-came-for-amy-cuddy.html</a> <a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/06/everything-we-know-about-facebooks-secret-mood-manipulation-experiment/373648/">https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/06/everything-we-know-about-facebooks-secret-mood-manipulation-experiment/373648/</a> <p style="text-align: center;">*****</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Class discussion</p>
Oct 24	How to write	<a href="https://stevenpinker.com/files/pinker/files/pinker_2014_why_academics_writing_stinks.pdf">https://stevenpinker.com/files/pinker/files/pinker_2014_why_academics_writing_stinks.pdf</a> <a href="https://slatestarcodex.com/2016/02/20/writing-advice/">https://slatestarcodex.com/2016/02/20/writing-advice/</a> <a href="https://psychology.yale.edu/sites/default/files/bemempirical.pdf">https://psychology.yale.edu/sites/default/files/bemempirical.pdf</a> <p style="text-align: center;">Submit OpEd /twitter thread (details to come)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In-class writing exercises</p>
Oct 31	How to give a talk	<a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/chris_anderson_ted_s_secret_to_great_public_speaking?language=en">https://www.ted.com/talks/chris_anderson_ted_s_secret_to_great_public_speaking?language=en</a> <p style="text-align: center;">others, TBA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">In-class talking practice</p>
Nov 14	Thesis Proposal Presentations	<p style="text-align: center;">Written Project Proposal Due</p> <p style="text-align: center;">8 Presentations in class</p>

Nov 21	Thesis Proposal Presentations	8 Presentations in class
Jan 9	Data Blitz	16 Presentations in class
Jan 16	TBA	TBA
Mar 19	Thesis Presentation	8 Presentations in class
Mar 26	Thesis Presentation	8 Presentations in class
Apr 2	Poster Day	Presentation & Thesis Due

### How your grade will be calculated

Thesis Proposal presentation:	10%
Written project proposal:	10%
Data Blitz:	5%
Research Advisor's Grade:	20%
Thesis Presentation:	15%
Thesis:	20%
Poster Presentation:	5%
Class Participation:	15%

### But ... don't worry about grades

The students in the research specialist program have already demonstrated excellence; we assume you'll continue to do well in this final year—to attend all the classes, participate meaningfully, and do excellent research with your supervisor. Unless something goes awry—and I'll let you know if this seems to be happening—you'll get a grade in the A range. So don't worry about grades and focus on having a productive and enjoyable experience. (And, by the way, if you made it this far into the syllabus, please email and tell me so, along with a picture (google images is fine) of your favorite movie).

## Some more details on the primary requirements of the course

### Thesis

Theses should report results from a psychological study conducted by the student under the supervision of a faculty member. Students are encouraged to browse through theses submitted in previous years to get a better understanding of what is expected in a thesis; old theses can be obtained from the undergraduate psychology advisor's office.

Every thesis must be submitted as if for publication, in format and style requirements set out in the APA Publication Manual, 7th edition. (2020). Theses must also include appendices summarizing data and statistical analyses upon which results and conclusions have been based. Theses must not exceed 20 pages (double spaced, 12-point font), excluding the title page, abstract, references, tables, figures and figure captions, and appendices.

Your thesis should be emailed to me on the final day of class. Hint: Try to get a first draft ready by early March so your supervisor has enough time to give you meaningful feedback.

The thesis grade indicates the quality of the final version of the thesis. Each thesis will be read by at least one anonymous reviewer that will be chosen from among the faculty who have a familiarity with the general research area (or I will take over the grading, depending on the availability of reviewers). It is important to note that in assigning a grade, no penalty should be imposed if a reasonable research plan failed to work as intended. In other words, whatever the results, good research design, clear justification for the study, and thorough and thoughtful presentation of the research are what counts. The referees can weigh several criteria as they deem most appropriate. These criteria are similar to those used in judging the acceptability of an article in a scientific journal, for example:

- Is the thesis well written?
- Are the research questions and experimental design stated clearly?
- Is the research design appropriate to answer the research question (and does the author state clearly how the design is appropriate)?
- Could a reader replicate the critical elements of the study based on the information given in the methods section?
- Are the results described clearly and completely?
- Are the statistical analyses appropriate, correct, and described clearly and completely?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the author make appropriate use of figures and tables?</li> <li>• Are the conclusions linked clearly to the data?</li> <li>• Is there evidence of original thinking and creative contribution?</li> <li>• Is the thesis "scholarly" (how well informed is the author about the topic)?</li> <li>• Does the thesis conform to APA guidelines for manuscripts submitted to journals?</li> </ul>
<b>Supervisor's Grade</b>	<p>The advisor's grade indicates the quality of the student's work up to, but not including, the final version of the thesis. The supervisor can weigh the following criteria as he or she deems appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent was the research question chosen as a result of the student's own initiative, persuasion, and reasoning?</li> <li>• To what extent were important design issues resolved by the work and reasoning of the student?</li> <li>• To what extent were data produced through resourceful efforts of the student?</li> <li>• To what extent did the student analyze the data effectively, with a clear appreciation of the most useful questions to be put to the data?</li> <li>• To what extent did the student understand his or her findings and their implications?</li> <li>• To what extent did the student successfully communicate his or her thesis work in the early drafts of the thesis and in conversations with the supervisor?</li> <li>• To what extent did the student meet individual deadlines set by the supervisor?</li> <li>• To what extent was learning and progress seen over the course of the year, with signs of new skills acquired and a deepened understanding of the research enterprise?</li> </ul> <p>You are encouraged to discuss these criteria with your supervisor early in the year.</p>
<b>Proposal Presentation</b>	<p>During the first term, students will make oral presentations describing their proposed thesis projects. The purpose is to hone your presentation skills and to receive feedback on your thesis project while it is still in a relatively early stage. I'll give you more details on the format of the presentation in class. Note that all students are expected to attend all presentations.</p>
<b>Written Proposal</b>	<p>Written proposals, up to a maximum of 10 type-written pages long (not including reference list), double spaced, 12-point font, must be submitted by November 15<sup>th</sup>. A well-prepared proposal will contain most of the Introduction of the final thesis, a skeleton of the Methods, and an outline of the important points to be addressed in the Results. Especially in the event</p>

	that you are still busy collecting data as the final deadline nears, this will give you a great head start on the final write-up. If you need to apply for human ethics approval, there may be some overlap between this and the ethics application. Your supervisor will be asked to provide a grade and feedback on your proposal. This grade will be averaged with mine (with equal weight) to calculate your grade.
<b>Data Blitz</b>	You will be required to present preliminary data early in January, even if all you have is a single subject at that time. You are allowed to present five slides: theory, hypotheses, methods, results, conclusions. Presentations should be no more than 5 minutes. All members of the class are expected to attend all data blitz presentations.
<b>Poster Presentation</b>	<p>In-person event contingent on COVID safety. An alternative event may be held if there is no in-person event.</p> <p>Every year, the graduating thesis class will present their research to the Department as a research poster. Typically, this event is held in the Psychology lounge on the 4th floor. Ask your research advisor or a grad student for a copy of a poster they presented at a recent conference and use it as a model for your own poster. Involve your research advisor early. Making a poster takes longer than you think and you need to budget some extra time to get the poster printed and to give some practice presentations in your lab.</p>
<b>Thesis Presentation</b>	Toward the end of the second term, you will present your theses as if you were giving a talk at a scientific conference (i.e., tell us what you did, why you did it, what you found, and what it means). I'll present details in class. All members of the class are expected to attend all presentations.
<b>Class Participation</b>	Attendance at all classes is <i>mandatory</i> . If you will miss a class (or have missed a class), you should be prepared to provide a very good reason for your absence. Students are expected to participate in all class activities and will conduct individual and/or group presentations on various topics. And by the way, if you made it this far into the syllabus, congratulations and please email me a picture of either your favourite city or your favourite philosopher.

**When we meet, can I have my laptop or phone open, so I can check my email, go on social media, and shop for shoes?**

Sorry, no. I appreciate the temptation—I'm also often peeking at my phone during talks—but it's rude, both to me and to the people around you. You need to be fully engaged and participating in the discussion and you can't do that with a screen in front of you.

## **Other Stuff**

### **Accessibility Needs**

Students with diverse needs are welcome in this course. If you have an acute or ongoing disability issue or accommodation need, you should register with Accessibility Services (AS) ([accessibility.utoronto.ca](http://accessibility.utoronto.ca)) at the beginning of the academic year. Without registration, you will not be able to verify your situation with your instructors, and instructors will not be advised about your accommodation needs. AS will assess your medical situation, develop an accommodation plan with you, and support you in requesting accommodation for your course work. Remember that the process of accommodation is private: AS will not share details of your condition with any instructor, and your instructors will not reveal that you are registered with AS.

### **Writing**

As a student here at the University of Toronto, you are expected to write well. The university provides its students with a number of resources to help them achieve this. For more information on campus writing centres and writing courses, please visit <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/>.

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

All students, faculty and staff are expected to follow the University's guidelines and policies on academic integrity. For students, this means following the standards of academic honesty when writing assignments, collaborating with fellow students, and writing tests and exams. Ensure that the work you submit for grading represents your own honest efforts. Plagiarism—representing someone else's work as your own or submitting work that you have previously submitted for marks in another class or program—is a serious offence that can result in sanctions. Speak to me for advice on anything that you find unclear. To learn more about how to cite and use source material appropriately and for other writing support, see the U of T writing support website at [www.writing.utoronto.ca/](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/). Consult the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for a complete outline of the University's policy and expectations. For more information, please see <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai> and <http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/>

### **Being Excellent to Each Other**

*The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.*



### Specific Medical Circumstances

If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, consult me right away. Normally, I will ask you for documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. This documentation can be an Absence Declaration (via ACORN) or the University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form. The VOI indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. You can submit a different form (like a letter from a doctor), as long as it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI. For more information on the VOI, please see <http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca>. For information on Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence>. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

### Well-being

As a student, you may experience challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation, financial concerns, family worries and so forth. These factors may affect your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate fully in daily activities. Everyone feels stressed now and then – it is a normal part of university life. Some days are better than others, and there is no wrong time to reach out. There are resources for every situation and every level of stress.

Student Life Programs and Services (<http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/>)

Academic Success Services (<http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc>)

Counselling and Psychological Services (<http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>)

## Feeling overwhelmed?

*Get help now, with school or general life!*

Connect with ~~UofT's~~ "MySSP"  
☎ 844-451-9700 in North America  
☎ 001-416-380-6578 outside North America  
🌐 [studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/myssp/](http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/myssp/)

**Are you overloaded by coursework?**

*Get help planning & negotiating across classes*

**Contact your College Registrar**

🌐 [www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/college-registrars-offices](http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/college-registrars-offices)

### COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Spectra Multilingual  
Helpline  
905-459-7777

Canada Suicide  
Prevention Service  
833-456-4566

Black Youth Helpline  
833-294-8650

Anishnawbe Health  
Toronto  
416-360-0486

Lesbian Gay Bi  
Trans Youth Line  
647-694-4275

Toronto Rape Crisis  
Centre  
416-597-8808

Looking for self-education on  
stress management?

**Register for BounceBack**

🌐 [online.bouncebackonline.ca/](http://online.bouncebackonline.ca/)

**This is a wonderful syllabus, but I still have questions**

No worries – email me! [paul.bloom@utoronto.ca](mailto:paul.bloom@utoronto.ca)