Psychology 700 – Thesis (second semester)

**INSTRUCTOR:**

Email: Office: Office Telephone:

***Office Hours:***

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Students enrolled in this course will:

1. use information resources and search strategies to identify reliable, reputable sources of information

2. organize, synthesize, and evaluate existing literature to address a specific issue within the psychological sciences

3. propose original research questions that will contribute to the existing literature in psychological science and describe how the research questions relate to what is already known

4. identify measurement, research design, and data analysis techniques used in a given area of study and evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, and feasibility of each

5. select and use appropriate measurement, research design, and data analysis techniques to answer specific research questions based on an understanding of the advantages, disadvantages, and feasibility of each technique

6. use appropriate technology to collect, summarize, and analyze data

7. interpret research results within the context of specific research question(s) and more broadly within the context of the existing psychological science literature

8. prepare coherent, well-organized abstracts, literature reviews, and research reports in a style consistent with the most recent version of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association

9. formally present research orally with appropriate use of visual aids (e.g., presentation software)

**DESCRIPTION:** Every student in the Psychological Sciences Program must complete a **thesis** project that includes conducting an **empirical** **research study** that makes a scholarly contribution to the current body of knowledge in some area of psychological science. It is the student’s responsibility to complete all of the necessary work for the thesis project in a timely fashion. A student who fails to meet deadlines and submit high quality work or who otherwise deviates from the timeline specified by the advisor should not expect the advisor to adjust his/her schedule to accommodate the student.

**Thesis:** Once the data for the thesis project are collected, the student analyzes the data and writes the thesis under the supervision of the advisor. As with the proposal, the expectation is that the thesis will result from an **iterative** process where, in order to develop a high quality product, the advisor edits **multiple drafts** of the document that the student prepares. While analyzing the data and writing the thesis, the student should consult committee members only if he or she needs their expertise.

Once the advisor approves the completed thesis, the student should schedule a comprehensive examination meeting (typically 2 hours) during which the student will defend the thesis (often referred to as the thesis defense). The student should distribute the completed thesis to all committee members for review no less than one week prior to the comprehensive examination meeting and the student should not make changes to the thesis after he or she distributes it to the committee.

Members of the committee read the thesis and complete the written document portion of the Thesis Scoring Rubric prior to attending the comprehensive examination. During the comprehensive examination, the student makes a brief presentation during which he or she should: demonstrate foundational knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to the project; interact professionally with the audience; competently field questions about the project and the written document and; effectively use presentation software. Once the student has answered all of the questions, members of the committee will discuss the document, rate the student’s performance according to the oral presentation portion of the Thesis Scoring Rubric, and discuss the student’s performance on the comprehensive examination. The committee must decide (a) whether the student has passed the comprehensive examination and (b) whether they approve the thesis as written, approve the thesis pending revisions, or reject the thesis.

Note that the due date for passing the comprehensive examination and for submitting an approved thesis document is ***insert date for current semester here***. If the student does not pass the comprehensive examination **and** submit an approved thesis document by this date, he or she cannot graduate this semester. Any student in this position is responsible for adhering to the university’s policies regarding continuous enrollment and graduate degree completion requirements and thus must enroll in at least one credit hour of Psyc 699, Thesis Continuance, until the work is completed. Psyc 699 does not count towards fulfilling the required hours for the degree and the student may repeat Psyc 699 if necessary.

**REQUIRED ACTIVITIES, WORK PRODUCTS, and DUE DATES:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Activities | Work Products | Due Date |
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|  | * Symposium Presentation |  |
| * Thesis Defense meeting | * Comprehensive Examination Passed |  |
| * If necessary, make changes to written thesis | * Approved Thesis |  |

**EVALUATION:** Performance in this course is graded on an “S”/”U” (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory) basis. The student will earn an “S” provided he or she completes all of the activities and delivers all of the work products on or before the due dates listed above. Failure to complete all of the activities or to deliver all of the work products by the due dates could result in a grade of “U.”

A grade of “I” indicates incomplete work in a course and the advisor will award an “I” only when a student is unable to complete course work because of illness, other equally compelling reason, or in the situations described below. When a student receives a grade of "I," he or she must complete the work before the end of the next regular semester (i.e., summer sessions are not included) or the grade is reported permanently as a "U."

In the event a student fails the comprehensive examination, he or she may request a re-examination. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the re-examination must occur within six months of the date of failure. If the student does not pass the comprehensive examination before the end of the semester, the instructor will record a grade of “I” (Incomplete) for this course. If a student fails the second comprehensive examination, the instructor will assign a grade of “U” (Unsatisfactory) for this class and the Graduate School will terminate the student’s program.

If the committee does not approve the thesis as written, the student must make changes to the document, until it is acceptable. If the student does not complete an acceptable thesis document before the end of the semester, the instructor will record a grade of “I” (Incomplete) for this course.

Because each student must complete all course work by the final date of the student's graduation semester, if a student receives an "I" in this course, the student cannot officially graduate until this course is completed. Any student in this position is responsible for adhering to the university’s policies regarding continuous enrollment and graduate degree completion requirements and thus must enroll in at least one credit hour of Psyc 699 until the work is completed. Psyc 699 does not count towards fulfilling the required hours for the degree and the student may repeat Psyc 699 if necessary.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Academic integrity is central to the mission of this institution. All students deserve a healthy learning environment where their honest independent efforts form the basis of their evaluations. Academic dishonesty violates the most fundamental values of an intellectual community and depreciates the achievements of the entire university community. Every student is responsible for knowing the James Madison University Honor System. The policy appears in the *Student Handbook* (<http://www.jmu.edu/judicial/handbook.shtml>) as well as on the Honor System homepage at <http://www.jmu.edu/honor/>.

Ignorance or misunderstanding of the Honor System will not serve as an excuse for academic dishonesty. Faculty will take vigorous action against students who engage in cheating, plagiarism, forgery, misrepresentation, fraud, or other dishonest practices. Students are always welcome to contact faculty or make an appointment to meet with faculty (by telephone, if you are not in Harrisonburg) for a more detailed explanation of anything pertaining to this course, including clarifications needed regarding academic integrity.

**NOTE TO DISABLED STUDENTS:** Any student who is learning, sensory, or physically disabled, and feels that he or she needs special assistance with any of the work in this course should contact the instructor. The first couple of weeks of the semester are the best time to do this. Faculty will hold all such matters in confidence.

**FERPA:** The federal **F**amily **E**ducational **R**ights and **P**rivacy **A**ct of 1974 (FERPA), as amended (also sometimes referred to as the Buckley Amendment), is a federal law regarding the privacy of student records and the obligations of the institution regarding the release of educational records and the access provided to these records.  Generally the law provides that, with some exceptions, no information, applications, forms, letters, records, transcripts, etc. may be released, whether orally or in writing, without prior written consent, dated and signed by the student, specifying the records to be released, the reasons for release and to whom the records are to be released.  You can find the University's policy on the privacy of student records, Policy 2112, at <http://www.jmu.edu/JMUpolicy/2112.shtml>.