

PSYC 52A: Research Methods and Laboratory in Psychology

Prerequisites for this course: PSYC 10a and PSYC 51a

Welcome to Research Methods!

In this course, we will discuss the scientific research process, common methodologies used by psychologists, and the ethics of psychological research. The foundation of a good psychologist is his or her ability to assess scientific research and create interesting and methodologically strong research studies to investigate their field of interest. Students will work alone or in small groups on their own experimentally-designed research projects over the summer on a topic of their choice. I look forward to spending the summer with you all learning about how psychological research is conducted and helping you to do a research project of your own!

Essential Logistics

Professor: Jane Theriault, Ph.D.

Student hours (aka office hours): I am happy to meet with you on Zoom by appointment; let me know when you would like to do so!

Response time to e-mails: E-mail is the best way to contact me. I am generally on my email from 8am – 6pm, Monday – Friday, once on Saturday mornings, and once on Sunday evenings. I will answer students' e-mails within 24 hours. Please know that if you have a more complicated question, it may take longer for me to get you an answer, but I will acknowledge your question sooner. If response times will be longer due to illness or similar, I will let you all know.

Class communication: I will communicate important course updates through the Moodle message posts. Please be sure to check all notifications coming from Moodle in a timely manner. Please note that all Moodle communications as well as my personal messages will go only to your Brandeis e-mail account.

Required books and other materials:

Research Methods: Core Concepts and Skills for Psychology v3.0 by Paul Price.
ISBN: 978-1-4533-4123-0 for the digital version.

Here is our course book on FlatWorld:

<https://students.flatworldknowledge.com/engage/courses/2617709>

You can purchase the book access code via the bookstore or online from FlatWorld directly. You can also get a hard copy of the book if you prefer, but that's up to you!

We will be using FlatWorld Homework, which is an online homework system that coordinates with the material in the book. It comes with your book purchase. Here is the link for FlatWorld Homework: <https://practice.flatworldknowledge.com/c/HW-877963>

Access to a computer or mobile electronic device (tablet or smartphone) with internet access is required to complete your FlatWorld Homework assignments. Please let me know if you need information on computers available for use on campus.

If you have difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss [possible funding options and alternative solutions](#).

Additional recommended readings and/or third-party instruments:
Any additional materials for the summer term will be posted on Moodle.

Learning Goals

The emphasis in this course is on research design, including consideration of sampling procedures, questionnaire design, and methods of observation and reporting.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, you will have a general understanding of how research is conducted in the field of psychological science. You will learn how to formulate research ideas, read and review journal articles, identify, measure and manipulate variables, design an observational study, design a survey, design an experiment, and understand the ethical considerations that underlie all these processes. For your final project, you will design your own research study (either alone or with a partner/small group).

Components of Course Work:

FlatWorld Homework Quizzes (25% of your final grade):

Our online textbook has quizzes that will be used to take the place of exams in our course. Each chapter has a 30ish question quiz (sometimes 25, sometimes 35, never higher). These quizzes are intended to be low stakes learning activities to ensure continuous engagement in the course. They provide valuable assessment feedback so you can identify areas where you could deepen or clarify your knowledge. Again, these will take the place of true exams; please take them seriously! FlatWorld Homework Quizzes will be due on Sundays at 11:59pm. Here is the link for FlatWorld Homework: <https://practice.flatworldknowledge.com/c/HW-877963>

Discussion Board Postings (25% of Grade)

To promote reflection and analysis, and to create the equivalent of classroom discussion, I use the Discussion feature to give you all a chance to demonstrate what

you are learning and to exchange your thoughts with one another. Each week, there will be a set of questions for you to respond to using Moodle's Discussion board.

For each week's Discussion, I will be asking you to post replies to my question and also to read the comments from your fellow students and post at least one reply to one of their comments. The focus will be on applications of material that we are reading for class, whether that means a discussion of a particular challenge or responses to an article. It's also possible that Discussion will focus on a video that you watched at home or a news story related to class.

Discussion postings for each week are due on the last date for that week's lesson, Sundays, by 11:59pm. I will not participate directly in the discussions unless issues arise - these are a forum for you and your peers and I want to hear your thoughts and have you respond to each other. **IMPORTANT: Discussion posts are not accepted late.**

Weekly Assignments (30% of Grade)

We will cover a variety of topic areas in this course. **Each week** there will be at least one brief written assignment that will require you to apply the concepts we have discussed; some weeks will have two assignments. Each week's assignment will have specific instructions. Assignments will be submitted through Moodle. Weekly assignments will always be due on Sunday nights at 11:59pm.

Final Project (20% of grade)

The final project is due instead of a final exam and will be worked on throughout the summer term. It is a written project that requires you to apply many of the concepts learned throughout the course. Ultimately, you will be designing your own fictional research study, taking into account the methods and concepts that you learn during the summer.

Extra Credit:

There will be opportunities for extra credit in the class that can count towards your final grade. **I will not accept extra credit assignments late.** All extra credit will be available to all students in the course – there will be no individual extra credit. Extra credit can happen at any time; it will not be in the course outline, but you will always have at least a week to complete it.

You can see the course outline below.

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignments (due 11:59pm Sunday)
Week 1	Introduction and Overview; Scientific Psychology	Syllabus and Course Information; Chapter 1	Discussion post + response; Knowing There's a Santa Claus; FlatWorld Chapter 1 Quiz
Week 2	Research Basics	Chapter 2	Journal Article Search; Discussion post + response; FlatWorld Chapter 2 Quiz
Week 3	Research Ethics; Theories in Psychology	Chapter 3; Chapter 4	Discussion post + response; FlatWorld Chapter 3 Quiz; Reading Research Activity; FlatWorld Chapter 4 Quiz
Week 4	Psychological Measurement	Chapter 5	Independent and Dependent Variables; Discussion post + response; FlatWorld Chapter 5 Quiz
Week 5	Experimental Research	Chapter 6	Operational Definitions; Discussion post + response; FlatWorld Chapter 6 Quiz
Week 6	Nonexperimental Research	Chapter 7	Variables and Measurement Lab; Discussion post + response; FlatWorld Chapter 7 Quiz
Week 7	Complex Research Designs	Chapter 8	Personal Ads Coding Activity; Analyzing SpongeBob; Discussion post + response; FlatWorld Chapter 8 Quiz
Week 8	Survey Research; Single-Subject Research	Chapter 9; Chapter 10	Write Your Own Survey; Discussion post + response; FlatWorld Chapter 9 Quiz; Misinterpreting Correlations; FlatWorld Chapter 10 Quiz
Week 9	Descriptive Statistics; Inferential Statistics	Chapter 12; Chapter 13	Discussion post + response; FlatWorld Chapter 12 Quiz; Mythbusters Video Activity; FlatWorld Chapter 13 Quiz
Week 10	Presenting Research; The Big Picture	Chapter 11 and Chapter 14	Discussion post + response; FlatWorld Chapter 11 and Chapter 14 Quizzes; Final Project due by 11:59pm 8/9

Evaluation and Grading

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Discussion Postings	25%
Weekly Assignments	30%
Top Hat Activities	25%

Final Project

20%

Grades for the semester

I will use the following to assign grades based on the course averages while reserving the right to assign higher grades than those specified below.

> 93%	A	87-89.9%	B+	77-79.9%	C+	67-69.9%	D+
90-92.9%	A-	83-86.9%	B	73-76.9%	C	63-66.9%	D
		80-82.9%	B-	70-72.9%	C-	60-62.9%	D-
						<60%	E (F)

Important Course Policies

Attendance:

Even though this is an online course your “attendance” is critical. For an online course attendance requires logging in to the class frequently and submitting discussion postings and assignments on time.

Submission deadlines and late penalties:

All written assignments must be submitted in Moodle to receive a grade in the class. Late assignments will be graded down 10% per week late. Your final project will lose 15% the first day late and after that will not be accepted without making previous arrangements. FlatWorld quizzes will also lose points for each day they are late. You cannot turn in discussion posts late; they replicate in-class discussion, so you have to do them on time.

Please contact me ASAP if you are missing work.

Grading policy:

In general, you can expect a week turnaround time between the due date for your work and when you receive your grade. Of course, life does occasionally intervene, so I will let you know via email and Moodle announcement if this is not possible. Late work will not be graded on the same schedule as work which is received on time.

Course etiquette + netiquette:

Netiquette stands for Network Etiquette. It refers to proper behavior while interacting online. The golden rule of netiquette is essentially to treat people as you would want to be treated. Please be polite and considerate. Think about whether your comment could cause hurt feelings. Be careful about how your words can come across because misunderstandings can be common online. Feel free to use emoticons to show your tone! ☺

Please be respectful to me and to your classmates within both email and discussion board communications. Academic writing should be used in all communications including emails. Complaints about a fellow student's online communication should be directed to me. If a problem is found penalties may include grade reductions, failure of the course, and/or referral to student academic affairs.

Assignment deadlines:

Each week, you will be responsible for at least one writing assignment (sometimes 2), at least one FlatWorld Homework Quiz (sometimes 2), and one Discussion board (two posts minimum). Details can be seen above and are also on the last page). All assignments are due on Sundays by 11:59 PM. Penalties for late submissions are discussed above.

Expectations for student contribution to coursework:

Each course credit carries an expectation that in order to be successful a student needs to engage in approximately 45 hours of combined in-class and out-of-class work and preparation, where "out-of-class work" comprises readings, papers, discussion sections, problem sets, etc. The Department of Education's standard states that the combined total of class related engagement must equal 18 hours per week for a ten-week, four-credit summer course.

Academic honesty:

You are expected to be familiar with, and to follow, the University's policies on academic integrity. You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult [Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities](#) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to Student Rights and Community Standards. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. [Citation and research assistance](#) can be found on the [university library website](#).

Use of generative AI tools:

Generative AI has a place in the work that we are doing together in this course, and likely in your future endeavors. One of my goals for this course is that you further develop your AI literacy—that is, not only a sense of **how** to use generative AI tools to produce useful results, but also a sense of **when** and **why** to use them (or not use them) so as to preserve your own voice and agency as a human responsible for the knowledge you consume and produce.

In order to make sure that you are using generative AI in a way that contributes to your learning, and does not shortcut it, I am placing limitations on the ways in which you may use it. In this course, you:

- **may** use generative AI to develop your understanding of a concept, to practice a skill, to review course material (e.g. by self-quizzing), and for other, similar purposes in which you are employing generative AI to facilitate your learning **separately** from the formal work that you submit for evaluation, which must be entirely your own intellectual product.
- **may not** use generative AI when completing any assignments that will be submitted and graded. This means that you may not use generative AI to refine written work and/or code (e.g. with Grammarly or Claude Code), even when you have drafted it substantially on your own; to help you perform analytical tasks that are part of assignments (e.g. identifying or analyzing patterns within large datasets, interpreting figures, etc.); to transform material you have created in one genre into another (e.g. to transform an essay into a website); and for other, similar purposes in which you are employing generative AI to enhance or refine your assignment submissions.

I encourage you to read and take to heart the [AI Framework for Brandeis Students](#) when contemplating whether it is appropriate and genuinely advantageous to incorporate generative AI into your studying. Ultimately you are responsible for what you learn through your interactions with AI, including the assumptions and/or biases that generative AI may reproduce as well as the factual claims it may make.

Accommodations:

Brandeis seeks to create a learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all students, and I want to support you in your learning. If you think you may require disability accommodations, you will need to work with Student Accessibility Support (SAS). You can contact them at 781-736-3537, email them at access@brandeis.edu, or visit the [Student Accessibility Support home page](#). You can find helpful student FAQs and other resources on the SAS website, including guidance on how to know whether you might be eligible for support from SAS.

If you already have an accommodation letter from SAS, please provide me with a copy as soon as you can so that I can ensure effective implementation of accommodations for this class. In order to coordinate exam accommodations, ideally you should provide the accommodation letter at least 48 hours before an exam (this includes FlatWorld Quizzes, technically, though they are not timed!)

Respectful environment:

Brandeis University is committed to providing its students, faculty, and staff with an environment conducive to learning and working, where all people are treated with respect and dignity. Please refrain from any behavior toward members of our Brandeis community, including students, faculty, staff, and guests, that intimidates, threatens, harasses, or bullies.

Missed classes/assignments:

If you have a truly major health or family emergency, please contact me as soon as possible so we can make sure you stay on track. In general, I want to help you succeed; it's easier for me to do so if I know what is happening in your life!

Student support:

Success in this course depends heavily on your personal health and well-being.

Recognize that stress is an expected part of the college experience, and it often can be compounded by unexpected setbacks or life changes outside the classroom. Your other professors and I strongly encourage you to **reframe** challenges as unavoidable pathways to success. **Reflect** on your role in taking care of yourself throughout the academic year, before the demands of exams and projects reach their peak. Please feel free to **reach out** to me about difficulties you may be having that may impact your performance in this course as soon as it occurs and before it becomes too overwhelming. You can also find information about how Brandeis provides you with support [at this link](#).

How to do well in this class (some tips!):

KEEP UP: By midday Friday before each Monday, a new Week will be released (you will see it become visible on the course Home Page). This way, starting our first weekend you will always have two weeks available to work on, the week ending and the next one about to begin. Discussion postings are due every week by the end of the Sunday before we begin a new Week. FlatWorld will be available for the entire semester if you would like to work ahead.

STAY INVOLVED: The greatest danger in an online course is that students begin to feel distant and isolated, which in turn may impair their motivation and ability to keep up with requirements. Active participation in the weekly Discussions is vital here! You should plan to visit at least 2 or 3 times a week, both to post your own messages as well as to read what others have to say.

CHECK YOUR EMAIL FREQUENTLY: I will also use Moodle, which will go to your Brandeis email, to send out frequent announcements and reminders, so please check your email regularly during the summer term. You should get in the habit of checking your e-mail at least two or three times a week, if not daily.

ASK FOR HELP: This is perhaps the most important hint. If you are struggling or feeling overwhelmed or confused by any aspect of this experience, please let me know. Maintaining close contact is an important ingredient in your success, and I want to help you!