

PSY632 COURSE REQUIREMENTS

#1 (20%) MIDTERM ESSAY EXAM

Specifics: Your Midterm Exam will be in exactly the same format as your Final so that you can “practice” answering seminar-style test questions. You will be provided with 5 essay questions and will have to choose 3 of the 5 to answer. About 1 week prior to exam dates, I will hand out a set of study questions based on our readings. These study questions will be very similar to essay questions that will be on the exams. Please work on possible answers to these questions and share them with your classmates and/or myself. I strongly encourage you to write out “sample” answers before the exam – this will help you to organize your thoughts. You will need to answer the true essay questions in class without the help of your notes, books, readings, or classmates.

#2 (20%) FINAL ESSAY EXAM

Specifics: Your Final Exam will be in exactly the same format as your Midterm: you will be provided with 5 essay questions and will have to choose 3 of the 5 to answer. About 1 week prior to exam dates, I will hand out a set of study questions based on our readings. These study questions will be very similar to essay questions that will be on the exams. On the day of the final, the graduate advisor will give each of you a number for you to use to maintain your anonymity, and blue books and computer disks on which to put your answers. At that time, she will ask if you would like to take your final as a “comp” (short for “comprehensive” exam). Regardless of whether or not you take the final as a comp, you will be taking exactly the same test as your fellow classmates. The only difference between a comp and a regular final is that if you elect to take it as a comp then your test answers will be read and graded by myself as well as by a second, independent reader. The final will be held in the psychology computer lab so you can elect to use a computer or write out your answers by hand.

#3 (10%) IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION & CRITIQUES

Specifics: Talk!!!!!!! This seminar is all about learning new topics, thinking about them critically, and expressing and sharing our ideas. So....., no matter how you look at it, talking is a necessity in this class. For each required reading, you will need to generate at least 3 items of critique based on SCIENTIFIC CONTENT (general comments, how this research fits into your ideas on learning, ideas on improving the methodology, ideas on following up the research, etc.), type them up, and bring them into class on the day we will be covering the article(s). Be prepared to use your critiques during class discussion. Following class, you will need to turn them in to me so they need to be legible!!!! Since these critiques will not be accepted at any other time, please make sure I have them before you leave the classroom. Please do not email them to me. Your critiques should be insightful and specific to the articles. This means that they need to be clear enough to indicate you have read and thought about the articles carefully. Please avoid making vague comments that could apply to any and all articles; for example, "I found this article to be very interesting" or "This was a very easy article to read". Comments such as these are just that -- comments. They are not critiques (besides, they never do anyone any good and it always looks like you are trying to "fake it"). We sometimes have a tendency to make our critiques quite "negative"; that is, they usually point out weaknesses not strengths (since it happens soooooo often it must be a rather human thing to do I guess). So for each reading, please bring up at least 1 good/positive comment. It may take some additional thought, but I have faith in you.

#4 (5%) LITERATURE REVIEW: PREP & DRAFT

Due Dates: There will be four due dates, one for each of four aspects of your review.

Week 2, Tuesday 9/5 = Topic Choice

Week 4, Tuesday 9/19 = Outline

Week 3, Tuesday 9/12 = Literature Search

Week 5, Tuesday 9/26 = Draft

Goals: Practice writing, learn to aim your paper at a specific audience, learn to write a critical review of the literature, and learn to prepare Chapter 1 of a preliminary orals proposal.

Week 2, Topic Choice = 1%. During our first meeting, we will go over potential topics and attempt to match them up with your interests. By week 2, I will ask you to make your final decision and sign-up to write a paper on one of our prepared topics using one or more of the articles in the reading list (or an article that you suggest to me) as your initial resource. Your paper must be based on the assigned reading plus related articles collected as part of your literature search.

Week 3, Literature Search = 1%. Once your topic choice is made, you will need to run searches for additional references. You almost always have to use more than one database. Although these searches may not include all of the articles that you will eventually use, I would like to see a printout so we can determine if you are heading in a good direction for your paper. Your searches should generate at least 20 or so “hits” (please no more than 40). Out of these, choose 4-6 that you think are the best ones to include in your review. Turn in the following:

- (1) Hard copy of searches (with 20-40 hits).
- (2) Choice of 4-6 potential papers.
- (3) List of databases explored and search criteria used.

Week 4, Outline = 1%. Once your topic choice is made and you have conducted thorough literature searches, you will need to obtain the references and read them. Your “first pass” references should open up many, many more papers for you to explore -- just look in their reference sections! As you are reading, you will begin to organize your thoughts and decide which specific papers to include and how to present the material. Based on this, type up your thoughts as an outline for your paper and turn it in.

Week 5, Literature Review Draft = 2%. See the *University Style and Format Guidelines for Master's Theses and Project Reports* for details. ALL PAPERS WILL BE MARKED DOWN SUBSTANTIALY AND RETURNED to you unedited if it is in the wrong format so you will ABSOLUTELY need to follow this guide! It includes the rules for fonts, formatting of chapter headings and titles, formatting of subheadings, spacing of text, table and figure captions, notes, appendix materials, and references. It also has rules for the typing and formatting of the different pages and sections of your thesis. All other rules -- especially for how to write citations and what to include in a reference section -- are covered by the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Although your real thesis will not have a page limit, for this class the length should be no less than 15 pages. In addition to the 15 plus pages, you will need to include an appropriate reference section with a minimum of 8 primary references (this may include the reading list article) dated from 1999-2006. “Appropriate” in this case would be using APA style for content, University Style for spacing, font, etc.. If there are older articles you’d like to include in addition to these 8 please do!

- (1) Length = no fewer than 15 double-spaced typed pages (excluding references)
- (2) Font = 12 point Times Roman or Times New Roman
- (3) Margins = see Thesis Guidelines
- (4) Header/Footer = see Thesis Guidelines

Overview. This assignment is designed to help you write Chapter 1 of a preliminary orals proposal. Yes, each one of your thesis committee members will have their own list of things they would like to see, but this is designed to be a more general guide as to what is expected.

Know Your Audience: This paper, as well as your real preliminary orals proposal, should be written for an interested and educated audience. But remember..., an interested and educated audience does not necessarily know anything about your topic. In fact, your audience usually knows virtually nothing about your topic so the goal here is to “teach” them. For this assignment, I am your reader; but by the end of the semester your fellow students will be your readers. Do not assume that I (or they) know anything about your topic. Sometimes I will know very little, other times quite a bit so your aim here is to convey information in a clear, understandable manner without assuming that I “know what you mean” -- I don’t. Keep in mind that you are writing for more than one person -- you are not simply writing your thesis for your thesis chair! Granted..., your chair should know your topic area pretty well, but the rest of your committee will not. General rule of thumb: if you have to struggle with a topic, so will your readers. So one of the most difficult tasks you will have to perform is to guide your readers through the more challenging parts of your topic. Take them by the hand and lead them through your paper by starting with simple concepts (introduce then define your terms), go through the more complex (elaborate on research, describe theories), and end with the most provocative and innovative (i.e., your creative interpretation/critique of the material).

Organization: Organize, organize, organize! When you are finished with that, organize more! Think about your topic, what you would like to say, and how you should say it. Remember, you need to educate yourself first then educate your readers by providing information clearly and succinctly. If a paper is poorly organized, your readers will not be able to follow your ideas no matter how brilliant they are. USE HEADINGS! Headings and subheadings help organize your paper; they are just as useful to you as they are to your readers. Please do not try to impress me with your vocabulary or the sheer amount of work you have done by writing down every detail; instead, impress me with your ability to communicate effectively through writing. Definitely do not try to impress me using the words of your sources. I am never impressed by that since (1) many of your sources are poor writers, and (2) that’s called “plagiarism”.

Content: Committees differ in what they require in an actual thesis proposal, but in general it includes an Abstract, Introduction (Chapter 1), Methods (Chapter 2), Discussion (Chapter 3), and Reference section. This paper will be the equivalent of Chapter 1 plus the Reference section and will need to cover what I call “the basics”, current research, and a critical analysis. By the end of the semester, you will be required to add the abstract and other chapters.

The Basics. To cover the basics, you need to offer a clear and complete discussion of your topic as well as the theories used (if any) to explain it. Include the methods used to conduct the research, the results, and some explanation of how the results either support or refute the theory.

Current Research. Your discussion of current research should include research that applies to and updates the main review. Include a brief discussion of each paper with the rationale for why the study was conducted, methods used, results, and a discussion of how results fit into the larger picture.

Critical Analysis. Last, include a critical analysis of your topic by including an identification of unresolved issues brought up by the research and a discussion of how you might resolve them (e.g., what methods would you use to either run the study again, or run a subsequent, more illuminating study!). This last section is very important because it will set up your last assignment for this class: a mock preliminary orals proposal and defense.

Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar. Since this is a graduate course, please make sure that you keep these errors down to a bare minimum. I know we all make them, but be sure not to make too, too many or your paper will be returned to you ungraded (or worse). Proofread your paper before turning it in. Your thesis chair (i.e. “me” for this class) and committee members ARE NOT PROOFREADERS!!! Our function is not to correct your spelling, punctuation, and grammar; we are on your committee to comment on content, style, and scientific validity.

Style: Oh dear..., this part is next to impossible to teach, but here’s some advice.

Official Guides. *The University Style and Format Guidelines for Master's Theses and Project Reports* includes rules for fonts, chapter headings, titles, spacing of text, table and figure captions, notes, appendix materials, and references. It also has rules for the typing and formatting of the different pages and sections of your thesis. It does not really cover “style” *per se* but rather defers those decisions to your department and thesis chair. The Psychology Department uses the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* as the main source of information especially for writing citations in the text body then referencing them correctly in the reference section. If you would like to write a bit better and need a good pocket guide to writing style, purchase W. Strunk & E.B. White's *The Elements of Style* (2000; 4th or most recent edition, Boston:Allyn & Bacon). It's a good investment.

Paragraphs. This next statement may sound rather silly at first pass, but it needs to be said: Please use multiple paragraphs. By definition, paragraphs are greater than two sentences; and a section with a heading usually, but not always, contains two or more paragraphs. A paragraph should not be one sentence long, regardless of how long that sentence may be (that last part is a joke just in case you are not laughing yet). AVOID LONG, RUN-ON SENTENCES! They rarely, if ever, make any sense.

Parenthetical Clauses. Notice that a parenthetical clause was used above to convey a joke: they are often considered to be examples of poor writing style; ...oh well. If a point you are trying to make isn't important enough to warrant it's own sentence, then it is probably not important enough to include. Minimize use of parenthetical clauses.

“Awk”. You will all see this written throughout your papers. It refers to “awkward” and will be put next to a sentence or an entire paragraph that is written so awkwardly that I cannot tell what you mean no matter how many times I read it. Many times, “awk” is due to long, run-on sentences, poor or incorrect use of punctuation, or both.

Third Person, Past Tense. Most scientific papers are written in third person. Avoid referring to yourself using words and phrases such as “I” or “we”. For example, in one of the sentences above, instead of writing “Notice that I used a parenthetical clause...”, the chosen phrase was “Notice that a parenthetical clause was used...”. Also, most scientific papers are written in past tense. Again, as an example, instead of writing “Notice that a parenthetical clause *is* being used...”, the chosen phrase was “Notice that a parenthetical clause *was* used...”. Use past tense, not present tense when writing a literature review. This will change when you write other sections of your proposal, but the literature review (Chapter 1) is always third person, past tense.

Agreement of Subject and Verb. Make sure that the number of subjects determines the number of the verb; for example, “numbers” (plural noun) “determine” (plural verb) whereas “number” (singular noun) “determines” (singular verb).

Voilà! Once finished with this part, you will be ready to move on to the Abstract, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 which will be due later as requirement #7 RESEARCH PROPOSAL.

#5 (10%) LITERATURE REVIEW: FINAL DRAFT

Due Date: Week 8, Tuesday 10/17

Goals: To learn from your mistakes and be able to revise your draft according to the feedback you get from others (in this case, me). It also doesn't hurt if you get a second shot at submitting a good paper. Since you are now in graduate school, the days of cramming and putting in all-nighters are *not* over (contrary to what others might tell you). However..., the days of attempting to do that and submitting an acceptable paper are ABSOLUTELY over. The reality of our professional lives is that none of us, no matter how good we are, submit a "final" copy of anything until it has been through a number of different hands (co-authors, colleagues, reviewers, journal editors, etc.) and innumerable revisions. I will not pull any punches here -- this process can often be brutal. Even if not "brutal" per se, it always requires an ego adjustment and is uncomfortable at best. Therefore, I will make extensive notes on your drafts and highlight problem areas. I will not correct these problems -- that's your responsibility -- but I will direct your attention to them. Your finished draft should reflect your attempt to remedy those problems (all of them) and must include the following:

Cover Letter. This letter is written to your reviewer(s) to let them know exactly how you have addressed all of their comments -- one-by-one.

Revised Paper. Your revision must be made in **BOLD** text so that your reviewer can see all that you have changed.

To be considered "on time", you must turn in the original draft with my comments, as well as the cover letter and revised paper into the PSYCHOLOGY OFFICE and have them DATE STAMPED BEFORE 5PM on Tuesday 10/17!!!

#6 (10%) LECTURE

Due Date: Will vary dependent upon topic.

Goals: Practice public speaking, learn how to aim your talk for a specific audience, learn how to teach a topic area not just "present" the information, learn how to write a quiz to assess your student's understanding of your topic, and further conceptualize and understand your own topic by teaching others.

Specifics: You will be responsible for covering 75 minutes of one class period. You can use pretty much anything at our collective disposal: handouts, overhead projector, VCR & monitor, slide projector, audio tape player, digital projector.... Just let me know in advance and I'll try to arrange it. Preparing your lecture using PowerPoint is highly desirable, but not essential.

Overview: This assignment is designed to help you learn how to present material in such a way as to teach it to others. This will involve an interaction between you and I to determine what material needs to be covered, how it should be organized, and how it should be presented. Please arrange to work out your ideas with me during the week before your lecture; email me, come to office hours, and/or arrange to meet with me outside of office hours.

Know Your Audience: As with your paper, your lecture should be prepared for an interested and educated audience. They will not necessarily know much about your topic beyond that which they may have covered in a class on learning, or which they covered in the assigned readings. This assignment will be given to your peers therefore prepare it for them, not me. Remember: if you struggled with a particular concept, they probably will also -- it is your job to help them understand. Introduce basic concepts slowly and clearly, making sure your audience stays with you. Introduce then define your terms; once they are clear you can then elaborate on research and describe theories. The formal part of your lecture should end with your critique of your chosen topic area. This critique should then be used to generate discussion by all seminar participants (although most of the time, a discussion occurs well before you get to that point in your lecture). Your presentation is designed to be delivered as a lecture; this means you can and should take questions from the seminar participants throughout. These questions will often lead to discussion which is really the overriding theme of a graduate seminar so foster it.

Organization: Organize, organize, organize! Need I say more? You have all experienced miserable lectures. Many times the hardest lectures to sit through are those that are poorly organized. Please take pity on your audience (that includes me) -- put in the work to organize your topic in such a way that you start with easy, introductory level items then progress to the more difficult ones.

Content: Your lecture must start by covering aspects of learning that will bring everyone in the class up-to-date on general principles of learning. Use your textbook!!! For example, if your topic is behavior therapy interventions for the treatment of phobias then you will probably have to cover basic classical conditioning principles and methods (yep, start with Pavlov). If your topic is spatial learning then you will need to start your lecture on the differences between trial-and-error learning versus more complex forms of learning such as spatial learning and cognitive maps. Once you have introduced the general concepts, then be sure to present a general overview of your paper followed by your critique. We will then “open the floor” to all seminar participants and discuss, analyze, and critique the papers. This is designed to be an open exchange of ideas – creativity, innovation, and enthusiasm are premiums in this class!

#7 (15%) RESEARCH PROPOSAL (Mock Prelim Proposal)

Due Date: Week 13, Monday, 11/21: everyone must submit 15 copies of their proposal.

Goals: Practice revising a paper following comments by your thesis chair (aka “me”), and learn to write a RESEARCH PROPOSAL by preparing the Abstract, Methods (Chapter 2), and Outcomes & Interpretations (Chapter 3) sections of a preliminary orals proposal.

Overview: This assignment is designed to be a mock preliminary orals proposal that expands upon your work on your REVIEW PAPER (requirements #4 and #5 above). During the last three weeks of the semester, everyone will present and discuss these proposals in a mock PRELIMINARY ORALS presentation (see requirement #8 below). All of the guidelines provided for the REVIEW PAPER should also be used for this RESEARCH PROPOSAL especially with regard to organization, spelling, punctuation, grammar, and style.

Know Your Audience: By this point in the semester, you should be pretty clear on what your audience is like but this is important enough that it bears repeating. As with your review paper

and your lecture, your research proposal should be prepared for an interested and educated audience. Again, they will not necessarily know much about your topic. Remember you are writing for more than one person especially when you are writing your real preliminary orals proposal -- you are not simply writing your thesis for your thesis chair! Your chair should know your topic area pretty well, but the rest of your committee will not. Most of the time, your committee members are there to provide you with their expertise on basic writing, experimental design, and/or statistics. Your chair covers the specific scientific content, but the other members determine whether you are covering that scientific content in a way suitable for a general audience. Trust me on this: they will not “know what you mean” unless you have stated your points simply and clearly!

Organization: You know the drill: organize, organize, organize. Start with simple concepts (introduce then define your terms), go through the more complex (elaborate on research, describe theories), and end with the most provocative and innovative (i.e., your creative interpretation/critique of the material).

Specifics: This assignment is designed to be a mock preliminary orals proposal and involves revising your REVIEW PAPER. The revised paper can then be used as your Title Page, Chapter 1, and Reference section of your proposal. To these sections you will need to add a Chapter 2 covering Methods, a Chapter 3 covering Outcomes and Interpretations, and an Abstract. The proposal needs to be written according to both *The University Style and Format Guidelines for Master's Theses and Project Reports* as well as the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* as was the case with your review paper. Please provide 15 complete copies of your proposal for distribution to everyone in the class (including me).

Content: The following sections will be needed to complete your RESEARCH PROPOSAL:

ABSTRACT. Use *The University Style and Format Guidelines for Master's Theses and Project Reports* in order to format correctly. When discussing previous research, write in 3rd person, past tense; when writing about the experiment that you are proposing, write in 3rd person, future tense. Be sure to stay within the 150 word maximum.

TITLE PAGE. Use *The University Style and Format Guidelines for Master's Theses and Project Reports* in order to format correctly.

CHAPTER 1 -- INTRODUCTION. Your final review paper (assignment #5) is now your rough draft for this section so revise using my comments/suggestions as a guide. This chapter should now provide the background theory and research into your topic area and include important definitions and conceptual variables. If not done before, now is the time to add a section on unanswered questions that may have resulted from the research you summarized. Transition from this new section into Chapter 2 by stating what experiment(s) you are proposing to run and why. State your hypothesis clearly. Write in 3rd person, past tense for the review, but in 3rd person, future tense for your proposed experiment(s).

CHAPTER 2 -- METHODS. Chapter 1 should end with a statement of what experiment(s) you are proposing and why. So in Chapter 2 you need to include the details of exactly how you propose to conduct the study. Include a description of Subjects, Materials and/or Apparatus, Design, Procedures, Statistical Analyses, plus additional details about your study as appropriate. Include a draft of any questionnaires or other materials to be used if any. In your section on Statistical Analyses, you will need to include your proposed independent and dependent

variables, which analyses you propose to do given your design, the p value that you propose to use to determine statistical significance, etc.. Write in 3rd person, future tense.

CHAPTER 3 - OUTCOMES & INTERPRETATIONS. This is the section that you must include for your real preliminary orals paper; for your real final thesis it becomes your Discussion section. Describe and interpret each of the possible outcomes of your experiment(s) and discuss how the various results will either support or refute your hypothesis.. Write in 3rd person, future tense.

REFERENCES. Use *The University Style and Format Guidelines for Master's Theses and Project Reports* as well as the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* in order to format correctly.

Once you have finished writing your proposal, you will need to email me your orals announcement as a Word attachment no later than Wednesday 4/20; I will then distribute it to the class. The ORALS ANNOUNCEMENT TEMPLATE that must be followed is formatted in MS Word, is available on the department web site, and can be downloaded from

<http://www.csulb.edu/~psych/gradprgm/currstud/thesisgd04.html>

#8 (5%) MOCK PRELIMINARY ORALS

Due Date: Specific date will vary dependent upon topic, but all prelim orals will be held on Weeks 14-16, Tuesday 11/28, 12/5, and 12/12

Goals: Practice giving a very brief synopsis of your research plans. Learn what to expect during your “real” preliminary orals. Review material for the final.

Specifics: You will be asked to hold preliminary orals based on the research you proposed in assignment #7 above. The schedule calls for 5 orals per week so they will need to be short and to-the-point.

Overview: Preliminary orals and final orals tend to be a bit of a “mystery” to most students and can therefore be quite stressful. We’re going to try to demystify the process by having you do a shortened “mock” version of the preliminary orals for this class.

Know Your Audience: Oh yeah....., you know this one already.

Organization: Same with this one.

Content: Any faculty member or graduate student may attend your “real” orals therefore the members of this class will be attending yours; 3 of them will be acting as your committee. Orals will begin with your PowerPoint presentation of a 10 minute overview of your proposed study. During the remaining 10-20 minutes, your committee will question, discuss, and hopefully resolve any details that may have been unclear in your proposal. Usually real orals last about an hour -- your orals for this class will be limited to 20-30 minutes each.

#9 (5%) COMMITTEE WORK

All committee work will be conducted on Weeks 14-16, Tuesday 11/28, 12/5, and 12/12.

Goals: To share in the process of evaluating thesis proposals and learn what happens when your committee meets following your orals presentation.

Due Date: Your participation as a thesis chair or member will be determined randomly therefore the “due date(s)” will be sometime during Weeks 14-16, Tuesday 11/28, 12/5, and 12/12.

Specifics: During Weeks 14-16, you will be asked to read all of the proposals, edit them, and provide comments. Please write your comments directly on your copy of the proposal itself since they will be turned in to me first, then to the individual authors after I have looked them over. Armed with your copies of the proposals, you will be asked to serve once as a thesis committee chair, and twice as a thesis committee member. On the day(s) that you are chosen, you will need to lead the question-and-answer period for an individual student (with my help). After orals have been completed for a given student, the student will be asked to leave the room and the committee will discuss the proposal and make their recommendations.