

Psychology 420: Senior Integrative Seminar
Fall 2017
Department of Psychology, Colby College

Prof. Erin Sheets
Email: erin.sheets@colby.edu
Office: Davis 336
Office hours: Mondays 4:00-5:00, Tuesdays 3:00-5:00

Colloquia: Fridays 3:00-4:00
Discussion: Wednesdays 7:00-9:30

Course Overview

PS420 is designed as a culminating experience for senior psychology majors. Its overarching goal is for students to critically engage with a variety of current psychological research, so that they can integrate theories, methodologies, and findings across areas of psychology. At the completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify key research questions, hypotheses, methodologies, findings, and conclusions from both oral presentations and written reports;
2. Critically evaluate psychological research conducted in a variety of content areas;
3. Draw connections between different theories, methodologies, and findings — both within and across areas of psychology; and
4. Communicate ideas about psychological theories and research, both orally and in writing.

Colloquium Talks and Class Meetings

We will attend all of this semester's Psychology Department colloquium talks, scheduled for select Fridays at 3:00 pm in Davis 301. We will also meet for discussion each Wednesday following a colloquium talk. See the course calendar on page 5 for specific dates, speakers, and topics.

Course Readings

There is no textbook for the course. Instead, before each talk you will read one paper related to the talk. These papers are chosen by the colloquium speakers and are available on Moodle. At each presentation and class meeting, you should be prepared to answer questions about and discuss the reading assigned for that presentation.

Evaluation

Discussion Questions

By **6:00 pm on the Sunday** before each Wednesday class discussion meeting, each of you (with the exception of the class discussion leaders) will submit one or two discussion questions related to the colloquium talk or reading. You should post these questions to the Moodle discussion board so that we can read and think about them before the class meeting. These could be questions about theoretical ideas, broader implications of the results, ideas for future research, or other relevant aspects. Note that clarification questions (e.g., asking to review a study procedure or analysis from the colloquium talk or

paper that you didn't completely follow) are also encouraged, but are different from discussion questions. Each week, I will grade your discussion question(s) on a 5-point scale: 5 = submitted at least one well formulated discussion question on time, 3 = all questions were poorly formulated or repeated already submitted questions, and 0 = no questions were submitted. Late postings will not receive credit.

Questions asked of the speaker at the colloquium can be counted as one discussion question. To receive credit for these types of questions, on the Moodle Discussion board, you must write the question you asked, summarize the speaker's response, and indicate whether the response answered your question or what your next question would be now that this one was answered.

Here are two questions from a previous section of PS420 with feedback on how they were graded. The presentation was by David Balota of Washington University, who presented a series of studies geared toward predicting the incidence of Alzheimer's dementia (AD) from cognitive and personality factors.

1. "Some of the drugs that are currently on the market for treating Alzheimer's work to reduce the amyloid deposits in brain. However, the basis for Balota's attention and personality research is to determine whether another modulator may be playing a more direct role in the development of AD (because people with these neurological abnormalities don't always display memory dysfunction). Is the effectiveness of these drugs therefore dependent on individual differences in attention and personality?"

CREDIT = 5 because (a) it provides a preamble to the question so you know where the student is coming from, (b) reaches across areas – linking biology to several areas of psychology (attention, personality), and because (c) an attempt to answer the question (regardless of whether there is a single answer) would lead to an in-depth discussion (not just a yes/no response).

2. "Why might adults rely more heavily on relations across items than on defining information for encoded items?"

CREDIT = 3 because (a) it is hard to understand the question (not enough background or context and/or too much jargon) and (b) even though it may lead to an in-depth discussion it isn't clear why this is an interesting avenue to pursue. In other words, what will we learn from the answer?

Discussion Participation

This is a seminar course in which your active engagement is required. You must come to each class prepared, having carefully read the target article *and* given thought to the submitted discussion questions. As this course is your capstone experience, it is expected that your questions and many of your comments will be informed by prior coursework. It is expected that you will interact with your peers in an open-minded, respectful manner. After each class meeting, I will grade your participation on a five-point scale: 5 =

contributed substantially to the class discussion, 3 = contributed a little to the class discussion, 0 = absent or did not contribute to the class discussion.

To truly engage in a thoughtful and thorough exchange of ideas with your classmates, you must give your undivided attention to the discussion. Accordingly, **all devices are prohibited during class.**

Leading Discussion

A small team of students will lead each of our Wednesday class discussion meetings. During the discussion meeting, they will engage the seminar participants in a discussion that (a) summarizes the research described in the target colloquium talk and paper, (b) relates the colloquium talk and paper with other research, (c) organizes and integrates the posted discussion questions, and (d) evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the program of research and the quality of the colloquium presentation. Leaders will meet with the instructor on Monday or Tuesday to talk through their plan for leading the discussion. The discussion leaders will also have lunch with the speaker on the day of the colloquium, which provides the opportunity to ask the speaker in-depth questions about her/his work.

The main objective of the discussion leaders is to draw the class into an active discussion or friendly debate about the research presented in the colloquium talk and target reading(s). Each team can decide how to use their presentation to accomplish this. You will be expected to use PowerPoint and to reference material from (only) **three empirical research papers** other than the assigned reading(s). Examples of well-done PowerPoint slides from previous semesters are available on Moodle.

Key to the role of leader is facilitating discussion. It's important that you effectively review and evaluate the talk, target article, and three non-assigned articles, and that you lead discussions that address everyone's questions. Class leaders who "fill up" the full scheduled meeting time without allowing for ample discussion will be penalized. Also, interactive activities that facilitate student engagement are encouraged. The goal is quality discussion, interaction by all members of the class, and full exploration of the topic.

In general, my role during the class meetings will be that of an observer and occasional discussion participant. The discussion leaders should feel free to ask me for my thoughts, but otherwise I will do my best to stay out of the way and let them direct the discussion. Following each class meeting, I will give the discussion leaders detailed feedback about their presentation, some of which will come from student evaluation of the presentation. The discussion leaders will evaluate each other's contributions to the team.

Integrative Final Paper

You will write a final paper that integrates ideas, methods, and/or findings from the work of two or more of the colloquium speakers. The purpose of the integrative final paper is for you to connect the ideas and research of different (potentially *very* different) psychologists.

Requirements

The paper assignment is quite open-ended. It has only a few requirements:

- The paper must draw on ideas, methods, and/or findings from the work of at least two of this semester's Psychology Department colloquium speakers. This material can come from the speakers' colloquium talks or from papers that they have written.
- The paper must draw on material from at least three empirical papers that were not read for this course. It is ok to draw from papers that were incorporated into the seminar discussion by the week's leaders.
- The paper may also discuss your personal experiences related to the paper topic; if you include such a discussion, you should limit it to about one page in total length.
- The paper should follow APA formatting guidelines, with a title page and list of references. In terms of writing style, it can be less formal than the typical APA paper.
- The paper should be 6-8 pages long (double-spaced, with a 12-point font and 1" margins), not including the title page and list of references.

The paper is due no later than **December 13 by 7:00 pm**. The paper must be submitted through Moodle as a Word document.

Organization of the Paper

In past semesters, many excellent papers have used a structure roughly similar to the following:

1. An introduction that summarizes and connects ideas, methods, and/or findings from two or more of the colloquium speakers, leading to the formulation of one or more key questions or hypotheses. For example:
 - Speaker A and Speaker B advocate theories, models, or hypotheses that seem incompatible with each other. Which is correct?
 - Speaker A proposes a theory, model, or hypothesis that could be used to interpret the data from some of Speaker B's research. How well do the data from Speaker B's study (and other studies) fit with Speaker A's ideas?
 - Speaker A uses a particular research methodology that could also be used to study one of the psychological phenomena that interest Speaker B. What could this methodology reveal about this phenomenon?
2. A section that reviews and interprets previous research (conducted by the colloquium speakers and/or other researchers) relevant to the key questions or hypotheses.
3. A closing section, which might (a) draw conclusions about the paper's key questions or hypotheses, (b) discuss the broader implications of these conclusions for education, therapy, public policy, everyday life, etc., (c) identify important but unanswered questions that can be addressed by future research, and/or (d) informally propose a new study designed to address one or more of these open questions.

This structure is one possibility. Excellent papers have also taken many other forms. I am happy to meet with you and talk about your ideas for the paper.

Overall course grades will be weighted as follows:

Course component	Weight
Written discussion questions	20%
Class meeting participation	30%
Group presentation and discussion	25%
Integrative final paper	25%
Total	100%

Course Calendar

Date	Event
Wed 9/6	<i>Organizational meeting</i>
Fri 9/15	<i>Colloquium #1</i> Allecia Reid , Colby College Peer Influences on Alcohol Use: Implications of Social Psychological Processes for Behavior Change
Wed 9/20	<i>Class meeting #1</i>
Fri 9/22	<i>Colloquium #2</i> Wade Rowatt , Baylor University The Psychology of Religion and Immigrant Prejudice
Wed 9/27	<i>Class meeting #2</i>
Fri 9/29	<i>Colloquium #3</i> Daniel Briley , University of Illinois Using Behavior Genetics to Better Understand the Development of Personality and Human Agency
Wed 10/4	<i>Class meeting #3</i>
Fri 10/20	<i>Colloquium #4</i> Mark Huff , University of Southern Mississippi Distinctive Encoding Reduces Associative False Recognition in Both Younger and Older Adults, but Why? Insight from Signal-Detection and Diffusion-Modeling Analyses
Wed 10/25	<i>Class meeting #4</i>
Fri 10/27	<i>Colloquium #5</i> Bradford Pillow , Northern Illinois University Learning about the Mind: Children's Understanding of Knowledge and Cognitive Activities
Wed 11/1	<i>Class meeting #5</i>
Fri 11/3	<i>Colloquium #6</i> Josephine Shih , St. Joseph's University Coping with Stress: What Works and What Doesn't?
Wed 11/8	<i>Class meeting #6</i>
Fri 12/1	<i>Colloquium #7</i> Magdalena Wojtowicz , York University Pediatric Concussion: Informing Clinical Care through Research
Wed 12/6	<i>Class meeting #7</i>

Course Policies

Attendance

Given the participatory nature of this seminar course, it is difficult to make up for planned or unplanned absences. You are expected to attend *every* colloquium and class meeting. The College attendance policy as stated in the *Colby College Catalogue* is in effect.

Students are expected to attend all of their classes and scheduled course events in any semester or January and are responsible for any work missed. Failure to attend can lead to a warning, grading penalties, and/or dismissal from the course with a failing grade.

The colloquium schedule was put together with semester breaks in mind. If you have a conflict, such as the observance of a religious holiday, please let me know as soon as possible.

Make-up for an excused absence from a colloquium (e.g., for a job interview or athletic conflict, but not personal travel plans) – **with your absence approved in advance** – will entail reading an additional article related to the presentation topic. This article must be approved in advance by your instructor, and you must post your comments and questions based on both the target article and the additional article – making it clear in your posting which comments and questions are based on each article. The due date for your reading and posting for the additional and target articles is the stated Sunday evening deadline.

Make-up for an excused absence from a class discussion meeting – with your absence approved in advance – will entail attending the Department of Psychology poster session on December 8 (3:00 pm). To receive make-up credit, you must do the following: (1) List all posters you attended by indicating, for each, the name of the researcher(s) and the full title of the poster. (2) Choose one poster and write (a) a one-paragraph overview of the study including question addressed, method, results, and implications of the findings and (b) a second paragraph that makes links between the poster and one of the speakers or topics explored as part of PS 420. List all references in APA format. The due date for this make-up assignment is December 13 by 7:00 pm.

Academic Honesty & Consequences for Academic Dishonesty

Honesty, integrity, and personal responsibility are cornerstones of a Colby education and provide the foundation for scholarly inquiry, intellectual discourse, and an open and welcoming campus community. These values are articulated in the Colby Affirmation and are central to this course. You are expected to demonstrate academic honesty in all aspects of this course. If you are clear about course expectations, give credit to those whose work you rely on, and submit your best work, you are highly unlikely to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: violating clearly stated rules for completing assignments; plagiarism (including material from sources without a citation and quotation marks around any borrowed words); claiming another's work or a modification of another's work as one's own; buying or attempting to buy papers or projects for a course; fabricating information or citations; knowingly assisting others in

acts of academic dishonesty; misrepresentations to faculty within the context of a course; and submitting the same work, including a paper that you wrote, in more than one course without the permission of the instructors.

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense against the college. Sanctions for academic dishonesty are assigned by an academic review board and may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, or suspension or expulsion from the College.

If you have questions about any aspects of academic honesty, please do not hesitate to speak to me. It is always better to ask a question about academic honesty than to make a bad decision. For more on recognizing and avoiding plagiarism, see the library guide: libguides.colby.edu/avoidingplagiarism

Delayed Exams/Papers

This course follows the psychology department's general policy on deadline extensions: Students should treat deadlines as firm. Only documented medical excuses, documented personal catastrophes (such as a death in the family), and religious observances will be accepted as reasons not to complete an assignment as scheduled. If you are, for legitimate reasons, unable to complete an assignment when it is scheduled, you should notify the instructor ***in advance*** of the due date. Having a lot of work to do, several exams/papers in a few days, being generally unprepared, or having conflicting travel arrangements are not acceptable excuses to miss a due date.

Support for Students with Learning Differences

If you have a learning difference for which an academic accommodation is needed, please contact the instructors to discuss this as soon as possible