

PSCH 4310: Special Topics Writing in Psychology

I. Basic Course Information

I-A. Course Description

This course focuses on the effective methods of writing in the field of Psychology.

I-B. Course Learning Objectives

- examine some of the most important grammatical rules in the English language and the structure of a college essay. Students will also examine the use of APA in manuscripts.
- develop an awareness of the importance of effective writing as a professional and as a college major.
- Understand the importance of using a standard such as APA to develop papers.

I-C. Psychology Program Student Learning Outcomes

This course is an element of the RGC psychology program. It is expected that the graduating student in this program will demonstrate the capacity to:

- Recognize the central concepts in the department's main areas of focus: abnormal psychology; social & personality psychology, and developmental psychology.
- Recognize and apply basic psychological research methods.
- Communicate effectively in written assignments and oral presentations concerning psychological subject matter.
- Demonstrate insight into the behavior and psychological processes of oneself and others.

I-D. Meeting Time and Location

This course is a split-web course. It is vital that students consult the syllabus calendar to determine online assignments and class meetings.

I-E. Instructor

The instructor for this course is Dr. Tiffany Culver.

Email (preferred method of contact for a quick response): tculver@sulross.edu

Phone (excellent for calling, less so for getting calls returned): 830-279-3022

Office: A107 Uvalde

Office Hours: M-Th 5-6 p.m. and M-TH 10-11 a.m. online

Appointments may also be made for other days and times.

I-F. Course Materials
Required Texts

Basic Grammar and Usage, 8th Edition
Penelope Choy Los Angeles City College
Dorothy Goldbart Clark California State University, Northridge
ISBN-10: 1428211551 | ISBN-13: 9781428211551

Steps to Writing Well, 12th Edition
Jean Wyrick Professor Emerita, Colorado State University
ISBN-10: 1133311318 | ISBN-13: 9781133311317
656 Pages
Previous Editions: 2011, 2008, 2008
© 2014 | Published

APA Manual (most recent)
Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, (Sixth Edition). ISBN-13: 978-1433805622

By law, Sul Ross is required to tell you the following: "*A student of this institution is not under any obligation to purchase a textbook from a university-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer.*" In fact, bargains on textbooks are often found on the websites of many Internet booksellers. Major online vendors typically accept major credit cards, checks, and money orders.

● Illegal copies of textbooks are prohibited at all times in classrooms and labs.

II. Assignments

II-A. Diagnostic Tests (7)

During the first class meeting students will complete a diagnostic exam that will allow the professor to determine students' prior knowledge of grammar and writing.

II-B. Exercises A and B (Choy)

Students will complete the assigned reading in the Choy book and complete the assigned A and B activities from the book. Students will then refer to the back of the book and to bboard to check their answers. Don't skip this part! This will prepare you for the exams.

II-D. Unit Exams (Choy)

Students will take unit exams on bboard. These exams will be 100 points and cover all the material in the unit assigned. The exams will be timed. Students must stay within the allotted time or deductions will occur. If students go over 5 minutes past their allotted time, they will receive a 0 on the exam.

II-E. Assignments (Wyrick)

Students will read the assigned chapter in the Wyrick book and complete the assignment posted on the course calendar. All assignments should be typed in Word and uploaded to blackboard. These are writing assignments and students are encouraged to visit the writing center to receive help with their writing.

II-F. Assignments (APA)

Students will complete the assignments posted on the course calendar.

II-G. Final Exam

The final exam will require students to review a written paper and correct ALL grammatical errors, sentence/paragraph errors (organization, thesis statements, etc.) and APA errors.

II-E. Topic and Assignment Schedule

Writing in Psychology Course Calendar

August 24th –meet in class
Syllabus, diagnostic tests (7)

August 31-online work

Unit 1 (Exercise 1A and Exercise 1B for Chapters 1-4) and end of Unit review

Unit 1 Test (on bboard)

Unit 2 (Exercise 1 A and Exercise 1B for Chapters 5-8) and end of the Unit review

Unit 2 Test (on bboard)

Sept 7- online work

Unit 3 (Exercise 1A and Exercise 1B for Chapters 9-12) and end of the Unit review

Unit 3 Test (on bboard)

Sept 14- online work

Unit 4 (Exercise 1A and Exercise 1B for Chapters 13-16) and end of the Unit review

Unit 4 Test (on bboard)

Sept 21-online work

Unit 5 (Exercise 1A and Exercise 1B for Chapters 17-20) and end of the Unit review

Unit 5 Test (on bboard)

Sept 28 – online work

Unit 6 (Exercise 1A and Exercise 1B Chapters 21-25) and end of the Unit review

Unit 6 Test (on bboard)

Oct 5-online work

Unit 7 (Exercise F and G for Chapters 26)

Oct 12 –meet in class

Chapter 1 **Assignment** “Practicing What You’ve Learned” Part A (Write a paragraph answers questions 1, 2, 3, and 4)

Chapter 2 **Assignment** “Practicing What You’ve Learned” Part A and Part B

Oct 19- online work

Chapter 3 **Assignment** -Create an informal outline like the examples on pages 47-48. You may use any topic you like. At the top of the outline state your Thesis and your Essay map.

Oct 26-online work

Chapter 4 **Assignment**-Write a beginning (intro) and ending (conclusion) for the outline you created last week; Using one of the visual organizers I put on bboard, use your outline to fill in the blanks

Nov 2-online work

Chapter 5 **Assignment** p. 110 “Practicing What You’ve Learned” Part A

Using your outline and visual organizer complete your writing on the topic you picked. Remember that I need an introduction, 2-3 body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Revise as necessary.

Nov 9-online work

Chapter 6 **Assignment** p. 139-140 “Practicing What You’ve Learned” 1-10

Nov 16-meet in class

APA

Nov 23- online work

Assignment -Turn in an APA cover sheet and reference page

Nov 30—online work

Assignment-Turn in all parts of paper in APA style, including in text citations

Dec 7 final exam (on bboard)

III. Grading

III-A. The Calculation of Grades

Grades for each assignment, and for the course itself, are calculated as follows:
A: 90% or above; B: 80%-89%; C: 70%-79%; D: 60%-69%; F: 0%-59%.

The times and dates when assignments are due and when evaluations are given will not be altered to fit your schedule. You will be expected to alter your schedule to fit class responsibilities.

In the interest of more thorough coverage of certain topics, the professor may decide to omit some of the assigned material from coverage on any particular exam. You are responsible to learn of any announced omissions.

Unit Tests: 100 points x 7
Assignments (Wyrick): 100 x 6
Assignments (APA): 100 x 2
Final Exam: 200

$700 + 600 + 200 + 100 = \mathbf{1500 \text{ points}}$

In order to calculate your grades, simply add up all your points on the unit tests, assignments (Wyrick), and assignments (APA). Then double your score on your final and add it to the sum of the other work. Then divide that number by 1500. When you get your answer, multiply the number by 100.

III-B. The Interpretation of Final Grades

The rigor of grading varies somewhat from course to course, from instructor to instructor, from discipline to discipline, and from school to school. It is important to understand that the level of effort needed to achieve a particular grade in another course, under another instructor, in another discipline, or at another institution, might not be an accurate gauge of the amount of effort needed to achieve the same grade in this course.

The following is a general description of grades:

The grade of A is awarded for performance that is excellent to some degree – anywhere from very good to brilliant. It indicates a masterful level of performance which is far above the average. It is the grade representing a level of performance usually attained by only the top ten or fifteen percent of a typical class.

The grade of B indicates superior performance. B work is by definition better than most. It is good performance, but not outstanding. Consistent B-level performance is something to take a measure of pride in, especially if it the best one can do.

The grade of C represents adequate performance, enough to get by with, but little more. The grade of C is the grade achieved by most people; hence, it is the embodiment of mediocrity. Unless it is the consequence of one's genuine best effort, it should seldom be regarded as a satisfactory grade for persons with ambition or conscientiousness about their work in the endeavor being graded. It is the grade that pleases individuals who are content with being third-rate in their academic efforts.

The grade of D means that there are serious deficiencies in performance that makes the work product less than adequate, a marginal failure. Repeatedly earning Ds, unless they are balanced by As and Bs, is an indication of failure. Being able generally to attain only Ds is an indication that further education in the field of performance being graded may hold no value for you.

An F means that the deficiencies in performance are so serious that the resulting work product is completely unacceptable. A 59 and below means that failure has occurred, yet there are degrees of failure. A grade in the 50s indicates some likelihood that adequate performance could have been achieved under different circumstances, but typically a grade of below 50 means that the student was so lacking in effort, understanding or competence that failure was almost a foregone conclusion without major behavioral changes or remediation of some kind.

III-C. The Basis of Final Grades

Grades in this course are based on performance alone. They will not be rounded upwards. It is important for every student to understand that evaluation is not based ultimately on how hard someone has worked to earn a particular grade, or whether someone needs this course to graduate. Nor are grades based on personal & family needs, or on personal conceptions about what seems to be fair. All grades, including your final course grade, will be based *solely* on your academic work in this course, according to the criteria described in this syllabus.

III-D. The Reporting of Final Grades

For non-graduating students, final course grades will be posted on Banner. Final exams is a hectic time for students and the faculty alike, so please respect the privacy of all your professors during and after this period. Please do not initiate contact with me concerning grades between the start of the final exams period and when grades are reported. If I need information from you during this time, I will be the one to initiate contact.

Unsolicited voicemails and emails from any student during this period are liable to be ignored. This policy is based on years of experience: most communications

from students during final exams and the grading period are based on needless anxiety rather than reasonable concerns. Please understand that any issues of grading that truly must be resolved may still be resolved *after* final grades are reported. Access to assignment grades and other course content will also be available to you on Blackboard until the week after commencement.

III-E. Late Work

There will be NO late work accepted. If you have an emergency and miss turning in an assignment, you must bring a valid excuse (some form of documentation) within **five business days** in order to turn in your work or make up an excuse. If you do not have documentation, you will not be allowed to make up the work you missed. If you turn in your excuse after the fifth working day after your absence, you will not be allowed to make up the work.

What to do in order to obtain an excused make-up for a missed exam/not turning in a paper/not presenting:

1. Make every effort to notify the instructor ahead of time. Send a message to tculver@sulross.edu as soon as possible, and absolutely no later than the day you first return to class.
2. In the message, fully explain the nature of the emergency and why it prevented you from taking the exam/turning in work/presenting
3. Provide a source or sources that will allow the professor to verify your story. This MUST be done within five days of your absence
4. Expect further questioning from the professor before an excuse is granted.

IV. Student Confidentiality

Because of privacy laws, all school-related issues -- academic, disciplinary, and personal -- must be handled between the university and the student directly. A student's parent, spouse, boyfriend, best friend, case worker, parole officer, et cetera has absolutely no standing to intervene for a student or inquire concerning grades, disciplinary matters, or any other issues. Do not ask such persons to contact university faculty and staff to serve as a liaison, make inquiries, or settle disputes on your behalf.

V. Academic Integrity

V-A. The Honor Code

As members of the academic community, no student should tolerate cheating. According to the honor code, it is the responsibility of each and every student to report obvious cheating or any suspicious behavior that may compromise the integrity of the grading process. The confidentiality and anonymity of students who report such incidents will be respected.

☎ *To report cheating, call **830-279-3022**. If there is no answer, leave a detailed description of what you witnessed.*

V-B. Policy on Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty and the penalties pertaining to it are described in the SRSU student handbook. In this course, all communication among students while taking exams is prohibited.

- Communicating material included on an exam with or in the presence of someone who has not yet taken that exam is also prohibited.

- No student may print, photograph, copy, or in any other way reproduce material from any exam. The consequence of violating this directive will be immediate dismissal from the course with a grade of F.

- Students may not share books, notes, pictures or any other form of communication during exams. Do NOT sit next to another student who is taking the same test in the lab unless no other seats are available. No student taking an exam should have open any website other than the Blackboard site. Close all other windows. Failure to follow these instructions may, at a minimum, result in a zero for the exam and might result in an F for the course.

- The possession of any course-related material in an exam room during an exam period in which the material in question is forbidden is *ipso facto* evidence of scholastic dishonesty. In plain language, if you bring material, such as a textbook, into a testing situation where you are not supposed to have that material with you, you are thereby committing a violation, even if you were not referring to the material or intending to use the material to cheat.

- Plagiarism, as every student should know, involves taking the work of others and claiming it as your own. It will not be tolerated. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, excellent guidelines can be found online at www.plagiarism.org.

Using an illegal copy of textbook materials constitutes academic dishonesty. If a student is found to be using illegally copied textbook material during an open-book exam, the penalty will be failure of the exam. In addition, the student will have the choice of immediately surrendering the illegal copy to SRSU faculty/staff or receiving a failing grade for the course.

The penalty for serious academic dishonesty is severe: a student who turns in a plagiarized paper or cheats on an exam may receive an F for the entire course. A plagiarized paper will be given a zero on academic grounds alone, yet the student may face the additional disciplinary penalties for academic dishonesty. You and you alone are responsible for understanding and avoiding academic dishonesty in all your work.

VI. Student Etiquette

Student Etiquette In Split Web Based Courses

Students should arrive on time to class and stay until class has been dismissed. Even though online work does not involve such responsibilities as showing up on time and being quiet in class, there are other responsibilities that pertain. One of those is checking your email regularly. All students have a Sul Ross email account and your instructors or fellow online students may send notices to you at that email address. For this reason, it is important for you to check your Sul Ross email account on a regular basis – preferably daily, but at least twice a week.

Also, in web courses, you are a participant in discussions. It is helpful and good to reply to the postings of your fellow classmates and join in an active conversation.

In the computer labs when people are testing, it is absolutely essential that all students behave so as to minimize noise and disruption, including whispering.

VII. Policy Concerning Problems with Blackboard during Exams and While Submitting Assignments

VII-A. Blackboard Exams

Blackboard is seldom to blame for problems during exams. When genuine problems occur with Blackboard technology, the problem affects multiple people at the same time. Yet some students frequently report that Blackboard has “frozen up” or will not let them proceed with a test. So far I have identified the following reasons for this problem:

- Students will use the Firefox browser when taking a quiz. If you do not use Firefox, you will have problems.
- Students try to go back and change the answers to test items that they have already answered. You cannot do this. Trying to do so by hitting the back button on your browser, or by other methods, will cause you to forfeit a test grade.
- Students misinterpret the following statement that appears at the start of each quiz: “This Test can be saved and resumed later.” Yes, if later means in five minutes. But you will have only twenty-five minutes from the time you log on to the time you log out. Taking longer than that will result in a zero for the quiz.
- Students try to cheat by first previewing a quiz, then logging out and claiming that they were frozen out of the quiz. They do this in the hope of getting the chance to then retake the quiz and earning a higher score. That will not happen.
- Student press “save” after submitting an answer to each question. Do NOT do this. Simply press “submit” at the end of the exam.
- Students misuse the mouse by repeatedly clicking on a browser button to move to the next test item, or hold down the mouse button for an extended period of time. These behaviors may cause you to forfeit a test grade.

Tests will not be reset for individual students in the great majority of circumstances. Therefore, please avoid the behaviors listed above in order to successfully use Blackboard for taking tests.

VII-B. Using the Blackboard Dropbox

The Blackboard Dropbox feature is a reliable way for students to submit papers electronically. However, it is critical for students to know the difference between uploading (adding) a paper to the Dropbox and actually submitting (sending) a paper to a professor using the Dropbox. Until you see a confirmation message announcing “*Receipt: Success: The file has been sent to selected users with role of Instructor*” you have not successfully submitted your file.

VIII. Statement on Intellectual Tolerance and Academic Freedom

Psychology is a field of inquiry that touches upon many controversial issues, including sexuality, evolution, gender, race, ethnicity, individual differences, parenting, divorce, crime and public policy, drug use, religion, and multicultural issues, among others. Professors and students often have strong opinions and make forceful arguments concerning these phenomena. It is often educationally productive to address and debate these matters in the context of classroom instruction and

course assignments. Social taboos discouraging open discussion are inappropriate in this context and must be laid aside in the interest of intellectual inquiry.

Your grade will not be influenced in any way by expressing points of view that are in disagreement with the professor's. If time permits, students are encouraged to express their opinions and arguments whenever relevant to the subject material. The professor is free to do likewise.

Students who experience excessive anxiety or discomfort during the discussion of a sensitive topic (e.g., domestic abuse) should not hesitate to leave the classroom for a time if necessary and should never feel embarrassed for doing so. This can be an adaptive response to an emotionally difficult situation.

In contrast, other individuals are offended in principle by the mere exposure to concepts, opinions and arguments with which they disagree. The response of such persons is sometimes to try and close off discussion or to become hostile or vindictive toward others. Such persons are not encouraged to take psychology courses at Rio Grande College until they have resolved the personal issues preventing them from engaging in serious intellectual discourse.

IX. Teaching Philosophy

A college degree signifies accomplishment; it will increase a person's prestige and can help its holder acquire a job. However, once the job is taken, success depends on what has been learned—a college degree by itself is merely a sheet of paper. If a student takes full advantage of the opportunity of education, the sheet of paper signifies skills and knowledge that will magnify one's competence as a professional and value as a member of the community. If not, the student might find himself or herself with a sheet of paper only, without additional skills, useful knowledge, or value to employers and clients. RGC psychology courses are designed to provide students with knowledge and skills that will help them in their careers, in their relationships, and in their capacity to be responsible members of a community.

The early 20th Century American writer Albert Jay Nock had this to say about his college experience:

We were made to understand that the burden of education was on us and no one else, least of all our instructors; they were not there to help us carry it or to praise our efforts, but to see that we shouldered it in proper style and got on with it.

I believe that through encouragement and deserved praise, college professors can and should ease the burden of education for their students. Yet students who enroll at SRSU-Rio Grande College must remember they are expected to perform upper-division college-level work. No course in the psychology curriculum is remedial. As Albert Jay Nock understood, a professor's responsibility is to lead students to knowledge; it is, however, each student's responsibility to learn.

XI. Contacting Technical Support

Most technical problems that students experience using Blackboard can be avoided by using *Firefox* as your web browser rather than *Internet Explorer*. Firefox maybe downloaded for free at www.mozilla.com/firefox.

If you have a problem with technical issues such as downloading a file or taking an exam, contact an Office of Information Technology (OIT) staffer for assistance or

call the OIT Helpdesk. The Helpdesk is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days of the week.

- From on-campus, call 8765.
- From off-campus, call (888) 691-5071.

If you are downloading syllabi and other documents, you should update your computer for compatibility with Microsoft Office 2007. The free update is available at: <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=941B3470-3AE9-4AEE-8F43-C6BB74CD1466&displaylang=en>

XII. Special Accommodations

Our institution complies with state and federal laws concerning people with disabilities. If a student needs accessibility services, it is the student's responsibility to initiate a request. This may be done by contacting Ms. Kathy Biddick at 830-279-3003.