Methods in Experimental Clinical Psychology Syllabus

Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

PSYO 3122 Fall 2026

Dalhousie University operates in the unceded territories of the Mi'kmaw, Wolastoqey, and Peskotomuhkati Peoples. These sovereign nations hold inherent rights as the original peoples of these lands, and we each carry collective obligations under the Peace and Friendship Treaties. Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights in Canada.

We recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies, and contributions have enriched the part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

Course Instructor(s)

Name	Email	Office Hours
Instructor Dr. Rebecca Tucker PhD, Clinical Psychology	Rebecca.Tucker@dal.ca	Tuesdays from 2:00pm – 4:00pm Drop-in, Office on 3319
TA Mikaela Ethier-Gagnon PhD Student, Clinical Psychology	Mikaela.Ethier-Gagnon@dal.ca	By Appointment

Course Description

Students learn how to conduct research on topics in applied clinical psychology. Students conduct a series of research projects in the laboratory by serving both as subjects and experimenters, and analyze the results of these studies in written lab reports. Research studies serve to illustrate concepts discussed in class.

Course Prerequisites
PSYO 2000.03 or NESC 2007.03, PSYO 2501.03 or STAT 2080.03, and PSYO 2220.03

Key knowledge or skills expected of students coming into the course
Students should be able to critically evaluate scholarly journal articles in psychology and/or neuroscience. Knowledge of fundamental principles of research design (PSYO 2000), statistics (PSYO 2051) and psychological disorders (PSYO 2220) are assumed. Students are also expected to have experience writing lab reports in APA format, as well as locating appropriate scholarly articles and books using the library.

Learning Objectives

1. Be able to recall and compare different types of research designs, types of validity and types of reliability for both qualitative and quantitative studies.

2. Be able to critically review the literature and develop hypotheses on a selected topic in clinical psychology.

3. Be able to design a research study to test a self-generated hypothesis and be able to write up a research proposal testing that hypothesis in APA style.

4. Be able to identify what sorts of statistical tests would be required in order to test for power, reliability, validity and hypothesis testing. The goal is primarily conceptual, rather than mathematical expertise.

5. Be able to effectively communicate your understanding of a selected specialty of clinical psychology in both written assignments and an oral presentation.

Course Structure

Course Delivery
Class time will typically consist of lectures and class discussion, with some whole classes being set aside for workshops (see below for details)

Lectures
Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:35 – 3:55pm in LSC, Room C244

Note on Lecture Recording:
Personal recording of lectures is not permitted without receiving prior consent. I will be recording all lectures (technology permitting) for those with approved accommodations. Access to the recordings will be provided automatically as I receive accommodations letters. If you do not receive access but believe you should have it, please reach out to me.

Course Materials

Barker, C. & Pistrang, N., & Eliott, R. (2015). Research methods in clinical psychology: An introduction for students and practitioners (3rd ed). West Sussex, UK: Wiley.

Both digital and paper versions of the textbook are available at Dalhousie bookstore: **PSYO 3122**

All required information and materials for the course can be found on the PSYO 3122 Brightspace page, including lecture slides and any additional readings noted below that are not in the textbook. It will be helpful to check the webpage often as that is where I will post all relevant updates, lecture slides, and grades.

Assessment

Component		Weight (% of final grade)	Date(s)
Research Proposal	Research Question & Hypotheses	15%	Wednesday, October 7
	Study Design Decisions	15%	Monday, November 16
	Final Study Proposal	10%	Wednesday, December 9
Workshops		20% total	See content schedule
Exams		40% total	Midterm – Monday, October 26 Final Exam – Scheduled by Registrar

Research Proposal (40% total)
Throughout the course you will design a research study addressing a question within clinical psychology. This process will include a series of three assignments that build upon each other.

You will need to **declare your general research area by September 23** via survey on Brightspace

1. **Research Question and Hypotheses (15%):** This is the first step towards designing your research study. In this assignment, you will be required to submit a research question, an outline of the arguments and information drawn from literature that support the rationale for that research question, and two initial theoretical hypotheses. Essentially, this will provide a working structure for an introduction section, including (a) an introduction to the specific problem under study, (b) a description of prior theory, (c) a description of prior empirical research, (d) a statement of the rationale for the current study, and (e) two theoretical hypotheses. Your outline should also include references that you will use, with a reference list that is in APA 7th Edition format. You will be graded on various aspects related to the quality of your research questions, hypotheses, study rationale, and use of prior literature. Any additional information/detail that is required will be shared on Brightspace.

2. ***Study Design Decisions (15%):*** This is the next step in designing your study! For this assignment you will be required to turn your theoretical hypotheses into empirical hypotheses and outline the study methods you are planning to use to test them. Specifically, you will outline your design decisions for all aspects typically included in a methods section: study design, participants, materials, and procedures. Your outline should include justification for those decisions, using both knowledge you've learned in class and any required academic references (as would be typically seen in a methods section), with a reference list that is in APA 7th Edition format. You will be graded on the quality of your empirical hypotheses, the alignment between your planned design and your hypotheses, and the appropriateness of your

design choices in the three key categories (e.g., participants, materials, procedures). Any additional information/detail that is required will be shared on Brightspace.

3. ***Final Research Proposal (10%):*** The final step! For this assignment you will be required to put the first two assignments together into a full research proposal that is written in paper-format. This means integrating prior feedback and revisions as you turn your outline from step one into an introduction section and your outline from step two into a methods section. You will also add on one additional piece: a modified discussion section that includes a review of ethical considerations, potential threats to validity/reliability in your design, strengths/limitations of your design, and implications of your results if they were to support your hypotheses. Again, you will include a complete reference list that is in APA 7th Edition format. Any additional information/detail that is required will be shared on Brightspace.

Workshop Participation (20% total; 4% each)

There are five workshops spread throughout the course that provide some hands-on experience with research methods and, as such, are part of the benefits of a methods-based course. For each workshop, there will be activities that are completed in-class, sometimes independently and sometimes as a group. There may also be times that individual work will need to be completed prior to a workshop; you will be given plenty of notice if so.

Depending on the specific workshop, grading of workshop participation will involve some combination of the following three methods:

i. Submission of any preparatory work to Brightspace before the start of class (if applicable)

ii. Answering two or three brief questions during class, depending on the workshop this may occur through a digital survey, Brightspace quiz, or on paper that is handed in before you leave.

iii. Submission of any work completed during the workshop to Brightspace immediately after class.

In my experience, you will get more from these activities if everyone is actively engaged and participating (including in any larger class discussions). While I do not grade participation per se, I am monitoring the room and notice who is engaged with the activities.

Exams (40% total; 20% each)

There will be two in-person exams (see dates above). Both exams will include a variety of question formats: multiple choice, true/false, select all that apply, and/or short answer. More information about the number of questions, question formats, and time allowed for the exams will be available closer to the exam dates.

Due to the nature of the material covered in this course, the final exam will be “loosely cumulative”. This means it will have some cumulative components, but they will not be as detail oriented due to the primary focus being on information covered after the midterm.

Conversion of numerical grades to final letter grades follows the undergraduate Dalhousie Grade Scale

A+ (90-100)	B+ (77-79)	C+ (65-69)	D (50-54)
A (85-89)	B (73-76)	C (60-64)	F (0-49)
A- (80-84)	B- (70-72)	C- (55-59)	

Course Accessibility

It is important to know that students are eligible for accommodations based on protected characteristics such as religion. If you have religious, cultural, or community-significant observances that conflict with course requirements, reach out to me to collaboratively find alternatives for completing the course requirements.

To begin the process of requesting a formal academic accommodation, contact the Student Accessibility Centre

If you already have formal accommodations, I will take note of those as I receive the letters and send a confirmation email after I complete anything I need to do on my end (e.g., provide access to lecture recordings). Please reach out anytime if you have any formal accommodations that you need support to integrate into the structure of the course and/or if you think your accommodations have been missed.

Course Policies on Missed or Late Academic Requirements

Late Penalties for Papers
Papers and assignments are to be submitted in electronic format on Brightspace. Papers and assignments are due by 11:59pm on the date indicated in the schedule. **Late assignments will be assigned a penalty of 2% per day**.

Concern re: mark/grade
If you have a concern with a grade on an assignment, please document your concern(s) in writing and submit to Dr. Tucker. A meeting will be scheduled to address your concerns. All concerns must be raised within three weeks of the time when the mark is provided by the course instructor.

Student Declaration of Absence
Dalhousie University recognizes that students may experience short-term illness, distress, or other extenuating circumstances (such as caregiving duties; immediate family illness, injury or death; involvement in an accident; legal proceedings or being a victim of a crime) that may affect their ability to complete required graded academic requirements. SDA forms are a standardized way to handle student absences that interfere with the completion of graded academic requirements (exams, quizzes, presentations, papers, etc.)

Student declaration of absence forms cannot be used to reschedule assessments for leisure activities (e.g., going to the beach, leaving town on vacation). They also cannot be used to cover up lack of planning/preparation (e.g., forgetting to study, procrastinating on a paper). Using an SDA form for these purposes constitutes academic dishonesty and may make you subject to University discipline.

Here is the procedure you should follow if you experience short-term illness, distress or other extenuating circumstances that affects your ability to complete assessment components:

a) The SDA form or alternate verification of the absence must be submitted through Brightspace within three (3) calendar days following the last day of absence.

b) The SDA may only be used a maximum of 2 times throughout the term and may only cover 3 consecutive days of absence per form.

Here are the specific rules for each assessment component:

Late written assignments: If you experience a short-term illness, distress or other extenuating circumstances in the 7 days prior to the paper/assignment deadline, you may submit an SDA. You will receive an extension equal to the number of days lost due to your circumstance, to a maximum of 3 days. You cannot submit 2 forms for a single assignment to get a 6-day extension.

Missed workshop: If you miss a workshop (e.g., due to travel concerns, weather, etc.), then you may submit an SDA and we will discuss options for adjusting that component of your grade (e.g., pro-rating the other workshops so they are worth more). This can only be done for 1 workshop.

Course Policies related to Academic Integrity & Artificial Intelligence

While students are allowed to discuss the assignments in this class and ask/answer questions amongst your peers, written assignments should be submitted individually and represent your own work.

Due to the nature of the assignments and the skills/knowledge they are assessing, **students may not use AI tools (e.g., Grammarly, ChatGPT) to assist with their coursework**. **Use of AI when it has been prohibited will be considered a violation of academic integrity.** Please contact me if you have any questions about this policy.

Course Content

Date	General Topic	Readings	Assessments
Sept 9	Intro to PSYO 3122		
Sept 14	Philosophical Perspectives on Research	Chapter 2	
Sept 16	Initial Stages in Research	Chapter 3 Herek (2011)	
Sept 21	**Workshop 1 – Developing a Research Question**		
Sept 23	Writing an Introduction & Outlining		**Declare General Research Area**
Sept 28	Foundations of Quantitative Measurement	Chapter 4	
Oct 5	Foundations of Qualitative Methods	Chapter 5	
Oct 7	Ethics in Clinical Research	*TBD*	**Research Question & Hypotheses**
Oct 14	Foundations of Experimental Design	Chapter 8	
Oct 19	**Workshop 2 – Study Design**		
Oct 21	Participant Sampling	Chapter 10	
Oct 26	**In-Class Midterm**		
Oct 28	Self-Report & Observational Methods	Chapters 6 & 7	
Nov 2	**Workshop 3 – Developing a Measure**		
Nov 4	Small-N Designs	Chapter 9	
Nov 9	**Fall Break**		
Nov 11			
Nov 16	Mixed Method Designs	Hanson et al., (2005)	**Study Design Choices**
Nov 18	Thematic Analysis	Braun & Clarke (2006)	
Nov 23	**Workshop 4 – Thematic Analysis**		
Nov 25	**Guest Lecture:** Cue Reactivity Designs *Mikaela Ethier-Gagnon*	*TBD*	
Nov 30	Review Methodology	*TBD*	
Dec 2	Statistical Methods and Interpretation	Chapter 12	
Dec 7	**Workshop 5 – Statistics**		
Dec 8	Research Dissemination & Knowledge Translation	*TBD*	
Dec 9	Evaluating Research Claims *(or flex class if needed)*	*TBD*	**Final Study Proposal**

Note. **Some dates and some topics may change**

Syllabus Appendix

(Formerly University Policies and Statements)

Below is a link to the new “Syllabus Appendix”, which can help direct you towards up-to-date supports, university policies, and guidelines.

Syllabus Appendix: Student Supports & University Statements, Policies, and Guidelines