Syllabus for PSYC 5189-004: Thesis Research

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Dr. Conlon will serve as your thesis advisor, the primary person working with you during your thesis. Grades for the course are assigned by Dr. Conlon, after consultation with your thesis committee.

Purpose of the course: This course will allow students the opportunity to engage in original empirical research in collaboration with a thesis advisor and committee.

Course objectives: Students completing this course will be able to know/understand…
1. How to locate, read, and analyze articles in psychological journals
2. How to plan a professional research project
3. How to write an APA style literature review and research proposal
4. How to work with the thesis committee, IRB, and data collection site to gain approvals to conduct empirical research

General guidelines:
PSYC 5189 (Thesis Research) is designed to be completed in one semester, if you follow the schedule provided. Occasionally students get behind schedule and fail to finish in one semester. In these cases, a WH grade will be submitted by the thesis advisor at the end of the semester and you will be given an extension on PSYC 5189. Students may be charged a continuation fee (see the catalog). Students not completing PSYC 5189 within one year will be given F as their grade and will need to re-register for the course in the future. If you foresee not being able to complete your thesis in a timely matter, you should withdraw from the course and re-take it when you are able to devote adequate time to your research. It is not fair to your thesis advisor to keep him/her waiting for you if you aren’t ready to actively work on your thesis. It also isn’t fair to other students who may want to work with your advisor but must work with a 2nd choice instead because your advisor has met the maximum number of advisees that can be advised per person. Your project should involve empirical data collection (qualitative, quantitative or mixed method) or secondary data analysis. Projects that only contain literature reviews will not be accepted.

Your project should be in APA style, 7th edition. If you don’t currently own a copy of the APA publication manual, you should obtain one.

PSYC 5189 is a graded course. In order to do well in the course, you must complete the following tasks:

- Choose a thesis topic
- In consultation with your advisor, select two psychology professors to serve on your thesis committee in addition to your primary advisor
- In consultation with your advisor, select one professor from outside of psychology to serve on your thesis committee
- Write a research proposal
- Work through drafts of your proposal with your advisor until it is ready to defend
- Schedule a thesis proposal defense and provide a copy of your thesis to your committee with at least one week’s notice
• Pass your thesis proposal defense

Role of the thesis committee:
• Your committee will consist of an advisor and three committee members. Two members will be psychology professors. The final member must be a professor outside of the psychology department. This committee will supervise your thesis work and will decide whether you have sufficiently defended your thesis proposal and final manuscript.
• Your advisor is the person who will work with you throughout the process to develop your topic and revise your writing, lead proposal meetings, and serve as your primary point of contact while doing the thesis. This person must be a faculty member in the Department of Psychology who maintains standing on the Graduate Faculty.
• You (in consultation with your advisor) will choose three additional members of your committee. These people must also maintain standing on the Graduate Faculty. Your thesis committee members should be people whose feedback you value and whose training/work experience will contribute something to the overall project. Committee members will attend your proposal defense meeting, your final defense meeting, and read/give feedback on your final proposal draft and final thesis draft. You should also communicate with them during the process in order to solicit their input, ideas, and feedback. Committee members generally do not read drafts of your thesis prior to the final proposal/final copy or answer routine questions/issues related to the thesis process.

Intellectual Property Policy: The University has a policy (Policy 9.4) regarding intellectual property. This policy exists to encourage research and innovation, clarify ownership of intellectual property rights, create opportunities for public use of the university innovations and provide for the equitable distribution of monetary and other benefits derived from intellectual property. The policy can be found at this link: http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/intellectual-property-9.4.pdf

Elements of the thesis proposal:
Do NOT schedule a defense until your final thesis is polished and complete and your advisor has given you explicit permission to schedule said defense. The following are minimal expectations of the Psychology Department for a thesis document. Your advisor or committee may require additional items.
• Cover Page
• Abstract that provides a brief summary of the entire paper
• Introductory section should include:
  o Brief introduction to the topic
  o Thesis statement that previews issues that to be discussed in your literature review
  o A comprehensive analysis of all literature relevant to your topic. This summary should clearly explain the methodology and results of relevant studies in detail. This will be the largest section of your thesis.
  o An analysis of weaknesses / limitations of existing literature and how your study will make a substantial contribution to this literature
  o Brief overview of your method
  o Description of your hypotheses or research questions and the rationale for them
• Method section that includes:
• Combined Results/Discussion section:
  o Identify your independent and dependent variables (if applicable)
  o Describe your plan for data analysis and how you will address your hypotheses/research questions
  o A description of any limitations in your design and how you will account for them in your interpretation of results
• Reference page in APA style
• Appendixes that contain:
  o A copy of all measures and questionnaires that will be used
  o A copy of the consent form that you plan to give research participants
  o If participants are minors, a copy of methods for obtaining assent

Defense-related expectations:
• The average defense takes about two hours
• You should treat this as a serious event, dress professionally, and arrive early
• Bring all forms that will need to be signed. This will allow your committee to sign them at the defense rather than tracking them down later.
• You should prepare a short presentation to your committee about your project. Work with your advisor to determine the appropriate breadth, depth, and length of your presentation.
• You should prepare to answer questions about your topic, your choice of methodology, your plan for data analysis, and various other aspects of the project. Your committee is trying to determine if you have thought through your methodology carefully and are able to communicate about your project in an informed and professional manner.
• At the end, you will be given feedback about whether you passed and information about what you will need to improve in order to move forward with your project.

Grades / Possible outcomes of a proposal defense:

1. **Pass:** You are free to begin your IRB application and move forward with data collection (once IRB approval is granted). In consultation with your committee, your advisor will assign you a final letter grade. Even when students pass, it is common for changes to be requested as a condition of passage. Your committee will decide whether these changes need to be made immediately or can wait to be made during Thesis Writing.
2. **Conditional pass:** You will not be required to have a second defense, but will not be allowed to move forward with the project without addressing substantive concerns posed by the committee. Before submitting your project to the IRB and collecting your data, you must provide a revised product that addresses the concerns of your committee. You will be assigned a withheld
(WH) grade as your grade until you address committee concerns. At that point, in consultation with your committee, your advisor will assign you a final letter grade.

3. **Fail:** Your committee will give you feedback that you aren’t ready to defend your thesis proposal and will advise you to reschedule a defense when you are more prepared. If you are staying in touch with your committee members, this outcome is fairly rare. You will be assigned a withheld (WH) grade as your grade until you are ready for your defense.

In situations where the student fails to adequately complete the thesis within the time allotted and fails to present reasonable justification for an extension, a grade of F will be assigned.

**Note:** You are responsible for knowing and abiding by all thesis-related policies and procedures as stipulated by the Graduate School: [http://www.sfasu.edu/graduate/108.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/graduate/108.asp)

**University Policies**

**Academic Integrity (4.1)**
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit. Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/4.1-student-academic-dishonesty.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/4.1-student-academic-dishonesty.pdf).

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy 5.5)**
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf).

**Students with Disabilities**
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request
services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

**Mental Health**

SFA values students’ mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential. On-campus Resources: SFA Counseling Services, www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices, Rusk Building, 3rd Floor, 936.468.2401; SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic, www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp, Human Services, Room 202, 936.468.1041

Crisis Resources: Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343 Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255); Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741