

BENEDICTINE UNIVERSITY at  
SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE IN ILLINOIS

**PSYC 395 Senior Thesis**

Fall, 2006  
Room L 13  
Wednesdays 6-10 pm  
8/30, 9/6, 9/13, 9/20, 9/27,  
10/4, 10/11, 10/18, 10/25, 11/1

Instructor: Beth Evans Berning  
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**PREREQUISITES:** PSYC/SOCL 251 AND PSYC/SOCL 299.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. (2001).  
5<sup>th</sup> edition. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological  
Association.

Szuchman, Lenore T. (2005). Writing with Style: APA Style Made  
Easy. 3rd Ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is intended to be a capstone in the undergraduate psychology/sociology program. It will acquaint the student with the proper APA (American Psychological Association) methodology for designing and executing an original research project, as well as analyzing and interpreting the relevant findings obtained from that project. The research should be derived from a proposal formulated by the student in the PSYC 299: RESEARCH METHODS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES class. It should have the appropriate number of references to establish, in clear and precise terms, the hypotheses to be tested. If a theoretical framework for the proposed project is lacking, the student needs to research the area in more depth and come up with the suitable reference base before proceeding further

While the student will be doing most of the research on his/her own, mandatory meetings will be established where an important component of the thesis will be handed in (e.g., the introduction/reference list, the methodology, the results and the appropriate statistical computer printout). In addition, the instructor will require that each student meet with her on an individual basis before completing these tasks so that feedback is given in a timely and constructive fashion. Students are encouraged to contact the instructor with any questions. Refer to the course schedule on the last pages for more detail on the required assignments. The student will also be able to share his/her completed thesis with others in the final weeks of the class in the hope that an exchange of ideas can occur in an environment that is non-threatening and receptive. The oral presentation will consist of a 15-minute summary and defense of the research. **The final version of the thesis will be due on Wednesday, October 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. After 6:00 pm, the paper will be reduced one (1) letter grade for each day it is late.**

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the course, the student should achieve the following:

- First and foremost, recognize the seriousness of plagiarizing someone else's published work and falsely taking credit for something clearly not one's own (i.e., the development of the thesis, from conception to final write-up should be the student's own original work);
- be able to apply the basic principles of research design (which includes the statement of the research problem, formulation of the hypotheses, and notation of research importance) to any quantitative or qualitative undertaking;
- competently perform a literature review on a topic of research interest and merit to the psychological and/or sociological field(s);
- be able to apply a methodology to a given set of data which is appropriate to the demands of that method;
- **obtain approval from the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to execute the research;**
- become comfortable enough with descriptive and inferential statistical techniques so that the data can be analyzed in a suitable fashion, either by hand or by computer software;
- learn the appropriate **SPSS** Version 12.0 computer commands for any data analysis procedure requested at the undergraduate level;
- note the limitations of his/her research methodology and the need for continued investigation in the area;
- learn the standardized procedures for writing the components of the thesis as well as the final report according to the APA (American Psychological Association) publication style;
- and finally, develop competent enough speaking skills to present the original research in a peer-gathering situation.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

As mentioned in the course objectives, plagiarism is a serious issue, especially in a capstone course such as this. Therefore each student will read and summarize a document about plagiarism in the first class session. After reading the material, he/she will sign off on the document. **ANYONE WHO VIOLATES HIS/HER SIGNED STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC HONESTY WILL RECEIVE AN "F" FOR THE COURSE** and will need to meet with the instructor before signing up for the class the following semester. (These policies are in accordance with what is stated in the University's Academic Policy Statement included below.)

## **BENEDICTINE UNIVERSITY'S ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY STATEMENT**

The search for truth and the dissemination of knowledge are the central missions of a university. Benedictine University pursues these missions in an environment guided by our Roman Catholic tradition and our Benedictine heritage. Integrity and honesty are therefore expected of all members of the University community, including students, faculty members, administration, and staff. Actions such as cheating, plagiarism, collusion, fabrication, forgery, falsification, destruction, multiple submission, solicitation, and misrepresentation, are violations of these expectations and constitute unacceptable behavior in the University community. The penalties for such actions can range from a private verbal warning, all the way to expulsion from the University. The University's Academic Honesty Policy is available at <http://www.ben.edu/AHP> and students are expected to read it.

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Attendance (in group and individual sessions) is essential and required throughout the semester when students are required to complete portions of their theses and discuss the next sections with their instructor. **IF THE STUDENT FAILS TO SHOW UP FOR TWO OR MORE OF THE MANDATORY GROUP MEETINGS, HE/SHE WILL RECEIVE AN “F” FOR THIS COMPONENT.** If the student has a legitimate excuse for missing one of the group meetings, he/she will be required to hand in the respective part of the thesis by 4:00 pm the following day.

If the student misses one of the individual meetings with the instructor, he/she will receive a lower grade for the class attendance component. Also, each student is required to give the oral presentation of their thesis on the date assigned by the instructor. **IF THE STUDENT DOES NOT SHOW UP AT THE SPECIFIED TIME TO DELIVER THEIR REPORT, HE/SHE WILL RECEIVE AN “F” FOR THE ORAL COMPONENT PERCENTAGE.**

## **GRADING PERCENTAGES.**

The final course grade for the Senior Thesis will be based on 3 components:

1. **Class Attendance** — This includes specific Wednesdays as spelled out in the Course Schedule. Lectures will also be given during most of these sessions so that the student is better prepared to do the next part of the thesis in the appropriate APA style. Missed classes cannot be made up! No more than 1 absence is allowed! Meeting individual appointments will also be included in this percentage. The attendance component will count for 20% of the student’s final grade.
2. **Written Component** — 60% of the grade is based on the following: The 3 sections of the Thesis (Introduction, Method, and Results) and the final version of the Thesis, The 3 sections along with an up-to-date Reference List will contribute to 20% of the grade, and the completed Thesis the remaining 40%.
3. **Oral Component** — The final 20% of the course grade will be based on the student’s oral presentation, which he/she will give in one of the last 2 weeks of the course. The major emphasis will be on how succinct and persuasive the presentation is and how well the student handles questions Delivery style will also be evaluated, The student has only 15 minutes to defend the Thesis, so it is advised that he/she rehearse the presentation so that it can be completed on time,

## **GRADING SCALE**

The grading scale for each course component is as follows; 90-100 A; 80-89 B; 70-79 C; 60-69 D; Below 60 F

## **SUMMARY OF POINTS**

- 20 = Class Attendance and participation
- 20 = Thesis Sections and Reference list
- 40 = Completed Thesis
- 20 = Oral Presentation

## **ADA COMPLIANCE STATEMENT**

Benedictine University at Springfield College in Illinois provides individuals with disabilities reasonable accommodations to participate in educational programs, activities, and services. Students with disabilities requiring accommodations to participate in college-sponsored programs, activities, and services or to meet course requirements should contact the Director of the Resource Center as early as possible. All students are expected to fulfill essential course requirements The University will not waive any essential skill or requirement of a course or degree program.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

| DATE               | TOPIC/ASSIGNMENT  | APA MANUAL READINGS  |
|--------------------|---|--|
| August 30, 2006    | Overview of Thesis Components<br>Discussion of hypotheses<br>Discussion of course expectations  | (read prior to class)<br>3-30; 117-122; 207-214; 348-55; 387-396,<br>Szuchman, #1, 9 |
| September 6, 2006  | Ethics in Psychological Research<br>Overview of Introduction/Listing of References; Review IRB Form.<br><b>Hand in Title Page and Statement of the Problem. Hand in hypothesis statement.</b> | 215-281; 306-8; 313-314<br>Szuchman, #3, 8   |
| September 13, 2006 | Overview of Methodology;<br><b>Hand in Introduction with Sub-headers along with all References in APA Format &amp; Complete IRB Form.</b>   | 31-117; 308-10;<br>Szuchman, #4  |
| September 20, 2006 | Individual Research day<br>Individual meetings  | Review prior readings  |
| September 27, 2006 | Individual Research day<br>Individual meetings  | 122-207; 310-11; 315-16<br>Szuchman #5   |
| October 4, 2006    | Overview of Results with Tables and Figures & Scheduling of Oral Presentations; <b>Hand in Method With Sub-headers</b>  | 379-383;<br>Szuchman #10 & Appendix  |
| October 11, 2006   | Individual Research day<br>Individual meetings  | Review prior readings  |
| October 18, 2006   | Individual Research day<br>Individual meetings  | 283-305; 311-12;<br>Szuchman, #6, 7  |
| October 25, 2006   | Overview of Discussion and Final Thesis Preparation;<br><b>Hand in Results with Tables and/or Figures and Statistical Printout</b>  | <b>Thesis Presentations</b>  |
| November 1, 2006   | <b>Hand in Final Version of Thesis</b>  | <b>Thesis Presentations</b>  |