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Research Methods in Psychology

Dr. Lauren Kirby

UTTyler
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

Course catalog description: Designed to extend the student's ability to recognize and use typical behavioral research methods and controls. Emphasis will be given to experimental design techniques, evaluation of research article, writing of journal reports, and statistical procedures used in psychological experiments. Prerequisite: PSYC 2354 or equivalent.

Course meeting information: I invite you to join course meetings on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 1:25am-2:20pm via Zoom (recorded and posted) for engaging in learning activities that help you practice course outcomes and learning objectives. The class is "flipped," meaning you need to read and view course content before class. Assignments for each module may be submitted any time after they become available and before their posted due/closure dates. There are no timed exams or quizzes, only "take-home" projects. This course requires on average 10-12 hours of work per week

Visual metaphor: For Research Methods in Psychology, I chose the metaphor of digging to build the foundation of a building, as shown in the photograph "Digging a foundation" (credit: Sarvodaya Sri Lanka, licensed under CC BY 2.0). As researchers, we will have to dig into (investigate) concepts we are interested in order to construct new knowledge (starting with the foundation of the building).
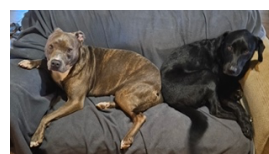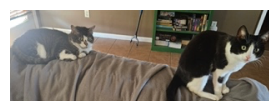

Instructor Introduction – Dr. Kirby

Hello! I am Dr. Kirby, your instructor for Cognitive Psychology. My educational background is in the biological and brain-based foundations of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

These days, when I take off my "Dr. Kirby" hat and am just "Lauren" at home, I enjoy hiking, lifting weights, animal fostering and rescue, reading (and listening to) novels (mostly fantasy, sci-fi, and mystery) and non-fiction books (histories, biographies, science), writing short stories, and spending too much time on *X* (Twitter). I enjoy working from home where at any given time I am likely to be spending time with any combination of my husband, two cats, two dogs, plus any foster animals we have at the time.

I am looking forward to similarly getting to know you better as we establish this learning community together for the term of this course!

My Teaching Approach
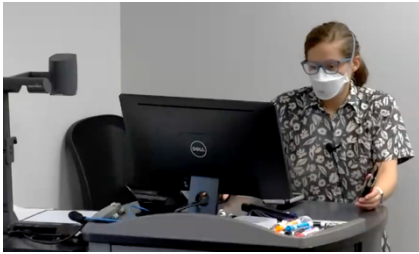
Positive reinforcement: Behaviors happen more frequently when they have been rewarded. Punishments are less effective teaching tools, so this course avoids them.

Intrinsic motivation: The types of rewards we work for matter. Working toward an internal feeling of reward is associated with longer-lasting learning than working toward external rewards. Traditional grades encourage extrinsic motivation. In my courses, attendance, grading, and makeup policies in this course are carefully designed to encourage all of us to focus on the learning instead of the points.

Growth mindset: Students who believe their abilities are fixed give up easily and learn less. Students who are comfortable with trying, making mistakes, and persevering, learn more, so I allow re-attempts on assignments.

Community: All learners belong in this course and can reach the learning outcomes. We learn together: we are not in competition with one another.

Transferable skills: You can learn skills in this course that will transfer to any workplace, regardless of your future career.

Big Ideas

Sources of knowledge about human behavior: We will learn how knowledge is produced, by producing it together.

Individual focus: We will focus on measuring variables from individuals, rather than from larger groups like societies or nations.

Clarity in measurement: You will learn how to evaluate the quality of the ways that psychologists can measure concepts from individuals.

Aggregation: Although case studies have their place in psychology, the vast majority of the research we read about—and all of the research we will conduct—will average together measurements from many people to view possible trends.

Relationships among variables: You will learn how to use and interpret statistics to make conclusions about trends in the data we collect and analyze.

Applications to the real world: You will be asked to think about how research you read about and conduct affects your life or your community.

Clarity in communication: You will learn how to communicate (both written and orally) research (yours and that conducted by others) to non-expert audiences.

Cognitive levels indicate the complexity of thinking required for the course outcome or learning objective.
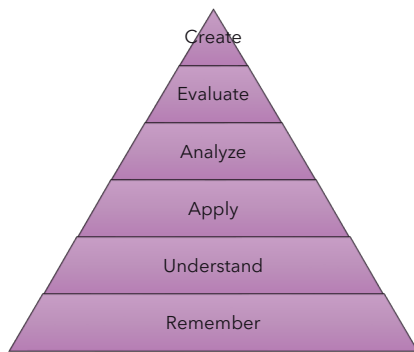
Course Outcomes (Student Learning Outcomes)

These are things you should know or be able to do by the end of this course. They will consist of smaller goals, called learning objectives.

CO1: Complete CITI Training Ethics courses. (Remember)

CO2: Develop first-hand knowledge of psychology research and/or practice. **(Apply)**

CO3: **Understand** how psychologists study thoughts, feelings, and behavior. (**Understand**)

CO4: Discover the relationship between observable variables. (**Create**)

CO5: Develop a survey research project proposal paper. **(Create)**

Grading Policy

Grading Breakdown by Course Outcome

CO1 (10% of grade) is assessed by submission of official CITI course certificates; CO2 through SONA credits (see panel to the right for more information, 10%); CO3 through project development and course discussions (ungraded); CO4 through a group observational research project (40%); and CO5 through an individual survey research project proposal paper (40%).

Makeups, Late Work, Re-attempts, and Attendance
There is no such thing as a grade of "zero" for any assessment in this course, whether it is on time, late, or missing*****. You can request assignment extensions for any***** reason at any time before the due date. I do not request documentation for excuses or extension requests. When you ask for an extension, it is good professional practice to propose your own modified due date in your first request email. If you do not request an extension ahead of the due date, but the work is still missing, I will reach out to you to create a plan for late submission and request a short reflection narrative about the consequences of late work and failing to notify the instructor. Your number of re-attempts in this course or on a given assignment is unlimited: I want you to be successful, even if it takes multiple tries. **Due such generous assessment policies, I do not offer extra credit or round grades up.**

*The only exception is the final project. I will also not grade older assignments during finals week. The due date for anything pre-final is the last day of class with no extensions. The final project also has no extensions. The final project is also the only assignment with no re-attempt possibilities.

Please note that for financial aid purposes, I am required to report to the Registrar whether you attended class at all within the first 2 weeks of class: this is a binary measurement (has attended or has not attended). If you have not attended at all within the first 2 weeks of the course, your financial aid may be adjusted accordingly. **For these purposes, in this course, "attendance" will mean having completed any assignments or activities at all (graded or ungraded)**.

Assignments

Group Research Journal: You will work with a group most of the semester on various in-class and out-of-class activities to practice research methods concepts you will use later on in an individual project paper. The final documentation of and reflection on those assignments is due at mid-term (03/08/26, 11:59 PM).

Research Proposal Paper: On your own you will develop a unique research question. We will not actually conduct the study, but you will write and plan it as if you were going to conduct it. The project is planned in stages on which you will receive feedback before proceeding to the next step.

CITI Training: This ethics training is required in order for you to conduct research. There are two short online courses you will take and must pass each quiz with 80% or greater accuracy. You may take the quizzes as many times as you like. Registration and instructions will be posted to Canvas.

Experiential Learning: Earn 6 SONA credits or 3 counseling hours (or mix and match). Alternatives include research article summaries and/or psychology podcast summaries (which count for 2 SONA credit equivalents each).

Resources

Check the course Canvas page and your UT Tyler email daily on weekdays. Your TA and I will communicate with you through Canvas announcements, UT-Tyler email, and pages and documents linked in the "Modules" and "Assignments" tabs. Pay special attention to the Course Calendar and the Assignments and Activities descriptions. Go to Canvas settings and set up your notifications to "subscribe" to such announcements and comments from us so you will not miss anything. I give feedback on some assignments through the comments feature when you check your assignments through the "Grades" tab. You will find those in the same place you submitted an online assignment on the right-hand side reading "comments." I also may attach drafts of documents (.docx) with tracked changes and comments; make sure you know how to view tracked changes and comments in Word if they are not automatically visible for you when you first open the document.

Microsoft Office

You will need to use Microsoft Office products online (such as Word, PowerPoint, and Excel) for some assignments. **DO NOT** use alternative programs such as Apple's Pages, Google Drive/Docs, .PDFs, or any other formats. You can sign in here: https://www.office.com/ using your UT Tyler Patriot credentials. **DO NOT** create a personal account: use the one UT Tyler already gave to you. You will need this for all required software, and I will post tutorials on Canvas for how to use them on your assignments. If you have any trouble signing in, do not hesitate: go to help.uttyler.edu and join a Zoom meeting during business hours to get it sorted out as soon as possible.

Zoom

You need a webcam, microphone, and familiarity with using Zoom (including functions such as joining audio, muting and unmuting video and audio, sharing your screen, and recording video). For Zoom use tips, go here: https://lms-media.uttyler.edu/fileman/DAT/BB/PDF/Zoom-Use.pdf. Webcams and microphones are built into some computers already, but not all. Please test your devices as soon as possible to make sure they work. I can set up a test Zoom call with you to help you. Even inexpensive earbuds have microphones on them, so please procure one. Please let me know if you cannot access a webcam, microphone, or any other technology for this class. This request needs to be made as early in the semester as possible so that shipping or any other logistics could be achieved on time.

Required Textbook

Pilegard, C. & Gellar, E. (2023). *Modern Guide to Understanding and Conducting Research in Psychology.* GitHub. PDF or Website (no ISBN). Creative commons license: CC-BY-NC-SA Retrieved from https://pilegard.github.io/psychmethods/

This textbook is FREE, but I am required to put this note here in the syllabus anyway by the University. Note: A student at UT-Tyler 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.

Recommended Website:

Purdue University Writing Lab. APA formatting and style guide (7th Edition). *Purdue online writing lab (OWL).* https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html

Gen AI Policy

Image credit: "Machine Learning & Artificial Intelligence" by mikemacmarketing is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools include software that creates or remixes images or text, with popular examples such as ChatGPT—a large language model (LLM)— or DALL-E image generator. Their use is discouraged in this course.

All assignments are designed to support your learning, which GenAI assistance would undermine.

Inaccuracies are common in GenAI text output. GenAI tools do not know, remember, or reason.

The **environmental and human impact** of GenAI is costly. Some tools have even been trained using child sex abuse material!

Thus, the most ethical and responsible choice for this course is to submit only your own work without GenAI assistance.

Other Policies

Accessibility Statement
This course is designed to be accessible to all students. However, you may still have access needs that require accommodations. Feel free to let me know of any disability or other access needs informally, and be aware of formal disability documentation (for uses in other courses as well as mine) processes through our Student Accessibility Resources: https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/disability-services/.

Pregnancy and Parenting Statement
Pregnant and parenting students have the legal rights in higher education as well (Texas Laws SB 412, SB 459, and SB 597/HB 1361), including excused absences and other resources. UT Tyler encourages you to document and opt into those resources by contacting parents@uttyler.edu and completing the Pregnant and Parenting Self-Reporting Form to go through the formal accommodations process. You may also informally inform me about your needs related to pregnancy or parenting and make use of the flexibility everyone has access to in my courses regarding attendance, make-ups, and re-attempts.

If you believe you have experienced discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment/sex-based misconduct, and/or related retaliation, please know that you can contact the Title IX office or file a complaint. You may also send questions and concerns to Blake Bumbard, Title IX Coordinator, at bbumbard@uttyler.edu or by phone at 903-565-5760.

Students have various needs that go beyond the scope of my class, but I am happy to connect you with anything you may need. Feel free to let me know about anything going on in your life that is a barrier to your learning. For additional resources, such as tutoring, financial aid, the food bank, housing assistance, etc. please see the syllabus module in our Canvas course.

You are subject to university policies beyond those in my course. Feel free to let me know of questions about them: if I don't know the answer, I know how to find it. For additional university policies, such as the official accommodations policies, AI policy, student conduct guidelines, campus carry policies, etc., please see the syllabus module in our Canvas course.

Course Calendar

Target Due Dates	Module	Readings	Assignments
01/18/26	0: Getting Started; 1: Variable Types and Research Question Wording	Syllabus; Chapter 1; Chapter 2	
01/25/26	2: Hypothesis Wording and Outcomes	Chapter 2; Chapter 11	
02/01/26	3: Method: Ethics	Chapter 9; CITI Training Courses (Social-Behavioral and RCR)	**CITI Training**
02/08/26	4: Method: Sampling	Chapter 5; Chapter 4	
02/15/26	5: Method: Designs, Validity, and Reliability	Chapter 3; Chapter 6	
03/01/26	6: Literature Searching and Organization	Chapter 10	
03/08/26	7: Reading and Annotating Literature		**Group Research Journal**
03/22/26	8. Literature Synthesis		Annotated Bibliography
03/29/26	9: Discussion Writing		Research Question
04/05/26	10: Discussion Writing		Outline
04/12/26	11: Writing and Formatting		
04/19/26	12: Writing and Formatting		Format Check
04/28/26	Final Module: Paper and Reflection	Final Paper Assignment Guide	**Final Paper**

Note: All due dates are suggested to help you keep on track. The modules are designed in sequence: newer modules will only open for you if you have completed the activities in the previous ones. It would be helpful to your learning for you to allow for the instructional team to provide feedback on some assignments before completing the next ones. You also have unlimited re-attempts on all assignments except for the mid-term project (hard deadline of Sunday, 03/08/26 at 11:59 PM) and the final project. All pre-final assignments have a hard deadline of the final day of class (Friday, 04/24/26 at 11:59 PM), however. The courses closes at 11:59 on 04/28/2026, at which time the final project is due. If you have a passing grade at that time, I will put in an "I" letter grade, which represents "incomplete" and you can finish your assignments after the completion of the term. We will need to meet and do some paperwork to discuss revised due dates in that case. Additionally, this course calendar and syllabus are subject to changes, which will be announced by the instructor in a timely manner.

CEP Mission and Vision Statements

CEP Mission
The mission of the CEP is to prepare competent and passionate professionals in the fields of education, psychology, and counseling; to advance knowledge and expertise; and to impact these fields locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

CEP Vision
The CEP will be a global leader in responding to needs in the fields of education, psychology, and counseling, with a focus on the East Texas region, by creating innovative academic and scholarly pathways and partnerships.

Grading Policy

The grading scale for this course is as follows:

A = Excellent, ≥ 99+%

B = Good, ≥ 80%, < 90%

C = Fair, ≥ 70%, < 80%

D = Poor, ≥ 60%, < 70%

F = Fail, < 60%

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage Policy

UT Tyler's AI Policy

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

Dr. Kirby's AI Policy

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools—software that creates new text, images, computer code, audio, video, and other content—have become widely available. Well-known examples include ChatGPT for text, DALL•E for images, and Sora for video. The learning opportunities in this course are useful only when you complete original work rather than using generative AI tools for any portions of any assignments. I encourage you to take advantage of the learning opportunities and submit only your own work, unless otherwise indicated. I have carefully designed all assignments and class activities to support your learning. Doing your own work, without human or artificial intelligence assistance, is best for your efforts in mastering course learning objectives. If you choose to use generative AI tools, please remember that they are typically trained on limited datasets that may be out of date. Additionally, generative AI datasets are trained on pre-existing material, including copyrighted material; therefore, relying on a generative AI tool may result in plagiarism or copyright violations. Further, LLMs (e.g., ChatGPT) do not <u>know, remember</u>, <u>or reason</u>: they are "fancy predictive text." They predict which words tend to be near other words. GenAI is also circular: its training data are being <u>corrupted by AI products themselves</u>. Further, GenAI usage has a large <u>environmental impact</u> (stressing power grids and polluting neighborhoods), it involves <u>hidden human costs</u> (including exploiting low-wage labor), and GenAI image generation software has been trained on disturbing criminal material, <u>including child sex abuse material</u>. Finally, keep in mind that the goal of generative AI tools is to produce content that seems to have been produced by a human, not to produce accurate or reliable content; therefore, relying on a generative AI tool may result in your submission of inaccurate content. I invite you to take responsibility—instead of leaving it up to the tool—to assure the quality, integrity, and accuracy of work you submit in any college course. I am committing to the same expectations, as I am also refraining from using available AI tools in designing this course and evaluating your work. Deviations from these guidelines will be considered a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code and academic honesty values. This policy was drafted using the UT Tyler Artificial Language for Syllabi document and Chris Heard's Generative AI Syllabus Statement Tool (which itself not an AI tool). You may find UT Tyler's general AI syllabus policy and other resources here: https://www.uttyler.edu/offices/digital-learning/ai/

Please note that Grammarly (and especially Grammarly Plus) is considered generative AI for the purposes of this course, and is not allowed. Online paraphrasing or translating tools are also considered off-limits for this course. Please use only the grammar check already embedded into Microsoft Word. In order to verify the originality of your work, you will be asked to use only specific technology in this course that allows for verifiable version history tracking. If such evidence is not found for your work (e.g., you used a different software), you will be asked to reattempt the assignment (unless it is the final project, in which case there would be no time to do so, so it would earn a zero).