Research Methods in Psychology

Dr. Lauren Kirby

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CONTACTING YOUR TEAM

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Course catalog description: An examination of the cognitive processes involved in human mentation. Includes the study of attention, perceptual processes, memory, knowledge representation, language, decision making and problem solving. Recommended: Prior completion of PSYC 1301 or equivalent.

Course meeting information: This course meets on T/R 2-3:20pm in STE 127. 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 6-9 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 below. As researchers, we will have to dig into (investigate) concepts we are interested in to construct new knowledge (starting with the foundation of the building).

Photo credit: "Digging a foundation" by Sarvodaya Sri Lanka, CC BY 2.0.
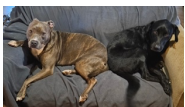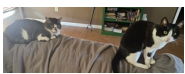
Instructor Introduction – Dr. Kirby

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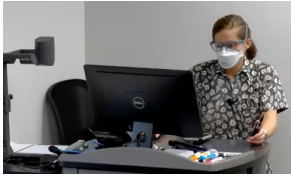
Positive reinforcement: Behaviors happen more frequently when they have been rewarded. Punishments are less effective teaching tools, so this course avoids them.

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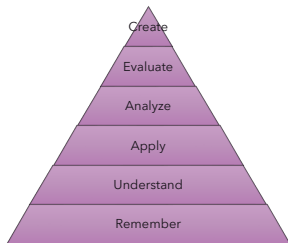
Growth mindset: Students who believe their abilities are fixed give up easily and learn less. Students who are comfortable with trying, making mistakes, and persevering, learn more, so I allow re-attempts on assignments.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion: All learners belong in this course and are capable of reaching the learning outcomes.

Community: 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

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 and analysis: 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 in data.

Real-world applications: 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.

Create
Evaluate
Analyze
Apply
Understand
Remember

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

Your final grade is broken down by course outcomes and assignments that are weighted as shown in the pie chart below. Assignments are graded by letter instead of percentages.

Grading Breakdown by Course Outcome Figure
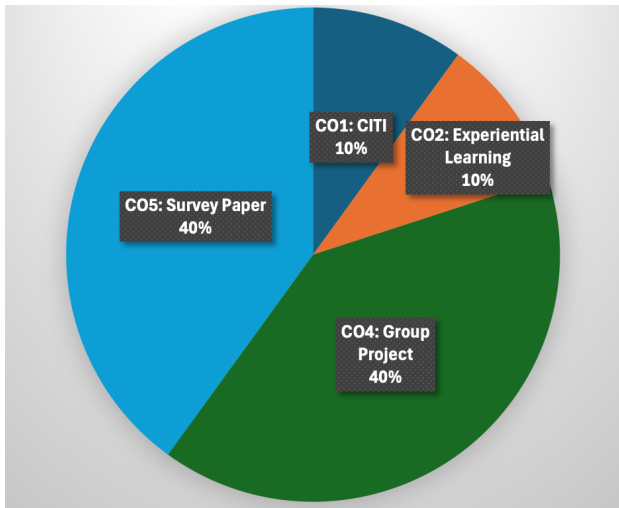
CO3 is assessed using ungraded assignments, such as embedded practice quizzing and in-class participation activities.

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. I mark attendance for records, but not for a grade.

Assignments

Observational Research Project: This is a group project in which you will develop a research question to measure observable variables from strangers in public. This project will be developed in stages with instructor or TA feedback at every step. You will collect and analyze your own data. It culminates in a presentation.

Survey Project Proposal: On your own, you will develop a research question to be measured using an anonymous survey. We will not actually distribute the survey, but you will write and plan it as if you were going to conduct it. This 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 in Canvas.

Experiential Learning—Research Participation, Counseling Hours, and Other Opportunities: 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.

You will need to use Microsoft Office products (Word, PowerPoint, and Excel) for some assignments. Do not use alternative programs such as Apple's Pages, Google Drive documents, or any other formats. If you do not have Microsoft Office, please visit the following page for instructions for how to download it for free: https://www.uttyler.edu/it/office365/365-proplus-students.php. You also need a webcam, microphone, and familiarity with using Zoom. Webcams and microphones are built into some computers already, but not all. Please test your devices as soon as possible to make sure your 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). *A Modern Guide to Understanding and Conducting Research in Psychology.* GitHub. 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

Field Code Changed

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
01/13/25	0: Getting Started; 1: The Scientific Method and Research Questions	Syllabus; 1. The Science of Psychology; 2. Getting Started in Research	Survey Concept Map; Observation Pitch
01/26/25	2: Forming Research Teams and Ideas	2. Getting Started in Research; 11. Theory in Psychology	Observational Groups and Research Question
02/02/25	3: Research Ethics	9. Research Ethics; CITI Training Courses (Social-Behavioral and RCR)	Data collection plan & CITI Training; Survey source
02/09/25	4: Study Designs and Data Collection	3. Experimental Research; 8. Nonexperimental Research	Data collection
02/16/25	5: Analyzing and Interpreting Data	13. Descriptive Statistics; 14. Inferential Statistics	Observational data analysis; survey variables
02/23/25	6: Presenting Research	12. Presenting Your Research	Group Presentations
03/02/25	7: Literature Searching	10. Research Ideas and Literature Reviews	Survey literature search
03/09/25	8: Organizing and Annotating Research		Annotated bibliography
03/16/25	9: Creating Surveys	4. Psychological Measurement	Survey item draft
03/30/25	10: Outlining and Writing		Outline
04/06/25	11: Method Section	5. Sampling	Method draft
04/13/25	12: Abstract		Abstract draft
04/20/25	13: Drafting from Outlines		First full paper draft
04/20/25	Final Module: Survey Paper and Reflection	Survey Paper and Reflection Assignment Guide	Survey Paper and Reflection

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. The courses closes at 11:59 on 05/02/2025. 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.