

Psychological Investigation: Ideas to Action

HUM 100-2 | Summer 2026

COURSE ACCESS

Meeting time: Tuesdays through Fridays 2:30pm-3:50pm

Location: TBD

COURSE INSTRUCTORS

Professor: Almaz Mesghina, Ph.D. (she/her/hers)

How to address me? Call me Professor Mesghina or Dr. Mesghina (*mess-GIH-nuh*)

Email: mesghina@northwestern.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays and Fridays 1-2pm at Swift 120

My office is NOT at Annie May Swift Hall. It is at Swift Hall (2029 Sheridan).

Teaching assistant: Ty'Shea Woods (she/her/hers)

Email: tyapossheawoods2026@u.northwestern.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1-2pm at TBD

What are office hours? Office hours are set times that we reserve specifically to speak to you. Please take advantage of this time. At office hours, you are welcome to share any successes, concerns, confusions, questions, trials, and tribulations regarding the course content, upcoming assignments, your major, your career goals, your college experience ... the list goes on. You are also welcome to ask about my career, research, etc. My goal for this time is to get to know you and assist you in any way appropriate in my capacity as your instructor.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Psychology is a fascinating field – our job is to study the *how* and *why* behind our everyday thoughts and behaviors. However, because human behavior is quite multifaceted and noisy, it is critically important for psychologists to know how to design research studies that are sound and scientific. In this course, we will learn how to (skeptically and confidently) read psychology research papers, generate testable research questions, and design our own research studies to test our questions. Our theme for the class and your research proposals will focus on one broad topic: use of social media and wellbeing.

Who should take this class? This class is not for someone who already has experience reading psychology research and designing psychology studies. This class is designed for beginners. When choosing your Bridge elective, you should consider taking a class that will challenge you to 1) improve skills you feel need more attention or 2) try subjects you would never have thought to try out before. Challenge and discomfort are inherently part of learning something new, and Bridge is a safe place to do this.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, we will be able to:

1. Develop a skeptical approach to reading research articles.
2. Synthesize many research papers to form one persuasive argument.
3. Formulate interesting, testable research questions that are informed by research.

4. Apply learned skills in research design to investigate a chosen phenomenon of interest pertaining to social media usage.
5. Translate and disseminate complex psychological jargon and statistics into accessible, everyday language via common academic modes of delivery (i.e., research papers and presentations are still made engaging and easy to understand).

HEALTH ACCOMMODATIONS

For the sake of our learning and because so much of class time will be spent collaborating on group projects, **we all must attend class...** except if you are feeling ill or otherwise believe you should not attend class for a health-related reason. **Please let me know if you will miss class.** I will offer support as needed. I also ask that group members support each other: **Also let your group members know if you must miss class and plan ahead for how you can continue contributing to groupwork virtually. Group members: be sure to inform your absent peers on what you did during class.** Know that I am generally quite understanding but **only if provided advance notice.**

COURSE POLICIES, GRADING, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As this is a discussion-based and collaborative course, participation is a highly encouraged and graded component of class. Therefore, you must come prepared to engage in discussion by completing all assigned readings prior to each class meeting. In addition to your contributions during class, other forms of participation include your active contributions to groupwork. More details on these assignments are provided below.

Your performance in this class will be determined on the following basis:

10% Participation

5% In-class and in-group participation and activities

5% Peer evaluations

40% Comprehension activities

15% Annotation practice

25% In-class quizzes

40% Group Research Proposal Write-up

5% Annotated bibliography

10% Draft 1

10% Draft 2

15% Final draft

10% Group Presentation

I. Participation (10%): Participation in this class will be evaluated both in terms of our contributions to the whole class and our contributions within our research groups. All participation grades are provided at the level of each student.

In-class and in-group discussion and activities (5%): We will meet four times per week as a class. As this is an applied course with an emphasis on collaboration, it is expected that you will contribute to class discussion and come prepared to assist your group. Please prepare yourself for discussion and for your group's project by completing all assigned readings before each class period. We will have many in-class activities to further your

understanding of the course topics. For instance, there might be worksheets and activities completed during class to help support your group projects. **If you cannot attend class for any reason, or if you will be late to class, please let me know in advance, because participation points necessitate your timely presence.**

Peer evaluations (5%): As is the case in all research settings and classes, success in this course requires a collaborative environment. To ensure the success of all groups, we will evaluate our group members and ourselves on the extent to which we have contributed to our group projects. This will be done at the end of the class. However, if things are not going well before then, I encourage a conversation in office hours.

II. Comprehension activities (40%): Activities completed in class and outside of class to confirm that you are understanding the course content. Graded, but aimed to help you prepare for the big assignments (paper and presentation).

Annotation practice (15%): During the first week of class, you will read a journal article and write a short annotation. Highlight as you read along. You will have comprehension questions too. Answers and annotations will be discussed the next day's class.

In-class comprehension quizzes (25%): On random days of class (starting after week 1) there will be short comprehension quizzes at the beginning of class. These are to ensure you have read the assigned readings and understood what was taught during class the day before. You will have opportunities to collaborate on some parts of these quizzes.

III. Group Research Proposal Write-up (40%): Your final paper will be a 10ish page APA style research paper in which you will summarize your group's research proposal. A detailed rubric will be provided.

Annotated Bibliography (5%): We will first write and submit an annotated bibliography, which will help you summarize all the research related to your topic.

Draft 1 (Literature Review) (10%): In the first draft, we will submit our literature reviews related to the topic we chose to explore. This will build heavily from the annotated bibliography.

Draft 2 (Draft 1 + Methods) (10%): In the second draft, you will incorporate feedback from Draft 1, plus add the methods section.

Final draft (Draft 2 + Abstract) (15%): A complete final draft (incorporating feedback from Draft 2 plus adding abstract) will be due during the last week of class.

IV. Group Presentation (10%): During the last day of class, we will present our final presentations. These will be roughly 15-minute presentations summarizing all aspects of your research proposal! Again, a detailed rubric will be provided.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This course schedule is subject to change.

Date	Topic	In-class activities & Assigned readings (complete before class)	Assignment Due (by start of class)
Week 1: Reading			
Tues Aug 11	Welcomes + introduction	No readings. <i>During class, we will:</i> –complete an interests survey –complete syllabus expectations –introduce the scientific method	
Wed Aug 12	How to read research	Jordan, C. H. & Zanna, M. P. (1999). How to read a journal article in social psychology. In R. F. Baumeister (Ed.), <i>The Self in Social Psychology</i> (pp. 461-470). Psychology Press. Skues, J., Williams, B., Oldmeadow, J., & Wise, L. (2016). The effects of boredom, loneliness, and distress tolerance on problem internet use among university students. <i>International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction</i> , 14, 167-180. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-015-9568-8 <i>During class, we will:</i> –review annotations –choose/narrow our research topics	Annotation practice #1
Thurs Aug 13	Annotated bibliographies & accessing research	Przybylski, A. K. & Weinstein, N. (2012). Can you connect with me now? How the presence of mobile communication technology influences face-to-face conversation quality. <i>Journal of Social and Personal Relationships</i> , 30(3), 237-246. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407512453827 <i>During class, we will:</i> –review annotations –hold an accessing research workshop –start annotated bibliographies	Annotation practice #2
Fri Aug 14	Work day	Cunningham, S. Hudson, C. C., & Harkness, K. (2021). Social media and depression symptoms: A meta-analysis. <i>Research on Child and Adolescent Psychopathology</i> , 49, 241-253. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-020-00715-7 <i>During class, we will:</i> –review annotations –work on annotated bibliography	Annotation practice #3
Week 2: Questioning			

Tues Aug 18	Formulating a research question and hypothesis	No readings. <i>During class, we will:</i> –narrow our research question & hypothesis	Annotated bibliography
Wed Aug 19	Reference and citations	<i>Writing for Psychology: A guide for psychology concentrators.</i> Harvard College. - Academic Honesty in writing (pp. 22-23) Northwestern University Office of the Provost. (2023). <i>Academic Integrity Guide.</i> (pp. 2-6) <i>During class, we will:</i> –start outlining our literature review –discuss academic integrity + citation practices	
Thurs Aug 20	Writing literature reviews	<i>Writing for Psychology: A guide for psychology concentrators.</i> Harvard College. - Do's and Don'ts of Effective Writing in Psychology (pp. 24-29) <i>During class, we will:</i> –continue working on literature reviews	
Fri Aug 21	Work day	No readings. <i>During class, we will:</i> –finalize literature reviews	
Week 3: Designing			
Tues Aug 25	Designing your study	No readings. <i>During class, we will:</i> –Select the best study designs for our projects	Draft 1
Wed Aug 26	Measurement	No readings. <i>During class, we will:</i> –Design survey questions, pick measures –Review validity, reliability	
Thurs Aug 27	Understanding data	No readings. <i>During class, we will:</i> –Do a brief, painless overview of statistics...in order to understand research papers & what constitutes “evidence”	
Fri Aug 28	Work day	No readings. <i>During class, we will:</i> –work on Draft 2	
Week 4: Presenting			
Tues Sep 1	1:1 Consultations	No readings. <i>During class, we will:</i>	Draft 2

		–meet 1:1 with groups to review Draft 2 and prepare for Final Draft	
Wed Sep 2	Work day	No readings. <i>During class, we will:</i> –work on Final Draft	
Thurs Sep 3	1:1 Consultations	No readings. <i>During class, we will:</i> –meet 1:1 with groups to prepare for presentations	Final Draft
Fri Sep 4	Presentations	No readings. <i>During class, we will:</i> –present our research!	Presentation & Peer evaluations