

**Mary Baldwin University**  
**PSYC 400L – Senior Thesis in Psychology**  
Online Tutorial  
Spring 2021

**Instructor:** Patricia L. Murphy  
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**Course Description:** This course is designed to be the culmination of a student's learning and understanding of psychology as a scientific discipline. The primary focus of this course is for the student to (a) choose a topic in psychology that is of interest to them, (b) review the recent literature (empirical and theoretical) on that topic, and (c) write a critical literature review (CLR) describing where psychology currently stands on that issue or topic, with the goal of answering a thesis question.

**Texts:** American Psychological Association (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7<sup>th</sup> Ed.) Washington, D.C.

Galvan, J.L. (2017) *Writing Literature Reviews*. Los Angeles: Pyrczak Publishing. Any edition you can get your hands on is fine.

**Course Requirements:**

- 1.) Students taking this class should **Contact** their instructor (by phone or by e-mail) during the first week of the semester, if not before. Staying in contact with your thesis advisor is imperative for a successful senior thesis experience.
- 2.) **Literature Search** – Students will be required to conduct a computer-based literature search to locate articles on their proposed topic. The articles must come from professional psychology journals or book chapters; popular press articles do not qualify. There should be a minimum of ten empirical articles—research articles presenting and discussing formal data collection. Theoretical articles are acceptable as long as they are in addition to the ten primary empirical articles. It is important that students avoid the pitfall of choosing too broad a topic, so be sure to discuss your evolving topic ideas with your professor/advisor.
- 3.) **Oral Presentations** – Students will be required to give an 12-15 minute presentation discussing and critically reviewing an article they select from their empirical review. The research should be presented as if the students conducted the research themselves, using “I” and “we” as necessary. Be wary of choosing too difficult a study for your presentation; if an article has more than one experiment you should pick only one to present. Presentations can be made in two different ways: (1) you can tape it and send a link, and (2) you can present on-line in real-time, using the Blackboard Eluminate software. In any case, presentations should be accompanied by a power point presentation. If taping do not attempt to include a visual of the power point slides in the taping, simply

include them when you send the link and refer to them in your talk. I will follow along with the slides as I watch your presentation.

Worth 15% of your final grade.

- 4.) **Critical Review Paper** – This paper should summarize and critically evaluate a minimum of ten empirical articles (none published prior to 2011) on a specific topic or issue in psychology. Papers must be from 3,000 to 6,000 words in length, usually 25-30 pages. Papers must also be in strict APA format. The paper should begin with an overview of the recent literature, including a thesis statement that you derive **after** you have poured through the literature and educated yourself on the topic. Don't make the mistake of attempting to support a thesis statement that you create before you conduct your literature search. The bulk of the paper will summarize and critically evaluate the recent literature on your topic. It is not necessary, nor is it likely, that every study you review draw the same conclusion. Discrepancies should be discussed by referring to methodological differences, population differences and/or flaws in the conclusions. Papers should end with a brief summary of the major conclusions, indicating how said conclusions support your original thesis statement. More detailed paper guidelines will be distributed at the beginning of the semester. Worth 60% of your final grade.
- 5.) **Meeting Deadlines** – Students must file a report with their instructor every two weeks detailing their progress. Meeting deadlines is crucial to your success in this seminar. For that reason satisfactory progress according to the below stated deadlines will be worth 25% of your final grade.

**Critical Deadlines:** (Note: Chapters from Galvan text are listed sequentially where they will be most useful. Students should feel free to read ahead as suits their individual schedule and/or needs.)

		<u>Reading Assignment</u>
<b>Week 1</b>	How to conduct a Literature Search	<b>G – Chaps. 1 &amp; 2</b>
<b>Week 2</b>	Searching for articles & selecting a topic	<b>G – Chaps. 3 &amp; 4</b>
<b>Week 3</b>	Taking notes and organizing your information. Analyzing Literature. <b>Turn in initial reference list of sources to instructor</b>	<b>G – Chap. 5</b>
<b>Week 5</b>	Analyzing Research & Creating an Outline At this point you should have most—if not all—of your articles. <b>Contact instructor about presentation</b> <b>Turn in outline to instructor</b>	<b>G – Chap. 6 &amp; 7</b>
<b>Week 7</b>	Organizing Notes & Writing tips <b>Oral Presentations</b>	<b>G – Chaps. 8 &amp; 9</b>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>First Draft - 5-10 pages of rough draft due</b>	<b>G – Chaps. 10 &amp; 11</b>

**Final Draft of your thesis is due by Monday April 19<sup>th</sup>.**

**Honor Code:**

Students are expected to abide by the Mary Baldwin University honor code and conduct themselves accordingly. Any form of plagiarism, cheating, or dishonesty will be reported to the Dean.

**Late Policy:**

Keeping up with the course schedule is critically important to your success in this course. If a student falls behind at any stage during the semester they are unlikely to finish their thesis on time. For this reason, 25% of your grade will be a reflection of how well you stay on schedule.

**Extension Policy:**

At the student's request extensions may be granted (at the discretion of the instructor) to those who have not completed all the course work by the MBU declared deadline for the given semester. However, students must have completed at least half of the required work in a good faith effort and/or have extenuating circumstances in order to be approved for an ET.

**E-mail Activation:**

All MBU students are required to activate their MBU issued e-mail accounts. These accounts will be the primary source for communication from the instructor and are thus crucial for your success in this course.

**Source Documentation and Group Work:**

All written work must cite sources within the text and on required reference pages using standard APA format.

Each student must complete her or his assignment individually (e.g. you can't collaborate on a paper) but peer support and review is often helpful and strongly encouraged.