Psychology 497
Senior Project
Spring 2015
Fridays, 9AM-11AM, N107
3 units

Instructor: Elizabeth D. Cordero, Ph.D.
Office: Faculty Offices East, 139
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2PM-4PM online and by appointment
E-mail: ecordero@mail.sdsu.edu
Phone: (760) 768-5610

Course Description
From the SDSU Course Catalog, p 400:

“Individual investigation and APA-style report on a research project. Maximum credit six units. No more than nine units of Psychology 497 and 499 may be counted toward the major and no more than 12 units of courses numbered Psychology 491, 494, 495, 497, 499 may be counted toward the major.”

This course is designed to guide students through independent research projects of psychological phenomena. Students will learn about the steps involved in conducting a study from start to finish. Students will experience for themselves how to conduct a thorough, pertinent literature review, select sound methodologies, complete a protocol for SDSU’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), collect and analyze data, and discuss their results. Additionally, students will write a scientific manuscript based on their project according to the style of the American Psychological Association (APA). By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Use PsycINFO and related search engines to find relevant background literature
- Develop research questions/hypotheses based on previous research
- Complete a protocol for SDSU’s IRB
- Argue the merits of various methodologies to investigate psychological phenomena
- Collect data from human beings in a scientific and ethical manner
- Analyze data with appropriate statistical tests
- Write an APA-style manuscript based on their project that includes a discussion of the implications of their findings.

Prerequisites (from the SDSU Course Catalog, p 400): “Twelve units of psychology and consent of instructor.”
Course Requirements

Attendence – Students are required to attend all class sessions. Students who are more than 15 minutes late to a class session or who leaves 15 minutes early will be considered tardy. Any student who misses or is late to more than two classes will receive a “no pass” for the class.

Article Summaries – Students will spend much of their time reading articles about their topic of interest from scientific journals, especially in the beginning of the semester. Students are required to use the “Summary Article Form” provided by the instructor to summarize each article they read. The amount of reading done will depend upon the existing literature pertaining to each student’s topic. Students are expected to be open to guidance about how much reading should be done and to be able to summarize verbally what they read, as well.

SDSU’s IRB Protocol – Students who plan to conduct an original data collection will complete a protocol to obtain permission to conduct their study from SDSU’s IRB after they complete their literature review and design their study. The protocol will be completed by January 30, 2015.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Write-Up – Students will collect data as needed as soon as permission to do so is received from SDSU’s IRB. Students should plan to analyze their data by the end of March, 2015 and spend the rest of the semester writing the results and discussion sections of their APA-style manuscripts.

APA-Style Manuscript – Students will write a manuscript about their project at least 20 pages long according to the latest version of the Publication manual of the American Psychological Association. This paper should be emailed to the instructor by 9AM May 8, 2015.

Grading:

Students will receive a “credit” or “no credit” based upon their completion of the aforementioned requirements. If students elect to receive a letter grade for this course, the letter grade will be based on the quality of the APA-style manuscript submitted at the end of the semester.

The following rubric will be applied for students who choose to receive a letter grade for the course. The APA-style manuscript will be worth 100 points. APA-style, spelling, and grammar will matter, and one-half of a point will be deducted from your total score for each instance of deviation from APA-style as well as incorrect spelling or grammar in the manuscript, up to 10 points. That leaves 90 points to be earned for the content of the manuscript and will be distributed as follows (Note: All criteria in each range need to be met in order to earn points in that range):

81-90 points
Student’s manuscript was at least 20 pages in length and included a comprehensive literature review of pertinent (seminal and recent) research; well-formulated hypotheses; clear description of the methods employed to collect data (e.g., information about participants, materials); succinct but thorough summary of the results and appropriate tables or figures; and a discussion section that presents the results using everyday language, compares and contrasts
the results with extant literature, proposes ideas for application of results, and provides information about the study’s limitations and future directions. A title page, abstract, and references accompany the manuscript. The manuscript was well-written.

71-80 points
Student’s manuscript was at least 18 pages in length and included a good but not comprehensive literature review of pertinent (seminal and recent) research; clear hypotheses; description of the methods employed to collect data (e.g., information about participants, materials); summary of the results and appropriate tables or figures; and a discussion section with most of the following: presents the results using everyday language, compares and contrasts the results with extant literature, proposes ideas for application of results, and provides information about the study’s limitations and future directions. A title page, abstract, and references accompany the manuscript. The manuscript was well-written.

61-70 points
Student’s manuscript was at least 15 pages in length and included an adequate literature review of pertinent (seminal and recent) research; hypotheses; description of the methods employed to collect data (e.g., information about participants, materials); an incomplete summary of the results; and a discussion section with some of the following: presents the results using everyday language, compares and contrasts the results with extant literature, proposes ideas for application of results, and provides information about the study’s limitations and future directions. A title page, abstract, and references accompany the manuscript. The student did not convey ideas well in writing.

0 - 60 points
Student’s manuscript failed to meet the criteria listed above.

Point ranges for letter grades are as follows:

A: 91 – 100 points  
B: 81 - 90 points  
C: 71 - 80 points  
D: 61 – 70 points  
F: 0 – 60 points

Please let me know if you encounter any difficulties with completion of the course requirements or if there is something in particular you’d like to learn about that pertains to this course. I’d like to facilitate you having as much of a positive experience as possible. If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Norma Aguilar at (760) 768-5637 or Student Affairs at (760) 768-5502. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Norma Aguilar in Student Affairs at SDSU-IV as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

A few words about cheating and plagiarism from the SDSU Faculty Handbook 2006, p 22:
“Cheating and plagiarism are serious violations of academic standards and, if they occur in connection with an academic program at SDSU, may warrant academic sanctions...as well as disciplinary sanctions...(such as probation, suspension, or expulsion...)”

In order to preserve academic integrity and encourage students to make responsible choices, all students found cheating or plagiarizing will receive an automatic fail for the course and will be sent to the appropriate administrative body for review for the aforementioned consequences. Please review the university’s definition of plagiarism in the SDSU General Catalog.

This course requires students to participate in field trips, research, or studies that include course work that will be performed off-campus. Participation in such activities may result in accidents or personal injury. Students participating in these events are aware of these risks, and agree to hold harmless San Diego State University, the State of California, and Trustees of the California State University and Colleges and its officers, employees, and agents against all claims, demands, suits, judgments, expenses, and costs of any kind on account of participation in the activities. Students using their own vehicles to transport other students to such activities should have current automobile insurance.