

Texas A&M University - Central Texas

PSYK 588-110/180 Thesis

Instructor: Sam Fiala, Ph.D., L.P.

Class Meetings: M 6-9pm

Office: Warrior Hall 318-B

Email: sam.fiala@tamuct.edu

Office phone: 254-519-5759

Office hours: Mon-Thu 9am-12pm; Mon/Wed 1-3pm (and by appt.)

Course Web Page: <https://tamuct.instructure.com>

Mode of Instruction and Course Access:

This course uses TAMUCT's Canvas learning management system

(<https://tamuct.instructure.com/login/ldap>). Students will use their Canvas username and password (communicated separately) to logon to this system.

Student-Instructor Interaction:

The professor will logon to the course in Canvas regularly during the work week (Monday through Friday) and will reply to email within two business days.

Students are expected to logon to the course in Canvas regularly to review announcements and resources.

The professor will provide feedback on assignments by commenting on drafts submitted via email. Meetings can be set up face-to-face or via Skype for Business.

911 Cellular:

Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University – Central Texas

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Connect at [911Cellular](https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Texas-AM-Central/alert-management) [<https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Texas-AM-Central/alert-management>] to change where you receive your alerts or to opt out. By staying enrolled in 911Cellular, university officials can quickly pass on safety-related information, regardless of your location.

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Overview and Description:

An independent research course in which a student proposes and completes an original, quantitative research project in conjunction with three graduate faculty members who serve on the thesis committee. Scheduled when the student is ready to begin thesis. No credit awarded until proposal and thesis are approved, respectively. Six hours of thesis credit is required.

Prerequisites: PSYK 500 and PSYK 501 and successful completion of 12 additional credit hours in the degree plan and approval of the Chair of the thesis committee, or Department Chair approval.

This course is designed to provide students with the opportunity to use systematic research methods and appropriate tools of inquiry to thoroughly investigate a psychological problem or issue. Students must follow the *Thesis Manual* provided by the Office of Graduate Studies.

Course Objectives (Student Learning Outcomes):

Course objectives and content will be addressed through the creation of an original research project that will be completed in two phases (i.e., proposal and thesis). The student, under the guidance of a

faculty advisor, will utilize sound research methods for the social sciences. In this course, students will:

1. *Demonstrate comprehension and application of fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories.* Students will identify and summarize relevant psychological theories and research in a content area of specialization to contextualize the thesis proposal and final thesis project.
2. *Demonstrate application of factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends).* Students will compute and present appropriate statistical techniques given the data collected in the project such as measures of central tendency and variability, correlation coefficients, regression, analysis of variance, and/or chi-square. Students will demonstrate their ability to compute and present appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of data on the final thesis project.
3. *Analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.* Students will read and summarize in writing the development of research on the variables of interest, read multiple research studies on the variables targeted in the thesis and integrate the information in writing to support the position, acknowledge in writing relevant research information that contradicts or is otherwise inconsistent with the arguments in the thesis, write a justification for the proposed thesis research that is based on limitations, shortcomings, and/or gaps in existing research, and write research hypotheses that are directly supported by existing empirical research.
4. *Integrate academic content from the program to improve thinking, problem solving, and decision making.* Students will develop and design a novel project supported by existing empirical research to address problems, issues, or gaps in knowledge. Students will integrate research results with existing research and theory in the content area of specialization to draw conclusions support by data gathered during the thesis project.
5. *Demonstrate skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing.* Students will utilize appropriate APA style to write summaries of existing research articles and base the justification for the thesis proposal on existing research, write a proposal for the thesis research and revise it based on committee feedback, and write a final report of the thesis research and revise it based on committee feedback.
6. *Demonstrate specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field.*
The student will:
 - a. craft, in conjunction with a faculty mentor, an original research idea.
 - b. research information related to the thesis project using online tools including the TAMUCT library's databases.
 - c. summarize existing peer-reviewed research on the topic and note where more information is needed.
 - d. write an original research proposal in APA style and defend it during an oral presentation to the thesis committee.
 - e. submit defended research plans through the Institutional Review Board process (for human subjects).
 - f. engage in data collection according to the approved plan and in a manner consistent with training on federal requirements.
 - g. use statistical computing software (e.g., SPSS) to analyze quantitative data collected through research and interpret it.
 - h. propose directions for future research.
 - i. write the final thesis to conform to the guidelines stated in the TAMUCT *Thesis Manual* and defend it during an oral presentation to the thesis committee and interested others.

Required Reading and Textbook(s):

Reading:

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. (ISBN: 978-1433805615)

Texas A&M University – Central Texas, Institutional Review Board (2015). *Institutional Review Board (IRB) Guidelines and Procedures Handbook*.

Texas A&M University-Central Texas, Office of Graduate Studies & Research (n.d.). *Thesis manual*. Retrieved from <https://www.tamuct.edu/files/docs/enrollment-management/ThesisManual.pdf>

Texas A&M University-Central Texas, Department of Psychology and Counseling Master of Science in Experimental Psychology Program (Fall 2015). *Procedures for preparing a thesis*.

Software for Semester 2:

IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Standard GradPack v. 24. This computing software is widely used to compute statistical analyses and is available for students to use on University computers **free** of charge. Alternatively, students can rent a subscription to SPSS for their personal computers. Students can purchase a 6-month or 12-month lease for the program via one of many online vendors. **The STANDARD GradPack is recommended instead of the BASE GradPack.** See the IBM website for a description of the product and a list of vendors: <http://www-03.ibm.com/software/products/en/spss-stats-gradpack>

Training:

National Institutes of Health, Office of Extramural Research. (2015). Protecting Human Research Participants. Retrieved from <https://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>

OR

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (2015). Human Subjects Research. Retrieved from <https://www.citiprogram.org/>

Students are required to read peer-reviewed, empirical journal articles related to the variables under examination in their research. Journal articles may be accessed through the online TAMUCT library site either as a direct download or via Interlibrary Loan.

A student of this institution 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.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will complete this course through independent study with days and times for meetings with the professor scheduled on a regular basis throughout the semester. All components of the research project will be submitted according to the course calendar. The following assignments are required for successful completion of the course.

Semester 1

Article Summaries –Rubric in Thesis course.

*Final Written Proposal –Rubric in Thesis course.

Oral Proposal Defense –Rubric in Thesis course.

IRB Submission – Pass/Fail

Semester 2

Data Collection – Pass/Fail

Submission of Raw Data and Statistical Analysis Output to Thesis Chair – Pass/Fail

*Final Written Thesis –Rubric in Thesis course.

Oral Thesis Defense –Rubric in Thesis course.

Thesis Submission to Office of Graduate Studies – Pass/Fail

*Submitted for plagiarism review with revision prior to submission to the Thesis committee.

All assignments must be written in a student’s own words. No credit will be awarded for quoted or plagiarized material on any assignment. **Quoting or paraphrasing that closely mirrors the source will receive no credit even if properly cited. Students must write original sentences conveying the information they have learned to the reader (i.e., paraphrasing) and properly cite the source of the information to receive credit for writing.**

All assignments should be written in proper APA style. Students must follow the APA style guidelines provided in the *Publication Manual* and use online style resources provided by the American Psychological Association at www.apastyle.org For final thesis formatting, the *TAMUCT Thesis Manual* takes precedence over APA style.

Grading Criteria Rubric and Conversion

All requirements for the Semester 1 or Semester 2 Thesis courses must be completed successfully before the student can be awarded credit for the Thesis courses. Until all assignments for each semester are completed successfully, students will be assigned “In Progress” status for the course(s). Students are required to remain enrolled in a Thesis course until all assignments are completed, and no guarantee is implied that the thesis can be completed in two semesters though students should work diligently to meet this expectation.

Rubrics for all assignments are located in the Thesis course in Blackboard. Awarding final credit for the thesis courses will be based on a pass/fail grading system in accordance with the policies and procedures outlined in the Office of Graduate Studies *Thesis Manual*.

Posting of Grades

All feedback will be sent via Blackboard Messages after the assignment is received. The professor will read, provide comments and record grades within 5 business days of receiving the assignment. *The student should not hesitate to ask the professor about any grade or concern.*

COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

Assignments*	Due Dates
Thesis Proposal (16-Week Semester 1)	
Task 1: Thesis Concept Paper to Potential Committee Members	By week 2
Task 2: Committee Selection	By week 3
Task 3: Initial Draft (thesis statement, literature review, method section)	By week 6

Task 4: Multiple Revisions of Proposal Draft with Chair/Committee	Ongoing
Task 5: Final Proposal to Committee (thesis statement, literature review, method section with proposed statistical design)	By week 12
Task 6: Proposal Defense with Committee (Presentation with Q&A – 1 hour)	By week 13
Task 7: Final Thesis Proposal with Edits to Committee	By week 14
Task 8: Proposal Approval Form forwarded to Department Chair	By week 15
Task 9: IRB Protocol Completed, Revised, and Submitted to IRB	By week 16
Final Thesis Project (16-Week Semester 2)	
Task 10: Await IRB Approval, Create Materials (Surveys, Handouts)	Weeks 1-4**
Task 11: Data Collection, Analysis, and Discussion/Implications	Weeks 5-7
Task 12: Initial Draft of Completed Thesis Project Paper to Committee	By week 8
Task 13: Multiple Revisions of Thesis Project Paper with Chair/Committee	Ongoing
Task 14: Final Thesis Project Paper (all APA style sections with full statistical analysis)	3 weeks prior to OGS deadline ~By week 9~
Task 15: Final Thesis Defense Meeting with Committee (must be scheduled a minimum of 2 weeks in advance)	2 weeks prior to OGS deadline ~By week 10~
Task 16: Final Thesis Paper Edits to Committee	1 week prior to OGS deadline ~By week 11~
Task 17: Thesis and Approval Forms Forwarded to Office of Graduate Studies (OGS)	See OGS deadline ~By week 12~
Task 18: All Thesis Materials Prepared for Publication (UMI)	See OGS deadline
Task 19: Required Bound Copies of Thesis and CD with all materials provided to University and Department Offices	See OGS/Department deadlines

*The professor reserves the right to amend this syllabus at any time. If revisions are necessary, the professor will make every effort to provide as much advanced notice as possible.

~These are approximate dates. Exact dates for OGS deadlines are provided on the University Calendar.

**A minimum of 4 weeks must be provided for IRB review of Exempt projects. If students propose an Expedited project, a minimum of 6 weeks must be provided for IRB review. If students propose a project that requires a full board review, a minimum of 8 weeks for IRB review must be provided. Students should not expect to complete a project that requires full board review by the IRB in only two semesters. Additional semesters of coursework using the variable credit hour option for thesis courses should be considered. Plan accordingly.

INSTRUCTOR POLICIES

Recommended Academic Strategies:

1. According to the federal definition of a credit hour, students should spend “not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class...for one semester hour of credit”

(<http://www.sacscoc.org/subchg/policy/CreditHours.pdf>). Bear in mind that this guideline is for an average class. Some students may find this course challenging and may require *significantly more time* to grasp the concepts and complete the assignments. Plan accordingly.

2. Research indicates that spaced practice is better than massed practice when learning new information. Thus, spending 3 hours a day for 6 days a week on coursework is better for your learning and your grade than ‘pulling an all-nighter.’ Adjust your schedule accordingly.
3. Be professional and use proper netiquette (i.e., internet etiquette) in all course correspondence. Your college education is grooming you for a professional career.
 - a. Use standard English in all of your communications. Do not abbreviate or use texting shortcuts (e.g., OMG! R U kidding. ROFL!). Spell check, revise, and edit your messages before sending them. Use proper punctuation and capitalization.
 - b. Be polite and respectful of others. Do not use all UPPERCASE LETTERS, which is equivalent to shouting. Avoid sarcasm and irony because they are easily misinterpreted by the reader. Do not ‘flame’ others by sending negative or hurtful comments; though the reader cannot see you, you are not anonymous.
 - c. Remember that you are individually accountable for all your messages and online actions. Treat all of your interactions with others in class as you would in your future professional career.

Technological Requirements And Support

This course will use the A&M-Central Texas Instructure Canvas learning management system.

Logon to A&M-Central Texas Canvas [<https://tamuct.instructure.com>].

Username: Your MyCT username (xx123 or everything before the "@" in your MyCT e-mail address)

Password: Your MyCT password

Technology Support.

For log-in problems, students should contact Help Desk Central.

24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

Email: helpdesk@tamu.edu

Phone: (254) 519-5466

[Web Chat](http://hdc.tamu.edu): [<http://hdc.tamu.edu>]

Please let the support technician know you are an A&M-Central Texas student.

For issues with **Canvas**, select “chat with Canvas support,” submit a support request to Canvas Tier 1, or call the Canvas support line: 1-844-757-0953, links to all are found inside of Canvas using the “Help” link.

For issues related to course content and requirements, contact your instructor.

Academic Honesty Policy

Academic Integrity

Texas A&M University -Central Texas values the integrity of the academic enterprise and strives for the highest standards of academic conduct. A&M-Central Texas expects its students, faculty, and staff to support the adherence to high standards of personal and scholarly conduct to preserve the honor and integrity of the creative community.

Academic integrity is defined as a commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course. Academic misconduct is any act that improperly affects a true and honest evaluation of a student’s academic performance and includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism and improper citation of sources, using another student’s work, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. All academic misconduct concerns will be reported to the university’s Office of Student Conduct. Ignorance of the university’s standards and expectations is never an excuse to act with a lack of integrity. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action.

My interactions with you are based on an expectation of mutual trust and honor. You are required to do your own work on exams and assignments (unless I explicitly say otherwise). Violation of this trust will result in an F in this course in addition to whatever consequences the administration deems appropriate. You are encouraged to seek feedback from peers and tutors with regard to your writing; however, you must be cautious not to allow an editor to do your writing for you.

Plagiarism (primarily of the unintentional variety) has been a problem for many students. I will post a video lecture talking about how to avoid plagiarism, and you will take a *Plagiarism Quiz* to document your understanding of what constitutes plagiarism (see Assessments section below). Engaging in plagiarism will result in loss of points in the class and (depending on the severity) may result in failure of the course. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT**

Library Services

The University Library provides many services in support of research across campus and at a distance. We offer over 200 electronic databases containing approximately 250,000 eBooks and 82,000 journals, in addition to the 72,000 items in our print collection, which can be mailed to students who live more than 50 miles from campus. Research guides for each subject taught at A&M-Central Texas are available through our website to help students navigate these resources. On-campus, the library offers technology including cameras, laptops, microphones, webcams, and digital sound recorders.

Research assistance from a librarian is also available twenty-four hours a day through our online chat service, and at the reference desk when the library is open. Research sessions can be scheduled for more comprehensive assistance, and may take place on Skype or in-person at the library. Assistance may cover many topics, including how to find articles in peer-reviewed journals, how to cite resources, and how to piece together research for written assignments.

Our 27,000-square-foot facility on the A&M-Central Texas main campus includes student lounges, private study rooms, group work spaces, computer labs, family areas suitable for all ages, and many other features. Services such as interlibrary loan, TexShare, binding, and laminating are available. The library frequently offers workshops, tours, readings, and other events. For more information, please visit our [Library website](https://tamuct.libguides.com/) [https://tamuct.libguides.com/].

Academic Accommodations

At Texas A&M University-Central Texas, we value an inclusive learning environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed and has the right to a barrier free education. The Department of Access and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability receive equal access to the University's programs, services and activities. If you believe you have a disability requiring reasonable accommodations please contact the Department of Access and Inclusion at (254) 501-5831. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

For more information please visit our [Access & Inclusion](https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html) webpage [https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html].

Texas A&M University-Central Texas supports students who are pregnant and/or parenting. In accordance with requirements of Title IX and guidance from US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, the Dean of Student Affairs' Office can assist students who are pregnant and/or parenting in seeking accommodations related to pregnancy and/or parenting. For more information, please visit <https://www.tamuct.departments/index.php>. Students may also contact the institution's Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to read more about these [requirements and guidelines](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf) online, please visit the website [http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf].

Tutoring

Tutoring is available to all A&M-Central Texas students, both on-campus and online. On-campus subjects tutored include Accounting, Advanced Math, Biology, Finance, Statistics, Mathematics, and Study Skills. Tutors are available at the Tutoring Center in Warrior Hall, Suite 111.

If you have a question regarding tutor schedules, need to schedule a tutoring session, are interested in becoming a tutor, or any other question, contact Academic Support Programs at 254-519-5796, or by emailing Larry Davis at

lmdavis@tamuct.edu.

Chat live with a tutor 24/7 for almost any subject on your computer! Tutor.com is an online tutoring platform that enables A&M-Central Texas students to log-in and receive FREE online tutoring and writing support. This tool provides tutoring in over forty subject areas. Access Tutor.com through Canvas.

A Note about Sexual Violence at A&M-Central Texas

Sexual violence is a serious safety, social justice, and public health issue. The university offers support for anyone struggling with these issues. University faculty are mandated reporters, so if someone discloses that they were sexually assaulted (or a victim of Domestic/Dating Violence or Stalking) while a student at A&M-Central Texas, faculty members are required to inform the Title IX Office. If you want to discuss any of these issues confidentially, you can do so through Counseling Services (254-501-5956) located on the second floor of Warrior Hall.

Sexual violence can occur on a campus because predators often feel emboldened, and victims often feel silenced or shamed. It is incumbent on ALL of us to find ways to actively create environments that tell predators we don't agree with their behaviors and tell survivors we will support them. Your actions matter. Don't be a bystander; be an agent of change. For additional information on campus policy and resources visit the [Title IX webpage](https://www.tamuct.edu/departments/compliance/titleix.php) [https://www.tamuct.edu/departments/compliance/titleix.php].

Drop Policy

If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete a [Drop Request Form](https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop_Request_Form.pdf) [https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop_Request_Form.pdf].

Professors cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Registrar's Office will provide a deadline on the University Calendar for which the form must be completed, signed and returned. Once you return the signed form to the Registrar's Office, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. If you still show as enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Registrar's Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the drop deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course, which may affect your financial aid and/or VA educational benefits.

University Writing Center

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