

Western University
Social Science
PSYCHOL 9723A
Social Topics – Social Assessments and Measures
Winter 2026
Tuesdays 10:30am-1:30pm [REDACTED]

Enrollment Restrictions

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in Psychology, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

Instructor and Teaching Assistant Information

Instructor: Samantha joel
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Course Description

The quality of any psychology claim rests on the quality of its methodology. However, building on the replication crisis that emerged in the 2010s (e.g., Open Sci. Collab. 2015; Simmons et al., 2011), psychology is currently facing renewed calls to interrogate their methodological practices. How can we better ensure that the insights generated in our fields are robust, reliable, and valid representations of the human experiences that we study (e.g., Elson et al., 2023; Flake & Fried, 2020; Hussey & Hughes, 2020; Maul, 2017; Vazire et al., 2022)? To what extent do our methods and measures capture the attitudes, cognitions, and behaviours that they are intended to capture? And, what can be done to improve the construct validity and generalizability of our methodological tools?

The class will take on a seminar structure, with assigned readings that provide various perspectives on current debates surrounding methodological best practices. We will discuss and build on each week's readings, and brainstorm how the issue could be tackled moving forward. In particular, we will discuss 1) how severe of a problem the issue poses for psychology, and 2) innovative ways that we might be able to solve it.

Course Format

This is an in-person discussion-based course.

Course Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Generate and communicate novel scholarly ideas within the field of social psychology.
2. Discuss current methodological challenges in the field of social psychology.
3. Lead insightful, nuanced, and respectful discussions in a group.

Methods of Evaluation

Discussion Leading (20%)

One student will be tasked each week with leading the discussion. The discussion leader should begin with a roughly 15-20 minute presentation outlining that week's topic. You are free to integrate any supplementary literature that you think will help to situate the topic for the class. Then, lead the class in a discussion about the key issues raised. Your presentation should demonstrate your knowledge of the literature on the chosen topic, and your ability to think deeply (and get others to think deeply) about the work.

Weekly Reflections (30%)

After completing the readings, please write a 1-page single-spaced reflection piece on the issue of the week. For example, how much of a problem do you think this issue poses for psychology, and for your particular subfield or topic? Do you have any thoughts about how we could address it? Do you foresee any important barriers to addressing it that would have to be overcome? These are just some suggested prompts – you are free to reflect on the issue as you wish. Also, your ideas do not need to be fully formed in this write-up; they will merely serve as a jumping-off point for our discussions. Please submit your idea generation piece on OWL by midnight the day before class each week. Submissions received after class will not be graded. Your final grade for this section will be based on the average of your best five submissions.

Class Participation (20%)

All students are expected to participate actively and respectfully. If you're not very comfortable speaking in group settings, this class is a great opportunity to work on that. Your perspectives are worth sharing! If you are very comfortable speaking in group settings: we love your energy, but be sure to pull back sometimes to make room for other voices. Everyone: consider how you would like others to engage with your thoughts and ideas, and please do the same for your colleagues.

Final Project (30%)

For your final project (worth 30% of grade), you will be asked to write a 8-12 page paper examining a particularly measurement issue within the field of social psychology. You are encouraged to choose an issue that you think is particularly pertinent to your area of research. Your paper should cover: 1) relevant literature on the issue broadly, 2) how the issue applies to your research subfield/topic, and 3) how you think the problem could best be approached/tackled/solved/improved upon in the context of your subfield/topic. The final project will be due on the last day of class.

Course Materials and Timeline

January 6

THE CREDIBILITY REVOLUTION: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Assigned Readings

Nelson, L. D., Simmons, J., & Simonsohn, U. (2018). Psychology's renaissance. *Annual review of psychology*, 69(1), 511-534.

Nosek, B. A., Hardwicke, T. E., Moshontz, H., Allard, A., Corker, K. S., Dreber, A., ... & Vazire, S. (2022). Replicability, robustness, and reproducibility in psychological science. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 73(1), 719-748.

Supplemental Readings

Atherton, O. E., Chung, J. M., Harris, K., Rohrer, J. M., Condon, D. M., Cheung, F., ... & Corker, K. S. (2021). Why has personality psychology played an outsized role in the credibility revolution? *Personality Science*, 2(1), e6001.

Tackett, J. L., Lilienfeld, S. O., Patrick, C. J., Johnson, S. L., Krueger, R. F., Miller, J. D., ... & Shrout, P. E. (2017). It's time to broaden the replicability conversation: Thoughts for

and from clinical psychological science. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 12(5), 742-756.

January 13
A RENEWED FOCUS ON VALIDITY

Assigned Readings

Fabrigar, L. R., Wegener, D. T., & Petty, R. E. (2020). A validity-based framework for understanding replication in psychology. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 24(4), 316-344.

Lilienfeld, S. O., & Strother, A. N. (2020). Psychological measurement and the replication crisis: Four sacred cows. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 61(4), 281.

Vazire, S., Schiavone, S. R., & Bottesini, J. G. (2022). Credibility beyond replicability: Improving the four validities in psychological science. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 31(2), 162-168.

January 20
CONSTRUCT VALIDITY PART I: DO WE HAVE A PROBLEM?

Assigned Readings

Maul, A. (2017). Rethinking traditional methods of survey validation. *Measurement: Interdisciplinary Research and Perspectives*, 15(2), 51-69.

Rhemtulla, M., Borsboom, D., & van Bork, R. (2017). How to measure nothing. *Measurement: Interdisciplinary Research and Perspectives*, 15(2), 95-97. [Note: This is a commentary on Maul, 2017]

Hussey, I., & Hughes, S. (2020). Hidden invalidity among 15 commonly used measures in social and personality psychology. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 3(2), 166-184.

Wetzel, E., & Roberts, B. W. (2020). Commentary on Hussey and Hughes (2020): Hidden invalidity among 15 commonly used measures in social and personality psychology. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 3(4), 505-508.

January 27
CONSTRUCT VALIDITY PART II: RAISING THE BAR

Assigned Readings

- Flake, J. K., & Fried, E. I. (2020). Measurement schmeasurement: Questionable measurement practices and how to avoid them. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 3(4), 456-465.
- Flake, J. K., Davidson, I. J., Wong, O., & Pek, J. (2022). Construct validity and the validity of replication studies: A systematic review. *American Psychologist*, 77(4), 576.
- Schimmack, U. (2021). The validation crisis in psychology. *Meta-Psychology*, 5.

February 3
NO CLASS (Sam is Away)

February 10
MEASURES, MEASURES EVERYWHERE

Assigned Readings

- Elson, M., Hussey, I., Alsalti, T., & Arslan, R. C. (2023). Psychological measures aren't toothbrushes. *Communications Psychology*, 1(1), 25.
- Iliescu, D., Greiff, S., Ziegler, M., Nye, C., Geisinger, K., Sellbom, M., ... & Saklofske, D. (2024). Proliferation of measures contributes to advancing psychological science. *Communications Psychology*, 2(1), 19.
- Anvari, F., Alsalti, T., Oehler, L. A., Hussey, I., Elson, M., & Arslan, R. C. (2025). Defragmenting psychology. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 1-4.

February 17
NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

February 24
CHALLENGES FOR EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS

Assigned Readings

Chester, D. S., & Lasko, E. N. (2021). Construct validation of experimental manipulations in social psychology: Current practices and recommendations for the future. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 16, 377-395.

Eronen, M. I. (2020). Causal discovery and the problem of psychological interventions. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 59, 100785.

Lin, H., Werner, K. M., & Inzlicht, M. (2021). Promises and perils of experimentation: The mutual-internal-validity problem. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 16, 854-863.

Rohrer, J. M. (2024). Causal inference for psychologists who think that causal inference is not for them. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 18(3), e12948.

March 3
CHALLENGES FOR BEHAVIORAL DESIGNS

Assigned Readings

Baumeister, R. F., Vohs, K. D., & Funder, D. C. (2007). Psychology as the science of self-reports and finger movements. Whatever happened to actual behavior? *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2(4), 396-403.

Dang, J., King, K. M., & Inzlicht, M. (2020). Why are self-report and behavioral measures weakly correlated? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 24(4), 267-269.

Conry-Murray, C., Waltzer, T., DeBernardi, F. C., Fossum, J. L., Haasova, S., Matthews, M. S., ... & Elsherif, M. M. (2024). Validity and transparency in quantifying open-ended data. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, 7(4), 25152459241275217.

March 10
GENERALIZABILITY PART I: IT'S A VALIDITY ISSUE

Assigned Readings

Yarkoni, T. (2022). The generalizability crisis. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 45, e1.

Landy, J. F., Jia, M. L., Ding, I. L., Viganola, D., Tierney, W., Dreber, A., ... & Crowdsourcing Hypothesis Tests Collaboration. (2020). Crowdsourcing hypothesis tests: Making transparent how design choices shape research results. *Psychological Bulletin*, 146(5), 451.

Gurven, M. D. (2018). Broadening horizons: Sample diversity and socioecological theory are essential to the future of psychological science. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(45), 11420-11427.

March 17
GENERALIZABILITY PART II: IT'S A DIVERSITY ISSUE

Assigned Readings

Ledgerwood, A., Lawson, K. M., Kraus, M. W., Vollhardt, J. R., Remedios, J. D., Westberg, D. W., ... & Zou, L. X. (2024). Disrupting racism and global exclusion in academic publishing: Recommendations and resources for authors, reviewers, and editors. *Collabra: Psychology*, 10(1).

Lewis Jr, N. A. (2021). What counts as good science? How the battle for methodological legitimacy affects public psychology. *American Psychologist*, 76(8), 1323.

Remedios, J. D. (2022). Psychology must grapple with Whiteness. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 1(3), 125-126.

Syed, M., & Kathawalla, U. K. (2022). Cultural psychology, diversity, and representation in open science. *Cultural methods in psychology: Describing and transforming cultures*, 427-454.

March 24
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE I: TEAM SCIENCE

Assigned Readings

- Adetula, A. (2024). Building research capacity in Africa via big team science: Challenges and lessons learned from the ManyLabs Africa initiative. *Retrieved from* <https://busara.global/blog/building-research-capacity-in-africa-via-big-team-science-challenges-and-lessons-learned-from-the-manylabs-africa-initiative/>
- Uhlmann, E. L., Ebersole, C. R., Chartier, C. R., Errington, T. M., Kidwell, M. C., Lai, C. K., ... Nosek, B. A. (2019). Scientific Utopia III: Crowdsourcing science. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 14(5), 711–733
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691619850561>

March 31
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE II: CONTINUING TO PERFECT OUR IMPERFECT SCIENCE

Assigned Readings

- Clarke, B., Alley, L. J., Ghai, S., Flake, J. K., Rohrer, J. M., Simmons, J. P., ... & Vazire, S. (2024). Looking our limitations in the eye: A call for more thorough and honest reporting of study limitations. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 18(7), e12979.
- Greenwald, A. G. (2012). There is nothing so theoretical as a good method. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(2), 99-108.
- Scheel, A. M., Tiokhin, L., Isager, P. M., & Lakens, D. (2021). Why hypothesis testers should spend less time testing hypotheses. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 16(4), 744-755.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Health/Wellness Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.