



Society for the Teaching of Psychology (APA Division 2)

OFFICE OF TEACHING RESOURCES IN PSYCHOLOGY (OTRP)
Department of General Academics, Texas A & M University at Galveston, Galveston, TX 77553-1675

VIRGINIA WESLEYAN COLLEGE

Psychology 280 (E)

The Descriptive Methods of Psychological Science

Special Topic: Positive Psychology

Spring 2003

<u>PROFESSOR:</u> Dr. Rita Frank	<u>TIME:</u> M, W 1:30 - 2:45 (Lecture) M, W 3:00 - 4:15 (Lab)
<u>OFFICE:</u> Roop 7	<u>LOCATION:</u> Social Sciences Lab
<u>OFFICE HOURS:</u> MW 4:30 -5:30 and by appointment	<u>HOME PHONE:</u> 498-5341 Calls accepted between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m.
<u>OFFICE PHONE:</u> 455-3288	<u>E-MAIL:</u> refrank@vwc.edu

COURSE DESIGN: Psychology 280 will be conducted as a workshop that fully integrates lectures and laboratories. In this workshop, we will take a qualitative approach to the most basic goal of psychological research, that of description. In so doing, we will learn the theory and practice of interviewing, direct observation, and the collection of unobtrusive measures. In-class discussion of each of these methods of inquiry will be followed by a relevant field experience, by opportunities to learn how to organize, analyze, and draw conclusions from data collected during these experiences, by in-class critiques of each experience, and by the creation of summative reflective memos. For this semester, the subject matter of our investigations will be drawn from the emerging field of positive psychology.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Psychology 280 is the first of three required methodology courses taken by psychology majors in preparation for completing an independent research project in their senior year. As the first course in this sequence, Psychology 280 is designed so that sophomore students:

1. learn a subset of basic research practices within the security of a group project apprenticeship model.
2. practice different ways of finding substantive problems of psychological interest.
3. learn how to plan and carry out mini -research projects that employ the following qualitative methodologies: interviewing, direct observation, and the collection of unobtrusive measures.
4. learn how to record data through videotape, audiotape and written notes/ memos.
5. learn strategies for analyzing and summarizing qualitative data.
6. compare and contrast qualitative and quantitative approaches in terms of assumptions and data collection strategies.

TEXT:

Frank, R.E. (2003). *Student Activity Guide: The Descriptive Methods of Psychological Science*. Norfolk, Va.: Virginia Wesleyan College.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Oral presentations: At the conclusion of each field experience, we will take time as individuals and as a group to talk about the process of research, the results of that process, and what we could do differently or better. During these sessions, you will briefly present (approximately 5 minutes) your thoughts about your work to the class. Each oral presentation will be awarded a maximum of 20 points with 15 of those points awarded for the content of your comments and 5 of those points being awarded for your oral presentation skills. In terms of content, I will be looking for the relevance of your comments to each field experience we undertake and your insightfulness in thinking about your own efforts and that of the group. In terms of your oral presentation skills, I will be looking for your ability to make eye contact, to speak at a rate your audience can comfortably process, to speak clearly and in a voice loud enough to be heard by your audience, to use language which is both appropriate and accurate, to speak in grammatically correct sentences, and to have an appropriate beginning and end to your comments. Total credit for these assignments = 60 points. (N. B. Work on these presentations carefully. They can serve as the basis for the formal memos described below.)

Memos: During the semester, you will be writing a series of five memos. These brief word processed commentaries are your personal record of your participation in this course. An excellent way to conceptualize your memos are as tangible objects that can be used to help you think about your efforts in a conscious, reflective, and self critical manner. General guidelines for writing each of these memos are provided in the course text as part of specific laboratory activity assignments. I will review and further explain those guidelines in class during relevant class sessions.

Your first researcher experience memo (due on February 5) will be awarded a maximum of 40 points. Your second, third, and fourth mini- research memos (due on March 10 April 7, and April 28) will each be awarded a maximum of 65 points with a maximum of 25 of those points to be earned by your efforts at transcription/coding/analysis of your collected data. Your final memo, a reflection on what you learned and what you personally accomplished in this course during the semester, will be awarded a maximum of 40 points. It is due on May 9th, the final exam date for this course. Grading of these assignments will be based on the degree to which you:

1. adhere to the provided guidelines for each assignment, including turning in all required materials generated for specific projects.
2. produce a complete, fully detailed, and accurate summary of the activities in which we were engaged.
3. demonstrate that you understood the purposes, goals, and outcomes of the activities in which we were engaged .
4. are reflective and self critical about the research process and your participation

in that process.

- 5 produce a commentary that is clearly written, grammatical and thematically coherent.

Total credit for these assignments = 275 points. Late memos (defined as being turned in after class begins on the due date for the assignment) will be accepted but lateness will incur a mandatory 5 point penalty.

Research bibliography: You will be asked to hand in a research bibliography on February 12th that is word processed and which meets APA formatting standards for references. This bibliography, clearly related to the topic of happiness and/or subjective well being, must include a minimum of four references with one of the four being annotated. Specific requirements for this assignment are provided in your text as part of laboratory activities #3 and #4. A maximum of 15 points will be awarded for this effort. A maximum of 8 of these points will be awarded for the appropriateness of the articles you selected, a maximum of 4 points will be awarded for the accuracy of your annotation, and a maximum of 3 points will be awarded for your adherence to APA standards.

Participation: The effectiveness of this workshop will depend on your active participation and your willingness to support the efforts of your peers. To accomplish these things, you must come to each class prepared to engage in assigned research activities in a positive, proactive manner and to discuss your experiences in a way that reflects intelligence and insight. During the semester, records of the quantity and quality of your contributions to the total classroom experience will be maintained. Your participation in our end of semester focus group activities will be factored into this part of your grade. A maximum of 50 points will be awarded.

Grades will be assigned as follows: 376 - 400 = A; 360 - 375 = A-; 348 - 359 = B+; 336 - 347 = B; 320 - 335 = B-; 308 - 319 = C+; 296 - 307 = C; 280 - 295 = C -; 268 - 279 = D+; 256 - 267 = D; 240 - 255 = D-; 239 and below = F.

If you convert points to percentages (points earned divided by points available), you will see that the cutoffs for A+'s, B+'s, C+'s, or D+'s are at 97%, 87%, 77%, or 67%, respectively; the cutoffs for A's, B's, C's, D's are at 94%, 84%, 74%, and 64%, respectively; and the cutoffs for A-'s, B-'s, C-'s, or D-'s, are at 90%, 80%, 70%, or 60%, respectively. An F would be earned if your percentage of points earned to points available corresponds to 59% or below.

POLICIES:

Attendance: Attendance is a course requirement and careful records of attendance will be maintained. Problems with faithful attendance will be reflected in your course participation grade.

Academic Honesty: Honesty is one of the most valuable assets that a member of an academic community possesses. In recognition of this fact, Virginia Wesleyan has enacted an honor code which is available to you in your student handbook. I adhere to this code explicitly and follow its recommended procedures.

Extra Credit: Extra credit may be earned in one of two ways. These activities may be completed at any time during the semester. The last day to turn in all required work and documentation will be Reading Day.

1. You may receive extra credit for participation as a subject in a senior research project. Each hour of such participation is worth 2 points. A maximum of 10 points may be earned.

Or

2. You may read and summarize a qualitative research report that has been published in a current APA research journal. (A reference list of approved articles will be distributed in class.) A maximum of 10 points may be earned.

Incompletes: Incompletes will be arranged for severe emergencies only. Arrangements for incompletes MUST be made with the instructor prior to the end of the semester. A formal contract must be agreed to and signed.

Accommodations for students with special needs: Virginia Wesleyan recognizes, and is sensitive to, the needs of learning-disabled students, as well as students with other handicapping conditions. In keeping with Title 5, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the College will respond to requests for accommodations when the requests are based upon recent medical and other acceptable professional documentation of disabilities. A student's decision to use academic support services and to seek accommodation is voluntary. **The student has the responsibility for contacting the appropriate person, the assistant to the dean of the college, in order to request accommodation for a handicapping condition or a learning disability.** In cases where there is strong evidence of a learning disability, the College will make arrangements for diagnostic testing at the student's expense. In cases where a handicap has been documented, arrangements for the appropriate accommodations will be made to support the student in the academic program that will fit his/her aptitudes and skills and, at the same time, adhere to Virginia Wesleyan's requirements.

Lecture and Laboratory Topics

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Date: January 27

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Orientation to goals and methods of the course: What are descriptive methods and why are they important to the study of psychology?/ What is meant by a “qualitative approach” to these methods?/ Brief comments about the reading due on January 29th.

Laboratory Activity: Orientation to laboratory facilities and procedures./ Overview of contents of the student activity guide for this course.

Date: January 29

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Becoming acquainted with the overall topic of positive psychology.

Reading: Seligman, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55, 5-14.¹

Laboratory Activity # 1: Seeing the Social World through Complementary Perspectives

Reading: Chapter 1 of your student activity guide.

Date: February 3

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Continuing the discussion begun last class with a particular focus on happiness and subjective well being.

Readings: Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1999). If we are so rich, why aren't we happy? *American Psychologist*, 54, 821-827. Myers, D. (2000). The funds, friends, and faith of happy people. *American Psychologist*, 55, 56-67. Sink, J. R. (2000). Why can't we measure happiness [Comment]. *American Psychologist*, 55, 1162-1163.

Laboratory Activity # 2: Composing a Researcher Experience Memo

Assignment: Complete your researcher experience memo using the questions and sample

¹ All assigned journal articles are available online at PsychINFO and in the periodical room of the Hofheimer Library on campus.

format provided in your student activity guide, word process your edited version, and turn it in during lab on **February 5**.

Reading: Chapter 2 of your student activity guide.

Date: February 5

Lecture/ Discussion Topic: The art of asking good questions.

Laboratory Activity # 3: Using Electronic Resources

Assignment: Using techniques learned today, find at least 2 articles that relate to the general topic of happiness and/or subjective well being and prepare a reference list of these articles using the format provided in your student activity guide. Come to class on February 10th with your reference list, a copy of the articles you selected if only available in hard copy, and a short summary of what you learned from one of the articles you found. **Be sure to have the central points you want to make about that article written down and ready to hand in.** Be prepared to defend both of your selections! What made them worthy of inclusion in your reference list?

Reading: Chapter 2 of your student activity guide.

Date: February 10

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Ethics in psychological research/Developing guidelines for the conduct of our mini-research projects.

Reading: Review the December 2002 version of the APA code of ethics

<http://www.apa.org/ethics/homepage.html>

<http://anastasi.apa.org/draftethicscode/draftcode.cfm#toc> Pay particular attention to General Principles and to Section 8: Research and Publication. (This code becomes effective June 1, 2003.) The code is also available in the December 2002 edition of the *American Psychologist*, 57 (12).

Laboratory Activity # 4: Presentation and Defense of References.

(Including discussion of the purpose of literature reviews)

Assignment: Find two additional articles and add them to your list. Final graded version of this assignment is due on **February 12**. Remember one of your four references must be annotated to receive full credit for this assignment.

Reading: Chapter 2 of your student activity guide.

Date: February 12

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Mapping the terrain: Introduction to the theory and practice of concept mapping – with mini lab:

Laboratory Activity # 5: Creating an Initial Map of Our Research Territory

Reading: Chapter 2 of your student activity guide.

Laboratory Activity # 6: Formulation of Initial Research Questions for Use in Exploratory

Research

Reading: Chapter 2 of your student activity guide.

Assignment: Prepare two or three questions for our Laboratory #7 role playing exercise. These questions must be word processed and available for distribution to the class on February 17th.

SEMI-STANDARDIZED INTERVIEWS AS A METHOD OF INQUIRY

Date: February 17

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Overview of Interviewing as a method of inquiry

Reading: Chapter 3 of your student activity guide.

Laboratory Activity #7: Preparing to Conduct Your Interview

Reading: Chapter 3 of your student activity guide.

Assignment: Prepare two or three questions that you would like to contribute to the semi-structured interview guide we will be creating during Laboratory #8. These questions must be word processed and available for distribution to the class on February 19th. In preparing these questions, please follow the guidelines provided on pages 55-61 of your text.

Date: February 19

Lecture/Discussion: Focus on semi-structured interviewing

Laboratory Activity # 8: Creating a Semi-structured Interview Guide

Reading: Chapter 3 of your student activity guide.

Date: February 24

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Focus on semi-structured interviewing Continued Refinement of interview guide if needed.

Laboratory Activity: Semi-structured Interview Field Experience.

Reading: Chapter 3 of your student activity guide.

Assignment: Conduct a semi- structured interview using the interview guide created in class on February 19 and refined in class today.

Date: February 26

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Transcription Basics. Introduction to HyperResearch.

Laboratory Activity # 9: Transcribing Your Semi-structured Interview

Begin the process of transcribing your interview. Complete this work outside of class if necessary and bring a word processed transcription (both in hard copy and on disc) to class on **March 3**. Your transcription will need to be formatted as a text file

Reading: Chapter 3 of your student activity guide.

Date: March 3

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Analysis Basics – Understanding the logic behind coding data ---- explicitly pointing out how the same data may be evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Creating a code book with our available hard copy interview transcripts and then using what we have learned to enter codes into HyperResearch.

Laboratory Activity #10: Data Analysis: A Content Analysis Perspective

Begin the process of using the qualitative approach to analysis to examine your data. Complete this work outside of class if necessary and turn it in along with your transcription and reflective memo on **March 10**.

Reading: Chapter 3 of your student activity guide.

Date: March 5

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Review of semi-structured interview field experience

Assignment: Come to class prepared to briefly discuss the process of interviewing: What worked well and what didn't? What did you learn? What surprised you? What would you need to do to improve your work? Issues of transcription? Issues of analysis? **Be sure to bring with you a written outline of the comments you have prepared.**

Laboratory Activity # 11: Meaning Making: A Matrices Approach to Data Display. Further instruction in HyperResearch.

Reading: Chapter 3 of your student activity guide.

Reflective memo of the semi-structured interview process is due on March 10. Remember to include your completed transcript, your analytic efforts, and collected informed consent documents.

DIRECT OBSERVATION AS A METHOD OF INQUIRY

Date: March 10

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Overview of Direct Observation as a method of inquiry – with a focus on naturalistic observations

Reading: Chapter 4 of your student activity guide.

Laboratory Activity # 12: Preparation for “observer as participant” Field Experience/ Making final decisions about appropriate sites on campus for conducting our field work/ Writing Field

Notes

Reading: Chapter 4 of your student activity guide.

Date: March 12

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Understanding the theory and practice of ethnography.

Laboratory Activity: Being an “observer as participant” in the field. This activity may be completed any time between now and our first class after the break.

Reading: Observer-as Participant Field Experience Assignment in Chapter 4 of your student activity guide.

Spring Break

Date: March 24

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Review of field notes and critique of our experience.

Laboratory Activity# 13: Preparation for “Complete Observer” Field Experience: Using videotape to collect Naturalistic Observational data

Reading: Complete Observer Field Experience Assignment in Chapter 4 of your student activity guide.

March 25th – recording our videotape(s).

Date: March 26

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Review of videotape(s)/ Strategies for understanding what we have recorded from a qualitative perspective.

Laboratory Activity# 14: Using a Qualitative Approach to Data Reduction Using Videotape (Creating a full descriptive field note as a whole class experience)

Reading: Chapter 4 in your student activity guide.

Date: March 31

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Review of videotape(s)/ Strategies for understanding what we have recorded from a quantitative perspective.

Laboratory Activity # 15: Using a Quantitative Approach to Data Reduction Using Videotape.

Reading: Chapter 4 in your student activity guide.

Date: April 2

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Comparison and contrast of being an on site observer versus viewing a videotape.

Assignment: Come to class prepared to briefly discuss the process of collecting observational data. What worked well and what didn't? What did you learn? What surprised you? What would you need to do to improve your work? **Be sure to bring with you a written outline of the comments you have prepared.**

Laboratory Activity: Catch up day for this part of course if it is needed.

Reflective memo of the direct observation process is due on **April 7**. Remember to include your jottings and full field notes from you "observer-as-participant" field experience.

UNOBTRUSIVE MEASURES AS A METHOD OF INQUIRY

Date: April 7

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Overview of Unobtrusive Measures as a method of inquiry with a focus on archival records/ Discussion of the use of archived photographs for research purposes

Reading: Chapter 5 in your student activity guide.

Laboratory Activity # 16: Selecting, Enlarging, and Digitalizing of Student Yearbook and/or Marsis Roster Pictures.

Reading: Chapter 5 in your student activity guide.

Date: April 9

Lecture/Discussion: Selective Overview of the Facial Expression Literature

Reading: TBA

Laboratory Activity # 17: Exploring Available Methodologies for Facial Coding of Basic Emotions.

Reading: Chapter 5 of your student activity Guide.

Date: April 14

Lecture/Discussion: Using physical traces in research/ Brainstorming ways physical traces could be used in our research.

Reading: Chapter 5 in your student activity guide.

Laboratory Activity # 18: Testing and Revising Our Facial Coding Scheme

Reading: Chapter 5 in your student activity guide.

Date: April 16

Lecture/Discussion: Case study as a methodological approach to data collection.

Laboratory Activity # 19: Applying our Facial Coding Scheme

Reading: Chapter 5 in your student activity guide.

Date: April 21

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Review of unobtrusive measures field experience

Assignment: Come to class prepared to discuss what you learned during this section of the class. What worked well? What didn't? What other possibilities for collecting unobtrusive data might have been explored? What other kinds of analysis might have been employed if time permitted? **Be sure to bring with you a written outline of the comments you have prepared.**

Laboratory Activity # 20: Displaying Our Facial Expression Data.

Reading: Chapter 5 of your student activity guide.

Reflective memo of the unobtrusive measure process is due on **April 28**. Make sure you included all the materials we have used to code and draw conclusions from our data. Comparing our findings from our semi-structured interviews, observations, and visual coding exercise would be appropriate here.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWING AS A METHOD OF INQUIRY

Date: April 23

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Overview of focus group interviewing as a method of inquiry

Laboratory Activity # 21: In class participation in an unmoderated group discussion of this semester's activities. (This activity will be videotaped)

Date: April 28

Lecture/ Discussion Topic: Focus group interviewing as a method of inquiry – Continued.

Laboratory Activity # 22: In class participation in an instructor led moderated discussion of this semester's activities – focusing both on what we accomplished in terms of data collection and in what we have learned about ourselves as researchers. (This activity will be videotaped).

Date: April 30

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Creativity in Psychological Research – Moving from initial/exploratory research questions to questions of lasting significance.

Laboratory Activity #23: Comparison and contrast of the unmoderated vs. moderated experiences we engaged in that is facilitated by watching portions of each videotape that was recorded on April 23 and April 28.

Date: May 5

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Review of the differences that exist between qualitative and quantitative approaches with a focus on thinking about what kinds of questions might be more suitable for each approach.

Reading: Carnic, P.M. Rhodes, J.E., & Yardley. (2003). Naming the stars: Integrating qualitative methods into psychological research. In P.M. Carnic, J.E. Rhodes, L. Yardley (Eds.), *Qualitative Research in Psychology: Expanding Perspectives in Methodology and Design.*² Washington, D.C. : American Psychological Association.

Laboratory Activity # 24: Critique and refinement of the “moderator guide” that your instructor used to guide discussion on April 28.

Date: May 7 (Last Day of Class)

Lecture/Discussion Topic: Concluding Thoughts and Course Evaluation

Laboratory Activity: Catch up lab if we have gotten behind at some point during the semester.

Date: May 9 between 11:30 - 2:00)

Your final reflective memo is due today by 2:00 p.m. at the latest. This memo should provide a comprehensive overview of your semester’s experience in Psychology 280 both in terms of what you learned about the process of research and what you learned about yourself as a researcher. More details about this assignment will be provided later in the semester.

The instructor will make every effort to abide by the lecture topics and scheduled activities as set forth in this syllabus. However, it must be understood that changes may become necessary due to extenuating circumstances.

² Available on reserve at the Hofheimer Library on campus.