P231 Professional Issues in Psychology

Course Description: Examines a variety of issues related to the professional socialization and development of graduate students in psychology. Topics include the publication process, sources of research funding, competitiveness on the job market, the academic career route, and alternative employment options.

Credit and Grading Options: 4.0 units; S/U only

Assignments: Assignments for course members will include activities such as setting outlining your short-term and long-term academic goals, investigating the editorial policies of journals in your field, learning how to communicate with journal editors and program officers at funding agencies, submitting and revising manuscripts, reviewing manuscripts, identifying sources of extramural funding, preparing specific aims for a grant proposal, preparing a curriculum vitae, preparing research and teaching statements for academic job applications, preparing for an academic job visit, and identifying non-academic job options. Specific assignments are tailored to the topic for each week. All assignments should be submitted to the instructor(s) unless otherwise indicated. Some assignments will also be shared with the entire class, so that class members can receive group feedback and can benefit from seeing how classmates approached the assignments. Individual and group feedback will be provided on most assignments.

Readings: Copies of the two required textbooks are on reserve at Langson Library. Assigned readings not drawn from either of the required textbooks will be placed on reserve and also will be available at a convenient location in the department. In addition, some readings will be available in an electronic drop box established for the course at the course website (access through eee.uci.edu). The course outline below provides information about the required readings assigned for specific dates.

Required Textbooks:


Useful Sourcebooks:


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**Outline of Topics**

**Session 1**  
**Getting Launched: Goal Setting and Career Planning in Graduate School**  
**Sept. 27**

Establishing realistic goals and timelines  
Using one’s time wisely – challenges and opportunities at different points in graduate school  
Avoiding potential pitfalls  
Planning ahead for competitiveness on the job market

*Assignment for Sept. 27:*  
Please bring a list of professional goals for the next six months, next year, and next three years. Consider research projects you hope to launch or conclude, manuscripts you hope to write, fellowship/grant applications you might consider submitting, etc. What intermediate timelines and tasks do you need to consider in order to achieve these goals? How will you protect the blocks of time needed to achieve your goals? You might consider keeping a time diary for a week to help you evaluate how you use your time.

*Required Readings:*  

*Additional Resources: The Working Relationship between Faculty members and Graduate Students*

Zanna, M. P. & Darley, J. M. (2004). Mentoring: Managing the faculty-graduate student research relationship. In J. M. Darley, M. P. Zanna, & H. L. Roediger III (Eds.), *The compleat academic: A career guide (2nd Edition)* (pp. 117-131). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. (This chapter was written for new faculty members, but it may offer helpful ideas about your working relationships with faculty members as you move through graduate school.)

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**Session 2**

**The Publication Process: Part 1**

**Oct. 4**

Scientific writing
Features of scientific articles that have high impact
Learning about the editorial policies of scientific journals

**Assignment for Oct. 4:**

1) Identify the published editorial policy of at least one social science journal in your area. These often appear in the official newsletters published by professional societies and/or in the journals themselves when a change of editorship occurs. (Note: The editorial policy differs from the standard submission guidelines for authors. Your task is to find a statement of an editorial policy for one or more journals.) Please bring enough copies to class to share with each class member. We will compare the editorial policies of different journals.

2) We will discuss, as well, the characteristics of scientific articles that have high impact. What articles have had high impact in your professional development thus far? What characteristics of these articles made them influential, in your view?

3) Scientific writing: A “before and after” assignment. Drawing on the readings for this week and/or next week, take a manuscript title, abstract, or “chunk” (one or more paragraphs) that you have been developing and modify it following the advice given in the readings. Include both your “before” and “after” versions with the assignment. Bring enough copies to class to share with each class member.¹

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¹If feasible, for this assignment and others referenced in the syllabus, we will attempt to use an LCD projector to share assignments.
Required Readings:


Additional Resources: Literature Reviews and Methodological Papers

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) for Authors (see http://www.springer.com/authors/author+zone?SGWID=0-168002-12-945107-0&cm_mmc=AD--Enews--SPR15729_V1--CENTER_945107)

McGrath, J. E. (2002). *The joy of prose: Some comments about producing technical manuscripts in social science*. (Distributed via SPSP listserv and available in the course drop box.)


Sternberg, R. J. (2005). *The psychologist’s companion, 4th ed.* (pp. 35-64; 98-118). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (Chapters: Writing the experimental research paper; Commonly misused words)

Session 3

The Publication Process: Part 2

Oct. 11

Preparing a cover letter to accompany submission of a manuscript for consideration for publication (less relevant in the era of electronic submission, but still used occasionally)
Tracking publication trends and acceptance/rejection rates for various journals
Responding to reviews of your manuscript, revising your manuscript
Deciding what to do following a rejection

Assignment for Oct. 11:

1) Prepare a hypothetical cover letter for an article that you wish to submit to a journal for consideration for publication. (Alternative assignment: Prepare a letter to an editor to inquire, prior to submission, about the suitability of your manuscript for the intended journal.) Please bring enough copies to share with members of the class.

2) Find an article that summarizes/analyzes publication trends in an area of interest to you. Some articles will focus on a specific area (personality, close relationships, etc.), whereas others will focus on a specific journal (e.g., types of publications appearing in the journal during a particular period of time). Please submit a copy of the first page of the article, and come to class prepared to discuss what you learned from the article. For example, did the article identify shifts in substantive topics or methodologies that might affect your own thinking about your research plans in some way?

3) Bring for group discussion a list of issues you have encountered in working on a response to reviews of a manuscript that you have authored or co-authored; please select reviews that included a “revise-and-resubmit” invitation from the journal editor. If you have not yet had the experience of working on a manuscript revision for resubmission to a journal, please ask your faculty advisor to share with you reviews of one of his/her manuscripts and the response letter that summarized the revisions made. Learning how to write an effective response letter is an important professional skill.

Required Readings:


Additional Resources: Publication Trends; Literature Reviews; Methodological Articles


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Session 4 The Publication Process: Part 3
Oct. 18 Research Funding: Part 1

Serving as a manuscript reviewer yourself
Sources of intramural and extramural funding
Federal and state agencies, private foundations
Special sources of funding for new investigators

Assignment for Oct. 18:

1) Draft or outline a brief review of an article that has been submitted for consideration for publication. The article to be reviewed will be distributed in class. (Optional: Bring enough copies to class to share with each class member.)

2) Identify at least one potential source of extramural funding to which you might consider applying for dissertation support. Come to class prepared to discuss your choice(s).
3) Begin thinking about the specific aims for a research project for which you might wish to seek extramural funding (see assignment for next week).

Required Readings:


Additional Resources: The Review Process


Additional Resources: Sources of Extramural Funding

Links to many search engines and online resources regarding extramural funding can be found at: [http://socialecology.uci.edu/pages/research-resources](http://socialecology.uci.edu/pages/research-resources) (see “For Graduate Students”)

Session 5 Research Funding: Part 2

Oct. 25

Sources of intramural and extramural funding: Federal and state agencies, private foundations
Special sources of funding for new investigators
Applying for extramural funding
Preparing a grant
The grant review process

Assignment for Oct.25:

1) Imagine that you are applying for a research grant or fellowship. Prepare the “Specific Aims” page for the grant or fellowship application. Bring enough copies to class to share with each class member.

2) Ask your faculty advisor to share with you a copy of a funded grant. If this is not feasible, consult samples of hypothetical grants at the websites listed below or an alternative website. Familiarize yourself with the various elements of a grant application.
3) (Optional, but good to practice!): Draft a short memo that you might send to an program officer at a funding agency to inquire about the fit of a research project you propose to conduct with the mission and programmatic emphases of the agency. Such communications often include the proposed specific aims for your project.

Required Readings:


Additional Resources:


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Session 6  
**Responsible Conduct of Research and Ethical Dilemmas**  
**Nov. 1**  

Responsive conduct of research  
Ethical principles for psychologists  
Scientific misconduct

**Assignment for Nov. 1:**

1) Please familiarize yourself with the ethical principles and code of conduct for psychologists (as well as with the federal policy on research misconduct).

2) Identify a case of scientific misconduct in psychology or a related social science field and prepare to report on how the academic and professional community dealt with it.

3) Consider the possibility that you were a fellow student in the Carnegie Mellon or Harvard University labs in which recent cases of scientific misconduct occurred. Please think through how you would address each of these cases were you made aware of them personally.

**Required Readings:**


Additional Resources:

See additional discussion and links to a variety of online resources on the responsible conduct of research at the School of Social Ecology’s website: http://socialecology.uci.edu/pages/responsible-conduct-research


Session 7  Establishing a Professional Identity
Nov. 8

Joining professional societies and organizations
Meeting and corresponding with professionals who share your research interests
Cautionary notes about Facebook, Twitter and similar electronic media
Presenting posters and giving talks at professional meetings
Circulating your preprints and reprints
Teaching – Understanding its role in your professional identity and job competitiveness

Assignment for Nov. 8:

1) Prepare a cover letter that you might use to circulate preprints of your work to highly respected researchers in your field. Bring enough copies to class to share with each class member.
2) If you have not already done so, meet with your advisor or other appropriate faculty member(s) to discuss one or more professional societies that you might consider joining as a student member and one or more conventions/meetings of professional societies to which you might consider submitting a presentation while you are in graduate school.

3) We will also discuss the role of teaching in establishing your professional identity and competence. You might be thinking about ways to develop your teaching skills during graduate school and also about the broader issue of how to allocate time to teaching versus research.

**Required Readings:**


**Additional Resources:**


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**Session 8**

**The Curriculum Vitae**

**Nov. 15**

The importance of the curriculum vitae  
Information typically included in the vitae  
Alternative formats  
Special considerations for emerging researchers, such as graduate students

**Assignment for Nov. 15:**

1) Prepare a draft of your curriculum vitae. (Optional: Bring copies to share with each class member.)

2) Preparation of a strong research statement is a time-consuming process. To help you begin to develop a draft of your own research statement, prepare a 1-2 page outline of your statement, and come to class prepared to discuss questions that arose in the process. Your research statement should summarize the substantive problems that interest you and that you have investigated, providing some detail about your methods and findings and the implications/importance of your work (e.g., for the field, policy considerations, design of
Your statement should note your distinctive research competencies and achievements (e.g., honorary or extramural awards, publication in stellar journals) and also should provide information about your future research plans. As you begin to think about your research statement, bear in mind that it will need to tell an interesting and coherent story, as search committees often must review dozens (or even hundreds) of statements. Your statement is less likely to be lost in the shuffle if it can engage the reader’s interest. (Optional: Bring copies of your outline to share with each class member.)

Required Reading:


Session 9  
Career Options  
Nov. 29

Academic and nonacademic employment options
Sources of information about jobs and postdoctoral positions
Evaluating trends in the job market
Introducing yourself in a job application letter and research statement

Assignment for Nov. 29:

1) Review the job openings listed in one or more issues of such publications as the Chronicle of Higher Education, the American Psychological Association Monitor, or the American Psychological Society Observer. You may also wish to explore job postings for research institutes such as the RAND Corporation. Identify a position that for which you would like to be considered. Complete #2 with reference to this position. (This might be a current job opening or one that has closed but that represents the kind of position that appeals to you.)

2) Finalize your research statement -- proof, proof, proof, as it needs to be squeaky clean!

3) Prepare a letter of application to accompany your research statement. Bring enough copies of #1, #2, and #3 to share with each class member.

4) Optional (but recommended): Prepare a draft statement that summarizes your teaching experience and philosophy. Some colleges and universities require job candidates to include a teaching statement with their applications. If you would like to develop a draft of your teaching statement, please feel free to do so you; you may submit your draft statement to the instructor for feedback and, if you wish, you may share it with other class members.
Required Readings:


Additional Resources:


Session 10

**Competitiveness on the Job Market**

**Dec. 6**

Preparing for the job interview
Preparing for the job colloquium
The academic career route: Making the transition from graduate school; juggling teaching, research, and service obligations; the tenure evaluation process

Assignment for Dec. 6:

1) Imagine that you have been invited to a university for a job interview. a) Prepare a list of questions that you might ask during your (individual/group) meetings with professors, graduate students, the Department Chair, the Dean. Bring to class questions that you are unsure whether or how to ask during the job interview. We will discuss some of these questions in class. b) Anticipate questions that you might be asked during an interview, and begin thinking about how you would respond. Bring your list of questions to class (enough copies to share with everyone). We will brainstorm as a group about ways that such questions can be approached. c) If possible, meet with your advisor to obtain his/her views about things job candidates do during their visits to campus that are especially helpful or unhelpful. (Please frame your discussion in general terms rather than with reference to particular candidates who may have visited UCI.)

2) Colloquia – During the course of your graduate career, you will have many opportunities to attend colloquia and academic presentations in PSB, elsewhere at UCI, and at conferences and professional meetings. Your primary focus, of course, will be on the content of these talks, but you may wish to devote some attention to features of the talks that you find to be particularly appealing. Try to learn what works well and what works less well, bearing in mind that opinions
can vary about the strengths and weaknesses of particular talks. You will be at the podium many times during the course of your academic career, both as a researcher and as a teacher, and it is not too early to begin thinking about a presentation style that will work well for you. Please come to class prepared to share some of your observations about features of talks that you have responded to favorably. (We will discuss these issues in general terms rather than with reference to particular speakers.)

**Required Readings:**


**Additional Resources:**


Sternberg, R. J. (2005). *The psychologist’s companion* (pp. 255-258). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter: Writing a lecture) [Many of the principles involved in preparing a good lecture have relevance to preparing a good colloquium.]

**Online resources that may be useful:**

Howard Hughes Medical Institute and Buroughs Wellcome Fund (2006). *Making the right moves: A practical guide to scientific management for postdocs and new faculty (2nd ed.).* (Available from the course drop box.) Contains information at the beginning of the document about obtaining and negotiating a faculty position.

Other readings at the UCI ADVANCE website ([http://advance.uci.edu/](http://advance.uci.edu/)) addresses family friendly policies in academic institutions, including special considerations for women and minority faculty members.