

# PSY 362. Psychological Testing

S. Mason Garrison

January 25, 2021

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Class Room: Canvas

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Web: [wakeforest.instructure.com/courses/28913](http://wakeforest.instructure.com/courses/28913)

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Hours: By Appointment [calendly.com/smasongarrison](https://calendly.com/smasongarrison)

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## Course Description

This course provides an overview of the development and nature of psychological tests with applications to school counseling, business, and clinical practice. The purpose of the course is to provide students with an understanding of the principles of measurement as applied to group standardized measures of achievement, special aptitude, intelligence, personality, interests and distress for use in counseling. Format will consist primarily of lectures along with group participation activities.

## Course Objectives:

- To acquaint you with the fundamental vocabulary and logic of psychological measurement and behavioral assessment.
- To develop your capacity for critical judgment of the adequacy of measures purported to assess behavior in the role of theory development.
- To acquaint you with some of the relevant literature in personality assessment, psychometric theory and practice, and methods of observing and measuring behavior.
- To instill in you an appreciation of and an interest in the principles and methods of psychometric theory in general and behavior assessment in particular.
- This course is not designed to make you into an accomplished psychometrist (one who gives tests) nor is it designed to make you a skilled psychometrician (one who constructs tests), nor will it give you “hands on” experience with psychometric computer programs. Rather it is aimed to allow you to understand the fundamental theoretical issues concerning both the psychometrist and the psychometrician.
- Because modern psychometrics and statistics may be done using open source software such as R, examples will be presented in R.

## Materials

### Texts

#### *Required*

[1] A. Anastasi and A. Urbina. *Psychological testing*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1997. ISBN: 0-02-303020-8.

**How to use the required text:** The text (Anastasi and Urbina 1997) is intended to supplement the lectures. The lectures don't follow the order of chapters in the text and the text covers some material that won't be covered in the lectures, i.e., not all the information in each chapter is perfectly pertinent to the course requirements.

## Course Assignments

### Grading Policy

Typically, an A- is defined as 90% of the highest point total in the class, B- as 80% of that total, C- as 70 and D- as 60%. I may shift these values down to provide a better fit to the actual point distribution. By scaling to a percentage of the highest point total in the class, each student has a much better chance of receiving higher grades than if no re-scaling were done. This curve can only help your grade.

The full table is provided below:

Table 1: Full Table

Letter	Cutoff
A	0.95
A-	0.90
B+	0.87
B	0.83
B-	0.80
C+	0.77
C	0.73
C-	0.70
D+	0.67
D	0.63
D-	0.60

#### *Curve Projections*

Unsurprisingly, students have many questions about the curve in this class. For tests and other assignments, I try to provide a projected letter grade. This projected letter grade is there to give you a sense of what your score *would* be if I implemented the class curve on this particular assignment. It is a projection. It is not a guarantee. These projected letter grades are not incorporated into your final grade. Trust me, you do not want me to curve by assignment.

## Quizzes

There will be 6 quizzes in this course. These will be approximately every three weeks. The best 5 out of 6 quiz grades will be used to determine your total quiz grade. You can drop 1 of the quizzes for any reason.

### *Quiz Dates*

- Quiz 1: Friday, 02/12
- Quiz 2: Friday, 03/05
- Quiz 3: Friday, 03/26
- Quiz 4: Friday, 04/16
- Quiz 5: Friday, 05/07
- Quiz 6: During Finals, 05/14

## Take Home Assignments

There are three large take-home assignments. Each assignment has a qualitative aspect and a quantitative aspect, and are counted separately in your grade.

The best two (2) out of three (3) qualitative aspects will be used to determine your qualitative score; similarly, the best two (2) out of three (3) quantitative aspects will be used to determine your quantitative score. I will provide more specific written guidelines at least two weeks before each assignment is due. You have to submit assignment 1 because I give extensive feedback that will help you on later assignments. However, you may skip assignment 2 or 3.

### *Assignment Dates*

- Assignment 1: Friday, 03/05: Set 1 and Critique of an online test.
- Assignment 2: Friday, 04/16: Set 2 and Critique of a testing-related popular media article.
- Assignment 3: Friday, 05/07: Set 3 and Critique of a testing-related YouTube video.

## Engagement Activities

There will be multiple engagement activities in this course. These activities will allow you engage with the material for each module. Details about the specific activities will be provided on canvas. Students must complete two activities per module.

## Grading Weighting

- 150 points of your grade will be determined by your best five (5) quizzes.
- 100 points of your grade will be determined by your best two (2) quantitative aspects of your take-home assignments.
- 100 points of your grade will be determined by your best two (2) qualitative aspects of your take-home assignments.
- 50 points of your grade will be determined by your engagement.

## Course Policies

### Class Engagement, Presence, and Participation.

In previous semesters, I have had a deliberately hardline attendance policy. In the light of the public health crisis, I have done away with this policy, as it doesn't align with my general philosophy of treating students as junior colleagues. The student who misses a class meeting is responsible for any assignments and/or announcements made.

Class engagement points are given to encourage your active engagement with the material. Specific instructions for engagement, can be found on the class website. In general, you will be rewarded with a perfect score as long as you engage meaningfully and intentionally with the material and your peers.

### Life Happens (Extensions and Absences)

As a reasonable and empathetic human, I recognize that life happens. There will be times when your outside life conflicts with scheduled class events. These life events can be any of the obvious things (sports, religious holidays, illness, interviews, etc), but they can also be the less obvious, like spending the entire night looking for your lost pet. My general approach is to work with you. You just need to let me know *ahead* of time. These late policies value discussion and communication over deductions and punishment. It is difficult for me as an instructor to know your situation and reason for lateness (e.g. are you sick? did you lose wifi? struggling with mental health? or just forgot?). Without communication, I will assume that students are choosing not to submit work and do not plan on submitting work. An email will help me better understand your needs and focus on coursework. I'm more than happy to give extensions and accommodations, so don't be afraid to email me. You don't need to disclose personal details (your privacy is important to me), so a heads up or request for assistance is enough.

#### *Excused absences*

Except in the case of *true* emergencies, a possible excused absence should be discussed with me as far in advance as possible and *must* occur beforehand. You should not assume that an excused absence will automatically be granted – but you may assume that I am a reasonable, empathetic person. This discussion should occur via email. If you also discuss your situation verbally, please send a summary of the discussion via email to me. An unexcused absence will result in a zero for any graded work that should have been performed for or during the missed class.

#### *Late Work*

Be sure to pay close attention to deadlines. If an assignment is not submitted by the deadline (i.e., is late), the student must email the instructor and provide a new deadline, ask for an alternative, or explain concerns *within 36 hours* of the missed deadline. Ideally, you will have communicated with me in advance of the deadline, but on occasion life happens. As long as you've communicated *within 36 hours*, I will do my best to work with you to come up with a new deadline or modification, so that you can receive full credit. This late policy does not apply to exams, tests, or quizzes.

If contact is not made *within 36 hours* of the missed deadline, the missing assignment will receive a 0. Alternative deadlines will be within one week of the original deadline. Exceptions to the 1 week policy are at the instructor's discretion. In general, I will be much more sympathetic and accommodating if you communicate in advance.

It is your responsibility to ensure that the instructor has received the assignment by the established due date and to ensure that the assignment submitted is the complete and correct version. Unless otherwise specified, all work must be submitted through Canvas.

Unless you have communicated with me in advance, there will be no make-up quizzes or tests.

### **Accommodations Policy**

If you are (or become) disabled (in any capacity, permanently, or temporarily), and need accommodations in class, reading, or any other work in this course, please contact me to discuss your specific needs as soon as possible. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are legally entitled to reasonable accommodations for disabilities. I will do everything in my capacity as your professor to ensure that you receive those accommodations.

Students who need reasonable accommodations for disabilities also should contact the Learning Assistance Center & Disability Services [lac.wfu.edu](http://lac.wfu.edu). These accommodations are not retroactive. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to use those accommodations. You rightfully deserve them, both in the legal, moral, and ethical sense.

### **Academic Dishonesty Policy**

All work submitted for credit must be the student's own and is subject to the provisions of the Wake Forest Honor Code. Details can be found at the Student Conduct web site: [studentconduct.wfu.edu/honor-system-wfu](http://studentconduct.wfu.edu/honor-system-wfu). It is your responsibility to avoid even the appearance of cheating.

Unless I have explicitly stated otherwise, every assessment is closed to outside resources (including, but not limited to books, notes, phones, people). Ignorance of the honor code and assignment instructions is not an acceptable explanation and/or defense.

It is *ALWAYS* academic dishonesty to share test questions, post course materials on any third-party websites, or to work together on tests. And frankly, it is really obvious in Canvas when you work together. I literally wrote a R program that checks for working together on tests.

Violations of this policy result in a zero for the assignment, my perpetual disappointment, and possible additional penalties, including, but not limited to:

- a referral to honor council,
- failing the class,
- forfeiting all extra credit, and
- being excluding from the course curve, drop policy, late policy, and extra credit.

### **Communication**

I ask that you provide me with the respect that I should spend my time engaging with students in meaningful ways, not pointing you to material you can find on your own. Be sure to check the syllabus, course website, course content, and classmates before emailing me. This is important training for life after college – when you have a question, the first thing you do should not be to email your boss. I do not want to discourage you from engaging with me. I love teaching because I love interacting with students. However, I do not want to engage with you in ways that nurture your inability to critically think and prevents me from engaging with other students.

### *Minimums*

You are expected to read every LMS announcement, message, and email; as well as view the media embedded within those communications. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. At minimum, you should be checking your communications within 24 hours. Ignorance of a class communication is not grounds for an excused absence or extension.

### *Self Advocacy*

If you are struggling in this class, please talk to me. Do not assume that I know what is going on in your life. Talk to me and tell me what you need.

### *Grading Questions*

Please send any questions about grades in writing via email within *two* weeks after the assignment is returned. If I erred in scoring or in calculating the grade, I will happily update the record. Otherwise, I will be most receptive toward questions framed in terms of your learning (rather than simply your performance), as research has shown that focusing overly on extrinsic rewards (like grades) is likely to lead to all sorts of outcomes that I don't wish for you (lower interest in the course material, lower learning, lower enjoyment).

### **Instructor Availability**

I am readily accessible during business hours (9:00AM-5:30PM; Monday-Friday) via email/ LMS/ git/ zoom/ carrier pigeon. Outside those hours, I do not typically respond to messages, in order to devote time to my family, rest, and living my life. Messages received during these times will receive attention once I am back online. Otherwise you can expect to receive a response to your message within 12 to 24 hours, often much sooner. If you do not hear back after 36 hours, please follow-up with me.

I have given out my cell-phone number, in the case of *true* emergencies. Please be mindful that poor planning on your part does not constitute an emergency for me.

### *Is it an true emergency?*

How do you know if it is a true emergency?

- Ask yourself, would a reasonable person consider this situation an emergency?
- How would the situation change if you waited until morning?
- Could this situation have been prevented by starting earlier?
- Would Professor Mason really want to know about this situation *right now*?
- If you were in Professor Mason's shoes, would you consider this an emergency?

### **Public Health in the age of COVID-19**

We share responsibility for the health and safety of each other in a learning space. Maintaining a consistent six feet of distance; wearing face coverings that cover our mouths and noses; limiting our gathering sizes; and isolating or quarantining when ill or exposed to someone with the virus are Wake Forest University directives and policies we all must follow. Students are encouraged to

visit [Our Way Forward](#) to stay informed about the latest guidance and review the [Public Health Emergency Addendum to the Student Code of Conduct](#).

Specifically, in this room, we will mitigate the risks of virus transfer and take care of our community by abiding by the following safety directives: - maintain six feet of distance at all times when feasible. - wear a face covering for the entirety of class indoors and out (unless there is exemption via an approved safety plan for specific coursework). This face covering should cover your mouth and your nose, and adhere to our [University face covering policy](#) (no face shields without masks; no neck gaiters; no bandanas; and no masks, including N95, with a one-way valve). - stay out of class when sick or after being exposed to someone who is sick.

In this class, any student who does not follow these requirements will be asked once to follow the safety directives.

I will offer you a mask or ask you to find one.

If you do not comply, I will ask you to leave the class for that day.

[I will also refer the matter to the COVID-19 compliance reporting system](#). Possible disciplinary actions may follow as described in the Wake Forest University Undergraduate Student Conduct Code Public Health Emergency Addendum.

## Classroom Climate

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, ethnicity, sex, gender, gender-identify, class, sexual orientation, religion, ability, political affiliation, etc.) To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official records, please let me know!
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.
- I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.
- If you reached here in the syllabus, e-mail me a picture of a cat. If you do it before the end of the first week, you get a small bonus.

## Department Statement

The Psychology Department values, respects, and celebrates the experiences, beliefs, and practices stemming from varied cultures and circumstances (emphasizing, but not limited to, those from historically underrepresented groups), and our deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion plays out through coursework, programming by majors, and research.

## Tentative Class Schedule

This syllabus is intended to give the student guidance in what may be covered during the semester and will be followed as closely as possible. Dates for tests and assignments won't change, barring extraordinary events. However, I reserve the right to modify, supplement and make changes as

the course needs arise. I try to avoid changes to the syllabus. Nevertheless, if changes occur, I will only make changes that are less burdensome and more advantageous to the students. (If I make a change that increases your burden, please talk to me.)

**Week 01, 01/25 - 01/29 : Foundations and Nature of Testing**

**Week 02, 02/01 - 02/05 : History of Testing**

**Week 03, 02/08 - 02/12 : Ethical and Social Considerations in Testing**

**Week 04, 02/15 - 02/19 : Norms and the Meaning of Test Scores**

**Week 05, 02/22 - 02/26 : Classical Test Theory**

**Week 06, 03/01 - 03/05 : Reliability**

**Week 07, 03/08 - 03/12 : Validity**

**Week 08, 03/15 - 03/19 : More Validity**

**Week 09, 03/22 - 03/26 : Item Analysis**

**Week 10, 03/29 - 04/02 : Factor Analysis**

**Week 11, 04/05 - 04/09 : Catch Up Week**

**Week 12, 04/12 - 04/16 : Practical Testing Things**

**Week 13, 04/19 - 04/23 : Ability Testing**

**Week 14, 04/26 - 04/30 : Personality Testing**

**Week 15, 05/03 - 05/07 : Special Topics**

## **References**

Anastasi, Anne, and A. Urbina. 1997. *Psychological Testing*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.