Research Methods in Health Education and Behavior

HSC 4950| Spring 2025

Course Description: **Overview of research methods used to study health education and behavior.**

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course students are expected to successfully:

✓ Identify the strengths and weaknesses of various research methods used to support claims related to health education and behavior.

✓ Obtain basic proficiency in designing a study to answer a specific research question, including selection of population and recruitment methods, measures, analytic methods, and interpretation.

Office Hours

- **In Office**: Tuesday 12-1:00 PM
- **By Appointment:** email me to set up a time!

Instructor

Megan McVay, PhD
Associate Professor
020 Florida Gym
352-294-1638
megan.mcvay@ufl.edu

Class Location and Time

Tuesdays
- 10:40-11:30
- McCarty Hall A, Rm 2186

Thursdays
- 10:40-12:35
- Matherly Hall, Rm 0015

Text & Reading Material

- Readings posted to Canvas
- No textbook

Graded Course Components

In-class activities and reading quiz (100 points)

Overview: We will engage in activities and discussion during class time.

- Students will get credit for engagement/completion of activity (typically this will be credit/no credit). Occasionally, some of these points will come from brief quizzes checking knowledge of assigned reading.
- There will be opportunity for credit in 12 class sessions, each worth 10 points. Your two lowest points will be dropped (e.g., you can miss up to 2 classes with credit and not lose points)
- *Example Activity*: In small groups, develop measurement items for a specified behavioral construct. Test items out on other class members using cognitive interviewing survey development methods. Discuss experience as a class.

Article processing tasks (90 points)

Overview: Students will read empirical research articles and answer key questions about reading in order to develop skills and knowledge relevant to class objectives.

- Students will answer a series of questions requiring close engagement with scientific research articles relevant to course topic.

Exams (180 points)

Overview: Students will complete three exams (60 pts each) to demonstrate mastery of course material.

- Exams will be short answer/essay format and require application of course material.
- The final exam will include new material from the second half of the class (~50% of total) and material from the first half (~50% of total).

Researchs study protocol (170 points)

Overview: Students will complete a series of assignments culminating in a complete research protocol.

- You will work on developing a plan for a research project. You will complete a series of assignments that will help you develop and draft your plan. Your final component will be a completed research protocol.

Research application assignment (30 points)

Overview: Students will complete an assignment involving interpretation of a research article.

- This project will involve engaging with and interpreting a research article.

PLEASE NOTE: All course components were developed such that use of AI systems/large language models (e.g., ChatGPT, Microsoft co-pilot) defeat the learning objectives. Thus, use of these systems is not allowed in any capacity unless explicitly indicated in writing by the instructor. If use of these tools is suspected, students may be subject to oral examination about the assignment and have points deducted for poor performance on oral exam.

In-person Meeting Schedule

We will be meeting on Tuesdays at 10:40 AM - 11:30 AM and Thursdays at 10:40 AM - 12:35 PM, unless otherwise noted.

Please always check your email/CANVAS the morning of classes, as I will post there that class is cancelled (e.g., due to illness).

Grading Standards

See table for grade standards for this course.

See current UF Grading Policies for further details:
https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

Grades	Course %	Grade Points
A	100-93	4.0
A-	92.99-90	3.67
B+	89.99-87	3.33
B	86.99-83	3.0
B-	82.99-80	2.67
C+	79.99-77	2.33
C	76.99-73	2.0
C-	72.99-70	1.67
D+	69.99-67	1.33
D	66.99-63	1.0
D-	62.99-60	.67
E	59.99-0	0
WF		0
I		0
NG		0
S/U		0

Technology devices policy

You may use your laptop during class only for taking notes and engaging in activities requested by the instructor. Engaging in activities other than these can distract your classmates and is not permitted. I will occasionally walk around to ensure that no one is off-task, and will deduct 10 points from your final grade if you are engaging in computer use that is not permitted.

Cell phone use is not permitted during class time. Cell phones should not be on desks during class time.

Make Up Policy:

Late assignments will receive a 20% reduction from scored grades for each day they are late.

Students are encouraged not to come to class if feeling unwell. Please reach out to instructor if you are sick to arrange for accommodations.

You are able to make up missed exams if you have documentation of a University-approved reason for missing class, including illness or family emergencies.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies. See UF Academic Regulations and Policies for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies.

Course Policies & Information

Grade Appeal Policy:
Should you want to contest a grade, you will have up to three (3) days after a grade has been posted to contact me and discuss your issue; after which the grade is final. Grades are based on a point scale and will not be rounded. Discussion about grades will occur in-person or via a phone or video call, not via email.

Honor Code Policy:
"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the honor code." The following pledge will be either required or implied on all work:
"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

All students must adhere to university regulations regarding academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty (including but not limited to any form of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, etc.) will not be tolerated. Any student guilty of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade (E) for the course, and the matter will be forwarded to the UF Office Student Affairs and the Dean of Students.

It is the duty of the student to abide by all rules set forth in the UF Undergraduate Catalog. Students are responsible for reporting any circumstances, which may facilitate academic dishonesty. University Policy on Academic Misconduct: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at: https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/

Class Recording Information
Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

See additional details here: http://aa.ufl.edu/policies/in-class-recording/

Student Accommodations
Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See the 'Get Started With the DRC' webpage on the Disability Resource Center site. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with me and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Course Policies & Information

<u>**Copyright Statement:**</u>
The materials used in this course are copyrighted. The content presented is the property of UF and may not be duplicated in any format without permission from the College of Health and Human Performance and UF, and may not be used for any commercial purposes.

Content includes but is not limited to syllabi, videos, slides, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these materials are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy or distribute the course materials, unless permission is expressly granted. Students violating this policy may be subject to disciplinary action under the UF Conduct Code.

<u>**Course Evaluation**</u>
Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner](). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here]().

<u>**Diversity and Inclusion**</u>
I endorse this statement about respect for diversity and inclusion: "I strive to make this classroom a place where you will be treated with respect, and I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, social classes, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, documentation statuses, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, abilities – and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. This does not mean we cannot disagree or have different ideas. It does mean we try to consider perspectives other than our own, though they may differ from our own beliefs/experiences. If you experience disrespect or discrimination in this class, please report your experiences to me." (Statement courtesy of Cal Poly Center for Teaching, Learning, & Technology)

I endorse the following comments on preferred names and name changes: "It is important to the learning environment that you feel welcome and safe in this class; and that you are comfortable participating in class discussions and communicating with me on any issues related to the class. If your preferred name is not the name listed on the official UF roll, please let me know as soon as possible by e-mail or otherwise. I would like to acknowledge your preferred name, and pronouns that reflect your identity. Please let me know how you would like to be addressed in class, if your name and pronouns are not reflected by your UF-rostered name. I welcome you to the class and look forward to a rewarding learning adventure together. You may also change your "Display Name" in Canvas. Canvas uses the "Display Name" as set in myUFL. The Display Name is what you want people to see in the UF Directory, such as "Ally" instead of "Allison."   To update your display name, go to one.ufl.edu, click on the dropdown at the top right, and select "Directory Profile." Click "Edit" on the right of the name panel, uncheck "Use my legal name" under "Display Name," update how you wish your name to be displayed, and click "Submit" at the bottom. This change may take up to 24 hours to appear in Canvas.   This does not change your legal name for official UF records."

<u>**Disclaimer:**</u> This syllabus represents the objectives and tentative plans for the course. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity.

Campus Resources:

Health and Wellness

I care about your health and wellbeing. I am happy to discuss any challenges you are having this semester—please reach out if you want to talk. Here University resources:

U Matter, We Care:
If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: counseling.ufl.edu/cwc, and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)
Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or police.ufl.edu.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu.

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling.

Library Support, Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints Campus

On-Line Students Complaints

Course Schedule

Wk	Date of week	Topic	Activity/assignment due
1	1/13	Course introduction; finding & reading scientific literature	Article processing task #1
2	1/21	Introduction to research methods	Article processing task #2 Protocol: Lit search Protocol: Research question
3	1/27	Measurement	
4	2/3	Measurement; exam review	Article processing task #3 Protocol: Measurement plan Protocol: Mediation aim
5	2/10	Experimental design & validity	**Exam 1 (Tue)**
6	2/17	Experimental design & validity	Article processing task #4 & #5
7	2/24	Observational design; sampling	Article processing task #6 & 7 Protocol: Sampling & recruitment
8	3/3	Sampling; Statistics	Protocol: Introduction
9	3/10	Statistics; Exam review	**Exam 2 (Thur)**
Spring Break			
10	3/24	Qualitative research	Protocol: full draft
11	3/31	Qualitative research; Systematic reviews	Article processing task #8
12	4/7	Systematic reviews; Implementation science	Article processing task #9 Protocol: Final
13	4/14	Additional topics determined by class interest; catch up	
14	4/21	Exam review	Research Application Assignment
			Final Exam: during University scheduled final exam time

Schedule subject to change. Please see CANVAS for up to date course information.