Psychology 721 – Spring 2011
Advanced Seminar in Personnel Psychology

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Class meets: Wed 1:00-3:40pm LS-281

Office hours: Tu 10-11, Wed 10-11, and by appointment

[at Amazon.com for $60]

[at Amazon.com for $143, digital textbook version may also be available]

This course goes beyond a rudimentary orientation to selection and training issues in the workplace. We will be discussing details of current research topics in these two areas, as well as exploring issues of application of research findings in the field.

Academic integrity: I hope this goes without saying, but nonetheless I must stress the importance of doing your own work. This course will be rigorous and challenging, and the temptation to “share the load” may be strong at times. Resist this urge.

Not only does misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own compromise your professional abilities when you graduate, but academic dishonesty (and even persistent laziness) makes my blood boil.

All involved parties will receive failing grades on the assignment in question. I also am required to report offenders to the Center for Student Rights & Responsibilities.

Specific learning objectives: (open to class discussion – here’s a start)

After completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Critically evaluate selection systems used in organizations
- Recommend ethically and legally sound selection approaches
- Validate new selection systems
- Advocate for or defend best practices in selection
- Explain the importance of applicant reactions to selection systems
- Assess organizations’ training needs
- Identify and nurture the appropriate pre-training conditions
- Design and implement a training intervention
- Evaluate the effectiveness of that training intervention
- Explain the need for training evaluation
- Weigh factors influencing the cost of training interventions
- Facilitate a discussion that allows for lots of participation and learning

When you turn in your assignments by e-mail, please make sure your last name is the first thing in the document name.
Grading: Your grasp of the course material will be evaluated according to the following indicators:

Attendance: You are expected to be present at all class meetings. You will find me much more flexible if you contact me IN ADVANCE if you are unable to make it to class due to extenuating circumstances. Your participation grade may be adversely affected if you miss more than one class.

Participation: You are also expected to have read the material 24h IN ADVANCE of attending the class. You should be prepared to participate in discussions about the course material and related topics. I know the difference between filler discussion and sincere discussion. But don’t be intimidated to ask questions, relieve yourself of ignorance, or even challenge what the experts (or I) think.

Reading Reactions: Each week, to encourage you to keep up with the reading and think deeply about what you have read, you will prepare a brief reaction to each of the assigned readings. I am particularly interested in questions about the readings, what you read that was new or interesting, links between the readings and other areas of I/O or your personal experiences. These will be graded on quality of thinking evidenced. This is an opportunity for more introverted students to show me what you’ve got.
- E-mail your comments to the entire class no later than 24h before class begins.
- Please ‘reply all’ when submitting your comments to the group.
- Remember to respect one another in this discussion forum – it’s OK to disagree, but good scientists focus on the topic, not person.
- If you are not good at remembering what you said, print your comments out for class.
- You do not have to submit reading reactions when you are the discussion lead.

Discussion lead: Each student will be responsible for co-facilitating class discussions throughout the term. Your responsibilities as discussion lead:
- Plan goals for discussion that day – e-mailed to me by 9am
- Meet with me for feedback on your facilitation
- Turn in developmental goals for yourself regarding facilitation skills
More information regarding my expectations is provided in a separate document.

Applied projects: To further facilitate the application of research findings to real-world situations, teams will complete two applied projects this term (one for selection and one for training). More detail about these projects will be given later.

Final exam: The final exam for the course will be comprehensive, and will be a take-home essay exam. Number of questions required has yet to be determined, but the general format is that a subset of questions presented will be required. Top exams will demonstrate not only mastery of the course topics, but ability to integrate the material across topics.

Attendance/participation: 15% - 150 points
Reading reactions: 15% - 150 points
Discussion lead: 10% - 50 points
Applied projects: 35% - 2 X 175 points
Final exam: 25% - 250 points
Reading assignments & course schedule
Reading assignments will be posted to Blackboard (blackboard.sdsu.edu)

Week 1 (Jan 19) – Introduction to selection: What is new?

Week 2 (Jan 26) – How do we know when a selection system works? Selection outcomes

Week 3 (Feb 2) – How do we know when a selection system works? Legal considerations
Gatewood, Feild, & Barrick, Chapter 2

Week 4 (Feb 9) – How do we know when a selection system works? Measurement and multidimensional considerations

The above is the focal article in a debate. Choose one of the below to be responsible for discussing/defending/excoriating.

Week 5 (Feb 16) – Predictors of performance: Cognitive ability, practical and emotional intelligence
Gatewood, Feild, & Barrick, Chapter 11, Mental ability tests – pp. 469-487.


The above is the focal article in an Industrial and Organizational Psychology journal debate. Choose one of the below to be responsible for discussing/defending/excoriating.

Week 6 (Feb 23) – Selection approaches: Simulations, assessment centers, and interviews

Week 7 (Mar 2) – Selection approaches: Biodata and personality tests

Week 8 (Mar 9) – Project presentations
Mar 13 – Final Project Papers due by 12pm

Week 9 (Mar 16) – Introduction to training & needs assessment
Goldstein & Ford, Chapter 2
Goldstein & Ford, Chapter 3
Week 10 (Mar 23) – Outcomes and evaluation: traditional & newer approaches
Goldstein & Ford, Chapter 5


Week 11 (Mar 30) – Have a great spring break!!

Week 12 (Apr 6) – Fertile soil: Training transfer climate
Goldstein & Ford, Chapter 4


Week 13 (Apr 13) – Happy SIOP conference!!

Week 14 (Apr 20) – Fertile soil: Trainee characteristics

Week 15 (Apr 27) – Applications: design and delivery

Goldstein & Ford, Chapter 7


Week 16 (May 4) – Project presentations

Final exam questions assigned

May 8 – Final Project Papers due by 12pm

May 15 – Final Exams due by 12pm