

Introduction to Assessment, Applied Statistics and Research

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Course Description: This course will provide an overview of basic concepts and issues involved in (1) testing & assessment, (2) applied statistics, and (3) research within the perspective and context of the role of human service professionals. The course will examine statistical concepts and terms related to evidence-based practice and evaluation, testing and assessment relevant for mental health professionals including school counselors, and applied social research procedures and practices. Attention will be devoted to increasing your practical understanding and consumer utilization of statistics, testing & assessment, and research.

Course Objectives: The course is designed to provide students with curricular experiences and demonstrated knowledge in basic statistics, testing & assessment, and research and program evaluation. As a result of this course students will have acquired knowledge and skills relevant to the Assessment (CACREP II K7 a thru i) and Research and Program Evaluation (CACREP II K8 a thru f) as defined by CACREP 2001 Standards.

ASSESSMENT - studies that provide an understanding of individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation, including all of the following:

- 7a. historical perspectives concerning the nature and meaning of assessment;
- 7b. basic concepts of standardized and nonstandardized testing and other assessment techniques including norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment, environmental assessment, performance assessment, individual and group test and inventory methods, behavioral observations, and computer-managed and computer-assisted methods;
- 7c. statistical concepts, including scales of measurement, measures of central tendency, indices of variability, shapes and types of distributions, and correlations;
- 7d. reliability (i.e., theory of measurement error, models of reliability, and the use of reliability information);
- 7e. validity (i.e., evidence of validity, types of validity, and the relationship between reliability and validity);
- 7f. age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, disability, culture, spirituality, and other factors related to the assessment and evaluation of individuals, groups, and specific populations;
- 7g. strategies for selecting, administering, and interpreting assessment and evaluation instruments and techniques in counseling;
- 7h. an understanding of general principles and methods of case conceptualization, assessment, and/or diagnoses of mental and emotional status; and
- 7i. ethical and legal considerations.

RESEARCH AND PROGRAM EVALUATION - studies that provide an understanding of research methods, statistical analysis, needs assessment, and program evaluation, including all of the following:

- 8a. the importance of research and opportunities and difficulties in conducting research in the counseling profession,
- 8b. research methods such as qualitative, quantitative, single-case designs, action research, and outcome-based research;
- 8c. use of technology and statistical methods in conducting research and program evaluation, assuming basic computer literacy;
- 8d. principles, models, and applications of needs assessment, program evaluation, and use of findings to effect program modifications;
- 8e. use of research to improve counseling effectiveness; and
- 8f. ethical and legal considerations.

Required Resources:

1. Texts:

Neukrug, E.S., Fawcett, R.C. (2010). *Essentials of Testing & Assessment* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.

Gravetter, F.J., Wallnau, L.B., (2002 – present). *Essentials of Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences* (4th-8th editions). Pacific Grove, CA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.

**Any version of the Gravetter book is good. The current edition through the bookstore is insanely expensive. I use the 4th edition. You can find early editions on Amazon and ebay. A text is mandatory for reference but you will not have any assignments directly from it.

2. SPSS

There are several ways to gain access to SPSS. Please select a situation that is both cost and time effective for your particular circumstances. Note that access to SPSS is mandatory and we will start using the program immediately. If you are going to purchase a student version, there may be several hoops you need to jump through so please plan accordingly.

1) There is no need to purchase SPSS because it is available all over the University in most of the community computing labs on campus (ie: the College Ave lab located behind Brower Commons, all of the libraries also have a lab). If you are going to use this option please call ahead to the lab to make sure they have SPSS on their computers and their hours of operation.

The GSE has a computing lab on the second floor which has SPSS. Hours are 8:30 – 4:30 but sometimes classes are scheduled in that room, so call before for the schedule.

2) You can download a version of SPSS called “SPSSGradPack.” Onthehub.com offers a 6 month download of SPSS for \$55. If you are taking more stats in the future, they offer longer rental plans as well as purchasing options.

3) The University will sell you a license for SPSS as well as the disks.

<https://software.rutgers.edu/search.php?q=spss>

3. EXCEL

Rather than walk through our calculations using paper and pencil, I perform all calculations using Excel. I find it very easy for students to follow along and takes messy handwriting out of the equation. As with SPSS, Excel is available all over the University. If you are using Microsoft Word, you probably already have it. There are other spreadsheet programs out there. I only support Excel.

Weekly Schedule

Each week starts at 12am Monday.

By Wednesday at noon, you must respond to the discussion question.

By Thursday I will post a follow-up to your discussion question submission.

Final replies to your discussions are due on Sunday at midnight

Your statistics homework is due on Sunday at midnight

Calculation of Grades:

Syllabus Agreement and Quick Bio	5%	Due Sunday, September 9th
Weekly Statistics Homework assignments	40%	
Weekly participation in Discussion Question	35%	
Final Project	20%	Due Tuesday, December 18, 2012

Submitting Assignments

Please make sure to only submit assignments in the drop box on our ecollege website (located on the top navigation bar). If you submit an assignment in any other manner (another location on our site, via email) I cannot provide feedback and it becomes difficult for me to grade.

Submitting assignments at the last minute never goes particularly well.

Should you submit an assignment after the due date, your grade will drop by 25% for each day late. Prior approval for a late assignment to receive full credit needs an acceptable reason: illness (with note from physician), family emergency, or religious holiday. In these cases, arrangements should be made with me as soon as possible for alternative due date. I realize that certain unexpected life situations are stressful, so the sooner I am informed of an unusual circumstance the greater my chances are of helping you navigate the course.

Please follow all directions for both completing and submitting assignments. Send only required information.

Grading:

A: 90-100 B+: 87-89 B: 80-86 C+: 77-79 D: 60-70 F: <60

All assignments are graded out of 100 and then final grades are computed on ecollege using the weights listed above.

Office Hours

As this is an online course, I have set-up a discussion area on our ecollege website called "Virtual Office Hours." Rather than email me questions regarding the course, please start a discussion thread and I will answer your questions right online so everyone can benefit from your inquiry.

Of course, if your question is personal in nature (you would like explanation of a specific grade, you have a personal issue) please privately email me.

All questions will be answered within 24 hours.

Please make sure that ecollege has your most updated email address. I frequently use email to communicate with students and pull email address directly from the ecollege system each time.

Surviving the Course:

- 1) What you get out of this course (knowledge and your grade) depends on what you put into it. My best advice to you is to go in seeking knowledge and a good grade will follow.
- 2) I understand how hard it is to juggle many of life's demands of graduate school and the time you will need to put into our course to be successful. In my experience, students who put in about 15 total hours of work per week (reading, preparing, actively participating in online discussions and completing homework assignments) are the most successful. I make it as easy as possible as all work can be completed on your own time and there are no mandatory check-in times. However, there are deadlines for assignments and discussions.
- 3) We need to assume that we are all very very busy. I understand and can relate to those of you who work (full-time or part-time), have children, are taking other classes, caring for family members (and juggle other things) and have developed the course with that in mind. If your schedule is packed, I suggest developing a master plan of your time for our 15 weeks together.
- 4) If you find yourself dealing with an unexpected personal situation, please let me know so we can work out a plan for you to complete the class. Please do not disappear for a length of time. And please do not push it with excuses, "I had too many parties to attend this weekend" or "you have no idea what it is like to be a busy student" will not go well.
- 5) Please do not wait until the last minute to ask questions if you are confused, find contradictory information, or if you think something is missing. Additionally do not wait until the last minute to get work completed.
- 6) You need very reliable access to the internet to successfully complete this course. Please make sure to have a reliable back-up plan in place (local library, friend's house, coffee shop) in case your primary access is not available when you plan to work on the class. Rutgers has a plethora of options for access on terminals (libraries, computing centers) and most buildings have wireless access for a laptop.
- 7) Please understand that I am not qualified in any way to help you resolve any technical difficulties you may experience with ecollege. It is always best for you to contact the ecollege student hotline for assistance (most problems usually occur when students attempt to submit assignments and posts at the last minute).

Participation

As with any graduate level course, discussions are a critical part of your learning experience. There are no seats in the back of room!

Each week we will have one discussion question. Discussions will prompt you to first read some specified material in the Neukrug text and then ask you to post a single response to a question by Wednesday at noon. Your goal is to demonstrate that you have read and pondered the material. I will then place a follow-up question under your original post and you will need to respond to this follow-up by Sunday at midnight.

****Important tip**** I highly recommend composing your posts in a word processing program first, then cutting and pasting on the discussion thread in ecollege. Writing directly to ecollege presents the risk of a technology failure or lock-up.

Each discussion will be graded on a scale of 0-100 for both your original and follow-up posts. Full credit is given for on-time responses which demonstrate you have read, studied and pondered the information and topic/question. Initial posts should be no more than 400 words and all deadlines must be met.

FINAL PROJECT
Due date: By midnight on Tuesday
December 18, 2012

The final project is an opportunity for you to demonstrate mastery of major concepts learned during the semester. I want you to situate your project in the context of your intended career goals.

Scenario: You are sitting in an interview for your dream job. You have thoroughly researched the organization including the programs they offer. You are interviewing with the director who asks you the following question “How would you bring excellent assessment techniques to your responsibilities with us?”

To answer this question you will be submitting a power point presentation with a voice over component. There is no paper required.

Your powerpoint should include the following slides:

- 1) Introduction to the organization to which you are applying
- 2) Explanation of the specific job you are applying to
- 3) Overview of how the job has assessment responsibilities
- 4) What the job assesses
- 5) Overview of a new assessment strategy
- 6) How will you plan for the assessment strategy?
- 7) What factors will be important for you to consider?
- 8) What assessments will you use and why?
- 9) How will you administer assessments?
- 10) How will you collect data?
- 11) What statistics will you use to analyze data? Why?
- 12) How will you interpret results?
- 13) How will you report results?
- 14) How will you interpret the results?
- 15) What will the results tell you?
- 16) How will you achieve high levels of reliability and validity?
- 17) Are there any ethical considerations for your proposed program?
- 18) Are there any legal considerations for your program?
- 19) How will the overall effectiveness of the services offered/program be impacted &/or improved?
- 20) One slide recap
- 21) Conclusion

THE POWERPOINT:

You should present your power point as if you were answering the question “what is your philosophy of assessment in an interview.” You should not read your slides but they should layout as a guide to your thoughts.

Audio for power point must be one continuous audio file (not one individual audio file for each slide). Please make sure that you have the capability (hardware and software) for the audio well in advance of sitting down to start the project.

The rubric for this assignment is on the checklist and is open to student input during week 3.

Final rubric for this assignment is under doc sharing

Philosophy of Assessment paper and power point are due December 18th by midnight.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Assessment Topic	Statistic Topic
Week 1	Intro to Assessment	Introduction to Statistical Concepts
Week 2	History of Assessment	Central Tendency SPSS/Excel
Week 3	Types of Assessments	Graphs and Charts
Week 4	Assessment in Counseling	Distributions
Week 5	Administering Assessments z-scores/transformations	Variability
Week 6	Planning for Assessment	Transformations Basic Probability
Week 7	Available assessments	z-scores
Week 8	Administering Assessments	Transforming z-scores Probability with z-scores
Week 9	Interpreting Data Reporting Results	Inferential Statistics vs. Descriptive statistics
Week 10	Interpreting Results Diagnosis	Hypothesis Testing with z
Week 11	Reliability	Z vs t tests Confidence Intervals
Week 12	Validity	Hypothesis testing with t
Week 13	Legal and ethical considerations	Scatterplots Correlation
Week 14	How Assessment can improve Counseling effectiveness	Simple linear regression
Week 15		Interpreting regression
Week 16	Final Projects Due	December 18, 2012

Students with Special Needs

If you have special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and require academic accommodations or modifications, please notify me immediately. I will make every effort will be made to support your work and success in this class.

Academic Integrity

I expect that you have read and will comply with the university's standards on academic integrity. Appropriate action will be taken should you be caught submitting dishonest work. All assignments are to be completed on your own unless specified as a group activity. All references to another's work must be properly cited.