

# Research Methods: Theory and Ethics (PSBE2-08)

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Office Hour: Mondays, 14:00 to 16:00  
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Time of Lecture: Thursdays, 15:00 to 17:00  
Location of Lecture V5161.0151, Bernoulliborg  
iCal address: [bit.ly/1n3yd1k](https://bit.ly/1n3yd1k)

## Course Description

This course reviews and extends the material introduced in other courses concerning experimental design and data analysis. On the basis of case studies, pitfalls in design are discussed. Emphasis is placed on finding the appropriate design for a given research question, the practicalities of data handling, and the ethical responsibilities of the researcher.

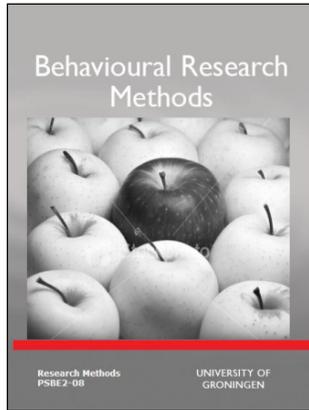
## Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- discuss the nature of the scientific process and how it applies to Psychology,
- discuss the principles of experimental design,
- highlight the ethical issues involved in conducting psychological research,
- discuss the methods and techniques involved in data acquisition and processing, in psychological research,
- identify the research designs best suited to answering a range of research questions.

## Required Reading

“Behavioural Research Methods”. (ISBN-13: 9781121067479)



Custom publication from McGraw-Hill, comprising the first 9 chapters from “Essentials of Behavioral Research Methods” by Rosenthal and Rosnow (ISBN-13: [9780073531960](#)) and the 13th chapter from Shaughnessy, Zechmeister, and Zechmeister’s “Research Methods in Psychology” (ISBN-13: [9780071310970](#)).

Every week, at the beginning of the lecture, I will make absolutely explicit what the week’s reading material is. If you ever have any questions, contact me by email or phone, or post your question on the Nestor discussion board.

## Notes, Rules, Suggestions

- Be on time. Lectures start on the hour, but try to be there a bit earlier so you may find a seat and say hello to your friends (and me) before we start.
- Every week, I will be recording the lectures and posting them on the course’s Nestor page. You can use these files and them to revise for your exams, catch up if you miss a lecture, refresh your memory of a particular topic, or to fall asleep to, if you like.
- A copy of each lecture’s slides will be posted on the course’s Nestor site, so you don’t have to spend half your time trying to copy that complicated formula for Universal Happiness™.
- In the past I have relied on the Nestor Discussion Board for students’ questions, comments, and to post interesting articles, questions, discussion topics etc. To lower the accessibility threshold and increase participation, I have set up a Facebook page too (<http://on.fb.me/1OxXvvr>). If you don’t have access to Facebook or prefer not to use it, by all means continue using (and subscribing to) the Nestor Board.
- Make sure your mobile phone is on silent. No, it does not interfere with the landing gear, but it’s distracting to everyone.
- Do not talk to each other (or to yourself) during the lectures; it’s a certain way to distract me from whatever point I am trying to make.
- DO talk to me. I encourage student participation, even in large lecture theatres and often incorporate games, discussions, quizzes and other interactive segments in my lectures. It’s much more interesting, helps you learn more easily and gives me a chance to have a sip of water.

- On that note, if I suggest that you prepare an article before a lecture, please make sure to read it and come prepared to discuss it. Research methods can be a dry topic sometimes but can be made infinitely more interesting with informed participation.
- A note on laptops: while they are allowed in the lectures, please do not let them distract others nearby by using them for browsing the Internet browsing or watching videos.

## Journal Club

One of the best (if not THE best) ways to become more familiar with the intricacies of research methodology is to read published work in an analytical and critical way. For the past few years, I have added a weekly Journal Club to this course, for exactly that reason. Find out more about it here: <http://bit.ly/1n9Qniy> It is entirely voluntary; you can just subscribe to the mailing list and join whenever you find an article interesting.

## Some Easy Listening

Last year, two students in the course met with me every week and recorded five interviews for Mindwise (<http://bit.ly/1ZEvyNf>), which looked at some of the more interesting aspects of methodology and research ethics that we never got round to address in the lectures. These interviews are now collected and available on the Mindwise Soundcloud page (<http://bit.ly/1ZEvwVG>). You can find the playlist here: <http://bit.ly/1ZEvwF9>.

## Assessment

Your grade for PSBE2-08 is assessed entirely by means of a multiple-choice exam on week 14. This exam will consist of 60 multiple-choice questions, each with three alternatives. The answers to all these questions will have been addressed during the course either in the lectures, or in the reading material. The exam lasts 2 hours. A second-chance exam, which also comprises 60 multiple-choice questions and lasts 2 hours, is scheduled for week 17. The usual rules about exams apply to this exam too.

For the first time this year, the exam will be an electronic one. I have been assured that electronic exams have been running smoothly for a while now at the RUG and the prospect of getting instant feedback on your performance (not to mention the hundreds of pages of paper we no longer have to waste) was enough to convince me to make the leap.

**Note:** this information is subject to change, so keep an eye for timetable changes here: <http://bit.ly/1OxXwQa>

## Course Evaluation

You will have the opportunity to formally evaluate the content and the instruction of the course during the final exam, at the end of Block 2a. However, it is very valuable for me to hear your comments, requests, and recommendations throughout the block. This will give me the possibility to adapt to your feedback and can benefit you directly. You can do this during or after the lectures, via the Nestor discussion board, by email, in person, or by leaving a letter with the GMW porters (anonymously, if you prefer). Even better, give your feedback to the year representatives, who can then discuss them with me every week.

## Schedule of Lectures

| Week | Date     | Time  | Topic   | Reading                             | Notes   |
|------|----------|-------|---|-------------------------------------|---------|
| 05   | 04/02/16 | 15:00 | The Spirit and Context of Research – Data Analysis and Interpretation | Chapters 1, 2, and 13 (up to pp299) | Lecture |
| 06   | 11/02/16 | 15:00 | Ethical Considerations in Behavioural Research                        | Chapter 3                           | Lecture |
| 08   | 25/02/16 | 15:00 | Ethical Considerations in Behavioural Research                        | Chapter 3                           | Lecture |
| 09   | 03/03/16 | 15:00 | Reliability and Validity. Observational Research                      | Chapters 4 and 5                    | Lecture |
| 10   | 10/03/16 | 15:00 | Randomised Controlled Experiments                                     | Chapter 7                           | Lecture |
| 11   | 17/03/16 | 15:00 | Randomised Controlled Experiments                                     | Chapter 7                           | Lecture |
| 12   | 24/03/16 | 15:00 | Non-randomised Research and Functional Relationships - Sampling Units | Chapters 8 and 9                    | Lecture |
| 14   | 08/04/16 | 14:00 | Exam  |                                     | Exam    |
| 17   | 26/04/16 | 09:00 | Resit   |                                     | Exam    |

*Please note that the reading list provided in the syllabus is a rough guide and that certain chapters may span more than one lecture. More accurate information will be provided during the lectures.*