

## **Introduction to Reading and Understanding Research Articles in Psychology**

**71070 Seminar      AG-7 Module**

**When:** SoSe 2018, Mondays, 10:00 – 12:00

**Where:** Vechta University, Room J03

### **Instructor**

Dr. Adrian Stanciu, [adrian.stanciu\[at\]uni-vechta.de](mailto:adrian.stanciu[at]uni-vechta.de)

### **Prerequisites**

The course is recommended especially for Ba students who have an interest in Social Sciences and Psychology and think of pursuing a Master's degree. Students will benefit most from the content of the course if they have a suitable command of the course language–English.

### **Course Description**

Psychology is in the curricula of universities around the world and its area of expertise can be observed in many domains of life; from human processes, for example the child development and the ageing process, including individual traits, for example attitudes and cognition, to similarities and differences between countries, for example in terms of value preferences and the construction of the self in relation to other people.

Typically, during the university studies, and later in one's academic career, reading and understanding research articles is a requirement for becoming proficient in theories and research techniques. A research article is the outcome of—usually—a long process of study preparation, data analysis, and results interpretation. Therefore, one can say that to properly read and understand a research article is a trained skill.

This class focuses on training such a skill. The course will introduce and suggest techniques on how to read and understand research articles in Psychology. Particularly, the course will be structured around the following questions that can be a challenge during the studying and early research career periods:

1. (Why) Are research articles necessary?
2. Is there a page structure that can allow me to skip 'irrelevant' text of an article?
3. Are all articles empirical (data based) or can they also be theoretical (no statistics reported)?
4. Can I be critical of an article? If yes, then why was the article published?
5. How can I prepare and write an article myself?

### **Intended Learning Outcomes**

The course aims to help students develop the following skills:

- i. Understand the structure and meaning of each section of a research article
- ii. Estimate depending on personal need what section of an article to read in depth and which to 'skim through'
- iii. Refresh/gain some basic statistical knowledge
- iv. Critically evaluate research articles in Psychology
- v. Gain the know-how of planning and writing a research article

### **Course Materials**

The course uses a selection of book chapters and journal articles. If not provided by the instructor via the StudIP portal, most of the course materials can be found via the university journal data base or via [google scholar.com](http://google.scholar.com).

### **Course Organization and Expectations**

13 sessions are planned. The sessions will consist of a mix of lecture style elements, small-group work and discussions, as well as student presentations.

If not indicated otherwise by the instructor, laptops and mobile phones must not be used in the sessions—this is to avoid distracting oneself and colleagues. All slides used in class will be made available after each session on StudIP.

### **Assessment**

The extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved is assessed via a **group presentation**. Students are expected to form groups of two or three (depending on total number of students). Students will work together in preparing an oral presentation of the article that the instructor will assigned them. After each group has been formed, all members of the group will inform the instructor of their topic of interest and the instructor will provide the group with one article to be presented in class. Examples of topics to consider: old age stereotypes, attitudes and behavior of elderly, cross-countries similarities and differences in old age discrimination or value priorities of aging individuals. Students may also choose own topics. **The deadline to form groups to present** is the end of second class (Week 2). **The deadline to choose a topic to present** is two weeks prior to the scheduled presentation—for example, if scheduled to present in Week 5, the instructor should be informed in Week 3 the latest; the instructor will provide an article the latest in Week 4.

**Starting with Week 5**, groups can present their assigned article in class and be able to respond any questions. To each group presentation, a **total of 30 minutes** is assigned: the group will ideally present for a maximum of 20 minutes and plans 10 minutes for Q&A. Your task is therefore to prepare an engaging presentation of the assigned article in which you outline the main message of the article and elaborate on its structure and sections (learned up to the respective week). You should also be able to answer questions of clarification to each of the separate sections of the article.

The instructor will evaluate each presentation according to a previously created list of criteria, such as clarity and concision. Each student will be evaluated according to his/her contribution to the group presentation. It should be made clear what the contribution of each member of a group is. All groups are encouraged to organize with the instructor a ‘consultation’ meeting at least one week prior to their planned presentation.

From (personal) experience, the best learning outcomes are achieved when classes are attended, mandatory texts are read, active in-class participation is shown as well as when the learned information is applied out-side the class hours, for example in preparing a group presentation for another course in Gerontology.

### **Course Schedule**

Additional recommended on-line readings will be provided at the end of one class for the following class (for example, at the end of Week 3 for Week 4).

<b>Week 1 – 09/04/2018</b>	<b>Course General Introduction</b> i) APA Manual Section – ‘Types of articles’ (pp. 9-11)
<b>Week 2 – 16/04/2018</b>	<b>On the ‘Why’ and ‘What’ of Titles and Abstracts</b> i) APA Manual Section – ‘Title and Abstract’ (p. 23; p.25)
<b>Week 3 – 23/04/2018</b>	<b>Why Do/Should We Read the ‘Introduction’ of An Article</b> i) APA Manual Section – ‘Introduction’ (pp. 27-28)
<b>Week 4 – 30/04/2018</b>	<b>About Hypotheses and Research Questions</b>
<b>Week 5 – 07/05/2018</b>	<b>What is the ‘Methods’ All About and Why Should One Read It?</b> i) APA Manual Section – ‘Methods’ (pp. 29-32)
<b>Week 6 – 14/05/2018</b>	<b>‘Participants’, ‘Procedure’, ‘Study Design’ – Why Bother?</b>
<b>Week 7 – 28/05/2018</b>	<b>Scales, Instruments, Tests, etc. – A Key in Understanding Them</b>

<b>Week 8 – 04/06/2018</b>	<b>What is the Purpose of the ‘Results’ Section?</b> i) APA Manual Section – ‘Results’ (pp. 32-35)
<b>Week 9 – 11/06/2018</b>	<b>Figures and Tables – Some Tips to Reading Them</b>
<b>Week 10 – 18/06/2018</b>	<b>‘Discussion’ - Bridging Together All the Other Sections</b> i) APA Manual Section – ‘Discussion’ (pp. 35-37)
<b>Week 11 – 25/06/2018</b>	<b>‘Limitations’, ‘Implications’ and ‘Future Research Directions’</b>
<b>Week 12 – 02/07/2018</b>	<b>General ‘Tricks’ to Reading a Journal Article in Psychology</b>
<b>Week 13 – 09/07/2018</b>	<b>Miscellaneous and Course General Recap</b>