

NEW SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

GPSY 6255 ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES
Spring 2005

Instructor: Doris F. Chang, Ph.D.
Office/Phone: F-341, 229-5766
Email: changd@newschool.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-5pm

TA: Karyn Ruiz-Cordell, RuizK136@newschool.edu
Office Hours: Fridays 5-6 Rm 308
TA: Chiung-Yi Tseng, chiungyitseng@hotmail.com
Office Hours: Wednesdays 6-7 Rm 407

Required Text:

Gregory, R.J. (2004). *Psychological testing: History, principles, and applications (4th Edition)*. Boston: Pearson Education Group, Inc.

Additional readings will be posted on the Portal throughout the semester.

Requirements: Statistics I. Students must have email and access to the Portal. It is your responsibility to check the Portal regularly for announcements, readings, and assignments.

Course Objectives: This course is designed to provide a basic introduction to the field of psychological assessment. The term psychological assessment is used here in a broad sense to include the measurement of human skills or abilities, aptitudes, values, and aspects of psychological functioning such as personality and psychopathology. Throughout the semester, we will examine reliability, validity, test construction, individual tests in intelligence and personality, and special issues in diagnostic interviewing, and cross-cultural assessment. By the end of the course, students will have the tools to critically evaluate existing assessment instruments when applied to specific populations. Because the best way to learn about the principles of test construction is to try them out, students will complete a semester-long group project involving the design, administration, and psychometric evaluation of an assessment tool.

Class Format: The format of the course is lecture with “hands-on” application of concepts through assignments and activities. Lab sessions will be regularly conducted to provide supplemental instruction, statistics tutorials, and assistance with your test critique projects. It is in your best interest to attend all class sessions. Active participation is encouraged and should provide a more facilitative and enjoyable learning environment for everyone.

Requirements:

Test Critique Assignment: Your mastery of the course material will be evaluated by means of a semester-long, multi-phase assignment. The purpose of this project is to give you a chance to think through the issues involved in analyzing the quality and potential usefulness of a test. Based loosely on traditional standards for reviewing a test (e.g., the *Mental Measurements Yearbook* and the *Test Critiques* series), the assignment is divided into three graded components, which will allow you to demonstrate your understanding of critical issues in psychometric theory and cross-cultural measurement. [See **Test Critique Assignment**]

Group Presentation: You will work with other individuals in your measurement cluster to make a 25-minute PowerPoint Presentation. Grading criteria will be handed out ahead of time. This presentation should be organized as follows:

- Brief description of the instruments reviewed by your group
- Your group’s assessment regarding the “best” overall test evaluated by group members
- Rationale for your choice, based on how the test compared to the others in the group (psychometric performance, representativeness of the standardization sample, construct differentiation, predictive validity, etc.).

Mid-term Exam: The in-class exam is also an important way to test your knowledge and keep up with the material. For me, the goal of the exam is to allow both you and me to better understand what areas I can clarify and you can get more practice with. The exam is required. There will be no make-up exams.

Late Assignment/Make-Up Exam Policy: All assignments are required. NO late assignments will be accepted. If you are going to miss class, you must email or fax your TA any assignment *before* the class for

which it is due. If you fail to do so, the assignment will be considered late and no credit will be given. Make-up exams will be considered only in the event of prolonged illness or documented emergency. If you must take a make-up exam, you must contact the professor before the exam to preserve your right to take the make-up.

Evaluation: Mid-term exam grades will be based on the overall class distribution of each test. There will be **no make-up exams** and no means of earning extra credit points.

Test Critique Assignment	50%
Part I- 10%	
Part II- 25%	
Part III- 15%	
Group Presentation	20%
Mid-term Exam	30%

Students with Special Needs: Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me directly as soon as possible (and certainly before the first assignment is due) so that we can discuss appropriate accommodations to facilitate your full participation.

Attendance Policy: Students will be required to sign an attendance sheet each time they are present in class. Any assignments missed due to unexcused absences will not be accepted. An unexcused absence is one that was arranged in advance with the approval of the instructor.

Course Outline: The following contains a tentative outline of the content areas to be covered and their associated reading assignments from the text. It must be emphasized that it is a tentative outline in that some topics may require more than the allotted time for adequate coverage, while others may require less. Students are strongly advised to read assignments *before* the class in which they are to be covered in order to facilitate discussion of text material in class.

Class	Topic(s)	Readings
1: Jan 25	Overview of course; History of testing; What is a test?	1, 2
2: Feb 1	Social, ethical, and legal issues in testing Test score interpretation: scales, transformations, norms	3A, 15B; <i>Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, Section 9. Assessment</i>
3: Feb 8	Reliability **Test critique assignment Part I due at start of class	3B
4: Feb 15	Validity	4A; Cronbach & Meehl (1955)
5: Feb 22	Validity	Campbell & Fiske (1959); 8A
6: March 1	Introduction to SPSS—Meet in Room 015 Lab 5	Handouts
7: March 8	Test Construction Guest Speaker: Michael Schober	4B; Clark & Watson (1995); Reckase (1996)
8: March 15	Mid-term Exam **Optional TA computer lab session March 16**	
**March 22	SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS	
9: March 29	Special issues in cross-cultural measurement Guest Speaker: Joan Miller **Test critique assignment Part II due at start of class	Okazaki & Sue (1995) Van deVijfer & Hambleton (1996); Miller (2004)
10: April 5	Intelligence testing	6, Greenfield (1997); <i>*optional Sternberg (2004)</i>
11: April 12	Test bias and testing special populations	7, Helms (1992)
12: April 19	Personality assessment **Test critique assignment Part III due at start of class.	13, 14
13: April 26	Diagnostic interviewing/Clinical Assessment	Murphy & Davidshofer (2001) Ch. 20-21; Dana (2001); Speigel (2004)
14: May 3	Final Group Presentations	
15: May 10	Final Group Presentations	

Test-Critique Assignment

Your mastery of the course material will be evaluated by means of a semester-long, multi-phase assignment. The purpose of this project is to give you a chance to think through the issues involved in analyzing the quality and potential usefulness of a test. Based loosely on traditional standards for reviewing a test (e.g., the *Mental Measurements Yearbook* and the *Test Critiques* series), the assignment is divided into three graded components, which will allow you to demonstrate your understanding of critical issues in psychometric theory and cross-cultural measurement.

Part I: Description of a test (Due: February 8; max 750 words max). For the purposes of this assignment, we will limit our selection to self-report questionnaires. Each of you will select a test to evaluate from a list of thematic clusters (to be provided). This will be the test that you will spend the rest of the semester working with. Once you have selected the test, you should assemble literature about the test (e.g., test critiques, published psychometric studies, the test manual if available, etc.) and obtain a copy of it along with scoring information. Use the following format for your written assignment:

- Place the formal name of the test, its author, and the test publisher (if copyrighted) at the top of the page. Then use the following headings:
- **Introduction/Purpose:** Describe the rationale for the approach taken. The purpose should be clearly stated in the published materials, which you may paraphrase. Begin with descriptive and non-judgmental sentences. For example: “According to the test manual (p. 2), the ABC Personality Inventory aims to provide a simple measure of the major personality traits of the normal adolescent.” Provide elaboration and clarification, for example, “The major personality traits covered by the test include...” Discuss the intended target audience for the test. Also discuss any theoretical orientation that the test may have. “For example, “The test structure attempts to operationalize Smiths’ four stage theory of adolescent development.” In this opening section, you are not to critique the test’s purpose, although you may choose to comment on how clearly this purpose is communicated.
- **Practical Applications/Uses:** Describe the structure and materials of the test: types of items, levels, length, etc. Thoroughly examine the test materials themselves. What exactly is this test? What are the items or other stimuli? What are the test directions? How long does it take to complete the test? How is it scored? Discuss what scores the test yields and how they are to be interpreted according to the test developers.

This section will also call attention to any special versions of unusual features of the test, if there are any. For example, if the test is available in Spanish as well as in English, such matters would be briefly noted here. Finally, provide a brief review of the kinds of clinical/research studies that have used this instrument.

- **Copy of the test:** Include a formatted copy of the test, including instructions for completion. Put your name on the top of the test.

Part II: Psychometric evaluation (Due: March 29; max 1750 words). *Note: Include a copy of Part I.*

together. The next phase involves evaluating the psychometric properties of the test. You will base this evaluation on the published literature as well as the data you collect in class. Each of you will administer 10 copies of your instrument to your classmates (we will do this during a lab session). You will enter the data you collect and conduct the psychometric analyses using SPSS. Address the following four elements:

A. Summary of the Literature

1. **Test development:** What procedures were used to develop the test? Discuss standardization and norm-setting procedures. What is the score distribution/range for the instrument
2. **Reliability:** What evidence is there in the literature for the reliability of the test scores? What reliability analyses have been conducted? For each study, describe the study, sampling procedures, and include the reliability estimates for each study. For example: “Administering an early version (1984) of the Substance Abuse Questionnaire—Adult Probation III to a small sample of 30 college students (not substance abusers or legal offenders), a test-retest correlation coefficient of .71 was found across an interval of one week.”

3. Validity: What evidence is there for the validity (construct, concurrent, etc.) of the test?
 4. Norms: What evidence is provided for the utility of the test's norms? Are the normative samples sufficiently large, current, and representative?
- B. Report of your Psychometric Analyses.** Following a similar format, report the results of your psychometric analyses using SPSS. Include the following information: descriptive statistics, internal consistency, validity.

Part III: Overall critique of test performance (Due: April 19; max 1250 words). *Note: Include copies of Part I and Part II.* The final section provides a summative evaluation of the test. Begin by reviewing your key conclusions based on your evaluation of the test and its psychometric properties in Phase I and II. What are the tests' strengths and deficiencies? Next, suggest cautions to keep in mind if the test is used and/or make recommendations for the test author and publisher to follow in further development of the test. Such cautions and recommendations will be outgrowths of earlier parts of the review. Third, identify at least one population or subgroup for whom this test would not be reliable or valid and provide a rationale. For example, "Because the test refers to activities of daily living common among mainstream, middle-class individuals, it may not provide a valid assessment of functional impairment among lower SES individuals, the homeless, and immigrants from less industrialized countries." In this last section, refer to the literature to provide alternatives to assessing the test's underlying construct in these identified populations.