

## THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

Department of Psychology  
London Ontario

### INFORMATION ABOUT PSYCHOLOGY 485E: HONORS THESIS COURSE 2008-2009

**COURSE COORDINATOR:** Dr. Bill Roberts, Room 7310, Social Science Bldg., Ph. 661-2111 Ext 84686

All honors psychology students registered in the 4th year of the Honors Psychology Program are required to take Psychology 485. The major focus of this course is the completion of an honors thesis research project. To assist those of you enrolling in the course next fall, some preliminary information relating to the thesis and potential supervisors is presented below. If you have any further questions about the course, please feel free to come by and see me.

**1. What is a thesis?** A thesis is a major research project carried out by a 4th year honors psychology student under the direction of a qualified advisor. The thesis is to be an empirical project that involves collecting and analyzing data. It is not a purely theoretical paper, nor just an in-depth review of the literature. The student is expected to play a major role in all phases of the thesis research project, including conceptualization, preparing materials and procedures, data analysis, and write-up. Please note that if a proposed project is not suitable for an honours thesis, the course coordinator may require modifications or the development of an alternate project.

At the end of the academic year a written thesis is to be handed in and marked by the student's thesis advisor and a second reader. In addition, students also present their completed thesis work at a poster session (typically in early April). It is expected that a format similar to this will be used in 2008-2009 for the course. Final details about all presentations and assignments for the course will be included in the course outline available in September 2008.

**2. Who can act as a supervisor?** All full-time faculty members of the UWO Department of Psychology may serve as supervisors for 4th year honors theses. In addition, our department has several honorary faculty members with full-time appointments in other areas of this university, including the Business School, Communicative Disorders, Kinesiology, and Education. These honorary faculty members may also be available to serve as 4th year thesis supervisors. To help you in your search for a supervisor you can obtain a copy of the Faculty Research Interests List from the Psychology Department Graduate Office (Room 7406, Social Science Building), or you can get this information from the Psychology Department website under the faculty and staff menu. This list will provide you with up-to-date information concerning both the full-time and honorary faculty members in our department.

On occasion, it has also been possible to make arrangements for Ph.D. level psychologists working in various applied settings in London to supervise honors theses. In addition, it may be possible for some senior Ph.D. level psychology graduate students or postdoctoral fellows in our department to supervise a thesis (under the direction of a full-time faculty member). Finally, some Ph.D. level psychology faculty members in the affiliated colleges may also be available to supervise a 4th year thesis. It should be stressed that the supervisor should have qualifications and experience in doing research. Concerns about the suitability of a tentative supervisor should be brought to the Psychology 485 Course Coordinator.

**3. How do you obtain a supervisor?** It is your responsibility to locate a supervisor and persuade that individual to supervise your thesis. Please prepare carefully before you meet with a potential supervisor to discuss the possibility of supervision. You should be able to provide this person with an idea of what you might wish to do for a thesis topic. In this regard, familiarity with the potential advisor's research interests is highly recommended. Specifically, when talking to this person you should be able to indicate how your proposed project relates to his/her areas of research interest and expertise.

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### 3. How do you obtain a supervisor? (continued)

You should begin your search for a supervisor by canvassing the full-time and honorary faculty members in the Psychology Department. Feel free to come by and see me if you have any questions about potential supervisors. Please note that if the person you are interested in as a potential supervisor does not hold a full-time or honorary appointment in our department **you must see me first to discuss the viability of this supervision arrangement.** In all cases, final approval for your selection of a thesis supervisor must be obtained from the course coordinator for Psychology 485.

Information about potential supervisors will be given out in class at the start of the fall term. It would probably be to your advantage, however, to secure an advisor before this. This is particularly important if you would like to do a thesis project in an area of psychology that is in high demand. Start thinking about a supervisor now, and, if possible, make your thesis supervision arrangements for 2008-2009 as soon as you can.

4. What else is involved in this course besides the thesis? An ethics review protocol for your thesis project will be required by the mid-portion of the fall term. Students also give oral presentations of their introduction and method to small groups of other students in the class. Throughout the year, written portions of your thesis will be handed in and marked by the course coordinator and teaching assistants (i.e., Introduction and Method sections). All of this work will contribute to your final grade in the course. Final details regarding the precise nature of these presentations and assignments will be included in the course outline (available September 2008) and in handouts provided during the course. A website for Psychology 485 is also available that has much of this information.

### Invitation to Attend the Psychology 485 Thesis Poster Sessions on Monday, April 2

Students from this year's Psychology 485 class will be presenting their thesis research in a poster session format on Friday, April 4, 2008. There will be a total of eight 1-hour sessions that day, starting at 8:30 am and ending at 4:30 pm. All sessions will be held in the Social Science Building, 7th Floor Alcove (beside A/B elevators). There will be 10 to 12 new posters displayed every hour. These poster sessions are open to all psychology students, and you are invited to attend as many sessions as you wish. Further details regarding the schedule for these poster sessions will be posted on the Psychology 485 Bulletin Board (which is across the hall from Room 7409, SSC Bldg).

Attending at least one of these poster sessions will provide you with several opportunities. First, it will help give you an idea of the range and type of projects that fourth year students complete for their honours theses. Secondly, you will be able to see how other students in this course have prepared their thesis posters (which will be helpful for you next year). Finally, it will give you a chance to talk to some of the current 4th year students about their experiences in completing a thesis, including such issues as selecting a supervisor, formulating a research idea, completing an ethics proposal, testing subjects, and so on. For all of these reasons, dropping in on one of the poster sessions is **highly** recommended.