Social Health Lab Directed Studies Information (2024-2025)

Pre-requisites and Learning Objectives
Directed Studies students in the SHL are expected to be able to generate hypotheses, collect and analyze data, and write a scientific report, with minimal supervision. Therefore, priority will be given to students who have volunteered in our lab for at least 9 months (i.e., 2 Winter terms, or 1 Winter term plus 2 summer terms) who have shown outstanding analytical, writing, and leadership potential. Our lab’s Directed Studies course is primarily designed for students with a serious interest in research careers. If you are not sure whether the course is a good fit for you, please consult the graduate student/postdoc supervising you and/or Dr. Chen.

A 6-credit Directed Studies spanning both Winter terms is the norm in the SHL. If you are interested in Directed Studies, please let the graduate student/postdoc supervising you know at least one month prior to the beginning of Winter Term 1 (i.e., early August). Please also submit 2 writing samples—the final report from your PSYC 217 group project, and one other independent piece of academic writing—so that we can assess your scientific writing skills and suitability for the course.

We do our best to accommodate lab members who are interested and well-suited for our Directed Studies course, but we almost always have more students in the lab who are interested in Directed Studies than we are able to take on. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee the availability of positions.

If you are accepted into the Directed Studies course, you are expected to meet with Dr. Chen and send her a draft of your Directed Studies form at least 1 week prior to the course registration deadline—this is necessary to ensure sufficient time to revise and finalize the form.

Grading
50% lab performance
50% final paper

Note that you are not in direct competition with the other directed studies students in the lab! It is possible for all directed studies students to get an “A” in the course.

Lab Performance Component (50%)
Directed Studies students are expected to commit to 8-10 hours/week of lab work, which includes activities such as: postering/flyering; emailing, recruiting, scheduling, running participants; creating and piloting experiment materials; data coding; data entry and cleaning; troubleshooting equipment issues; lab meetings, meetings with your grad student/postdoc supervisor, and meetings with Dr. Chen. Lab work also includes background research and/or analyses that Dr. Chen and/or your grad student/postdoc supervisor specifically asks you to complete (even if you might eventually use this research/analyses for your Directed Studies project).

Lab work does not include tasks you're completing primarily for your course credit requirements (e.g., writing up of Directed Studies papers; background research or reading for your directed studies papers that Dr. Chen/your grad student/postdoc supervisor has not specifically asked you to complete) or optional/voluntary out-of-lab activities (e.g., PURC, MURC). Please DO keep a record of these activities on your own -- we very much value and encourage you to spend adequate time on these activities (and a record of this can be very helpful for us when writing letters of recommendation). If you are unsure whether a task counts as “lab work,” please ask Dr. Chen or the grad student/postdoc supervising your project.

Dr. Chen will assess your lab performance with the detailed input of your grad student/postdoc supervisor, with whom you will work closely. Key components of solid lab performance are reliability, efficiency and promptness, professionalism, teamwork, and good communication. Outstanding lab performance includes demonstrating leadership, initiative, and critical thinking.
Final Paper Component (50%)

Your final paper will be a write-up of your directed studies project. It should consist of 8-10 pages double-spaced of text. The page count does not include your abstract, references, tables, appendices, figures, etc. Please use APA style, including standard font and margins, and do not go over the page limit. Please follow the guidelines below for the sections of your final paper:

- **Abstract (200 words max)**
- **Introduction** (approx. 2-3 pages)
- **Methods** (approx. 2-3 pages)
- **Results** (approx. 2 pages)
- **Discussion** (approx. 2 pages)

Course Timeline

**dates are approximate—exact dates will be confirmed by early September**

- **late Aug/early Sept:** Make sure you have met with Dr. Chen and your grad student/postdoc supervisor and have agreed upon a project idea and rough analysis plan
- **Dec 6:** Introduction and methods draft due (email to your grad student/postdoc supervisor by 11:59 PM)
- **Feb 14:** Internal deadline to complete data collection to be included in your analyses (you will most likely continue collecting data in the lab after this date, but you are not required to include the later data in your analyses)
- **Mar 8:** Results draft due (email to your grad student/postdoc supervisor by 11:59 PM)
- **Apr 8:** Final paper due (email to both Dr. Chen and your grad student/postdoc supervisor by 11:59 PM)

Your grade for the paper will officially be based on the final version you submit in April. However, you will have two opportunities (in Nov/Dec and March, as noted above) to receive feedback from your grad student/postdoc supervisor when you turn in your drafts of the intro+methods, and results, sections. To maximize your learning experience—as well as to help make sure you turn in the most polished product possible in April—we strongly urge you to spend sufficient time on the earlier drafts.

Conference Presentations

If you are interested in presenting your project at a conference such as MURC or PURC, inform Dr. Chen and the grad student/postdoc supervising you. We will be happy to advise you regarding suitable topics for you to present and/or discuss in your applications. **Consult with us at least 2 weeks, and preferably 1 month, in advance of the submission deadlines.** Remember that you will be representing the lab! It is essential that you provide all of your presentation co-authors (who will typically include Dr. Chen and the grad student/postdoc supervising your project) sufficient time to review and approve your presentation materials (e.g., abstract, data analyses) prior to submitting them. If annual budgets allow, the lab will pay for up to $50 of your poster printing costs. 36x48 is a standard size poster and should cost between $50-65 (including tax) when ordered for pickup from [https://www.staples.ca/](https://www.staples.ca/). Alternately, posters can be printed at CopieSmart (PSA members receive a 10% discount). You should consult with Dr. Chen and the grad student/postdoc supervising you before submitting your paper for publication in an undergraduate journal or in a repository such as UBC cIRcle. Especially when your results are part of a study that has not yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal, making your written document publicly available may not be advisable, as it can result in confusion in the scientific literature and other conflicts of interest. Dr. Chen and the grad student/postdoc supervising you can provide advice about avoiding these issues.
**SHL Directed Studies Final Paper Grading Rubric**

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<th>Needs work</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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**Abstract**
- Statement of research question and rationale
- Hypotheses
- Sample
- Study design
- Main findings
- Length (200 words max)

**Introduction**
- Review of theoretically-relevant literature
- Introduction and definition of central terms
- Statement of research question and rationale
- Research question(s) derived from theory/previous research
- Clear statement of a falsifiable hypothesis/hypotheses

**Methods**
- Sample (size, demographic characteristics)
- Measures (description of tasks and questionnaires, with internal consistency metrics)
- Procedure
- Ethical considerations
- Study can be replicated based on description

**Results**
- Data aggregation/cleaning (description of missing data, exclusions, etc.)
- Hypothesis-based analyses
- Selection and execution of statistical tests
- Relevant statistics reported (in APA style)
- Figures and tables (necessary, informative labels/captions)

**Discussion**
- Brief (1-2 sentences) summary of study and main findings
- Data-based evaluation/re-interpretation of hypotheses
- Comparison with relevant prior literature/findings
- Limitations/suggestions for future research
- Broader implications/conclusion

**Overall**
- Language (grammar, proofreading, etc.)
- Flow/clarity/comprehensibility
- Conciseness and relative balance in section length
- Appropriate credit to others (citations)
- Main text: APA style and formatting
- Reference list: completeness, APA style and formatting
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<tr>
<th>SHL Directed Studies Lab Work Grading Rubric</th>
<th>Needs work</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Good</th>
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<td><strong>Reliability and conscientiousness.</strong> We expect you to follow lab protocols, fulfil responsibilities on schedule, double-check your own work (e.g., data entry), fix your own errors, and avoid making the same mistakes twice.</td>
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<td><strong>Respect for research ethics.</strong> We expect you to be familiar with, and adhere to, standards of privacy and confidentiality for data collection, entry, and analysis.</td>
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<td><strong>Honesty and transparency.</strong> It is essential that you report incidents and/or mistakes in data collection/entry to your supervisor truthfully and promptly, and that you ask clarification questions if confused. We prefer if you err on the side of not overpromising but rather overdelivering.</td>
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<td><strong>Communication.</strong> We expect you to be prompt and clear in your communication and coordination with supervisors, labmates, and study participants. Please reach out to your supervisor and labmates promptly when exceptional circumstances arise (e.g., health issue).</td>
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<td><strong>Leadership.</strong> Experienced RAs should help to mentor and train newer labmates.</td>
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<td><strong>Problem solving.</strong> You should be ready and able to solve unexpected problems that may arise when you are on your own (e.g., issues with a participant during a study session), as well as issues that affect the larger study team (e.g., difficulties with participant recruitment or study design).</td>
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<td><strong>Initiative.</strong> We want our RAs to go beyond simply following instructions. We would like you to be proactive and inquisitive, contribute your own ideas to research projects, take the initiative to learn new skills or conduct background research independently, seek feedback, and raise potential issues that you foresee with new study protocols or lab procedures.</td>
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<td><strong>Teamwork and flexibility.</strong> We appreciate when RAs provide flexible availability, are willing to put in extra hours during critical weeks for the project, offer to cover timeslots when labmates are sick, are willing to help with mundane/tedious tasks as well as the exciting ones, and have a positive attitude.</td>
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