

Psychology 623: PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT

12 to 2 pm, Tuesdays, 143 Straub

Instructor: Gerard Saucier, PhD

Office: 312 Straub

e-mail: gsaucier@uoregon.edu

Phone: 346-4927

Office Hours: Mondays 12:45 to 2:45 pm, or by appointment

Readings: *See class schedule; all readings are made available (pdf) by the instructor*

The purpose of this graduate course is to give students a useful introduction to basic measurement issues in assessment of individual differences, focusing on personality but with 'personality' defined very, very broadly. A reasonable broad definition of personality (based on that of Funder, 1997) is "characteristic patterns of thought, motivation, emotion, and behavior, together with the psychological mechanisms behind those patterns." Such a broad definition might encompass much of psychopathology and of scales for measuring interests, attitudes, values, and beliefs. Among the concepts emphasized are reliability, validity, response bias, factor structure and dimensionality of a measure, measurement invariance across populations, content comprehensiveness, cross-cultural generalizability, and key components of item response theory. Measurement issues will be explored broadly, and then in their applications to particular models and measures, including those in which the student has special experience or interest. Indeed, the course will employ measures with which the students are familiar as prime examples, and is designed not only to review the present state of personality (defined broadly) assessment but also to help (present or future) researchers who will be faced with the task of creating a measure of some construct, or evaluating an existing measure with respect to its measurement properties. To that end, the central, unifying theme of the course is "what makes a measure good?"

This is primarily a course about concepts, not about statistics. However, it is assumed that students are familiar with basic statistical techniques of correlation and regression. Those who doubt their facility with these techniques should consult the instructor for suggested readings.

Reading assignments are substantial. Readings for each week are, in many cases, ordered from simple to advanced. Much of the best work on psychometric principles is classic and highly cited work from decades ago, so not all of the readings are of recent vintage.

Requirements of the course

1. Discussion questions based on readings for the current week. You are responsible for turning in sets of discussion questions based on the readings by two hours before the beginning of five different class meetings (of the nine after the first session). Late discussion questions don't confer credit. Discussion questions are **turned in via e-mail to gsaucier@uoregon.edu**. You can choose the dates of your

discussion questions (although any sessions with no assigned reading would be off limits). Discussion questions, to be worthwhile and to count, should (a) be indicative of having done the reading and (b) be instances of some degree of critical or insightful thinking. Should you ever develop a “block” about coming up with some, you might consider questions of the following form: *Why is this issue important? How are you defining _____? Aren’t you assuming _____? Isn’t it debatable whether _____? Does the evidence really support the notion that _____? Aren’t you leaving out _____? Isn’t there a limitation with regard to _____ (e.g., caused by using that methodology)? What about the rival hypothesis (alternative interpretation) that _____?* Responses to selected discussion questions (from the week before, or from the current week if they are submitted to the instructor well in advance of the class session) turned in will be a part of the class sessions, starting with week 2 (although often this will be at the beginning of the next class session *after* the date on which they are due). Discussions in the class sessions are a very important part of this course, and student discussion questions are one of the stimulants for such discussions.

2. **Midterm exercise.** Around the middle of the term students will be given instructions for a midterm exercise involving the creation/construction of a short scale (with data that will be provided to you) and an examination of its basic psychometric properties. This exercise will be **due on May 10.**

3. **A final paper/project.** Students will be asked to identify a model or measure tapping individual differences, and discuss basic measurement issues with respect to it. A set of generic questions (~15) that should be addressed in the final paper will be made available by week 6. The model or measure chosen may be one with which the student has experience, or one in which the student has a particular interest; indeed, think of this work as something that could be incorporated in a dissertation, thesis, or other eventual publication. Selected research-literature references are likely to be useful in the final paper, although none is strictly required. The final paper is **due at the end of the final-exam week.** Some kind of **advance outline or plan** for it (no longer than one page double-spaced) should be submitted by e-mail to the instructor **by May 17.**

4. **A brief presentation based on the final paper** (or at least on your early drafts of this paper) during the last two weeks of the course. Your presentation should be focused on questions, difficulties, puzzles, or dilemmas you are experiencing with respect to the content of your final paper (after providing a bit of background). It is not important to create an impressive presentation performance, but rather the brief presentation is primarily an opportunity to get some feedback from the instructor and other class members on the issues involved. These presentations will be allotted a fixed time period (affected by how many course participants there are, but at least 10 minutes) although discussion of a presentation may go on considerably longer if issues of interest to many students arise.

The **final grade** is based on: 30% for turning in five sets of discussion questions, 10% for the midterm exercise, 5% for a generally acceptable level of in-class contribution, 10% for the brief presentation, 5% for an advance outline of the final paper, and 40% for the final paper itself.

Bringing in your own data: The instructor uses real data for numerous examples in the course, and it may be particularly edifying for you to be able to see your own data, involving variables of special interest to you, applied in relation to important psychometric principles. If you have some data (even if incomplete, and it does not matter if you think it is not “personality” data) that you would like to see used for examples in this course, submit in SPSS file format to the instructor, who guarantees that it will be used only for educational purposes and only in this class.

Course Calendar and Readings

(some of these readings are likely to be revised: reduced or changed)

April 3

Introduction to the course and to personality and psychological measurement in general

April 10

Validity (and its central place in the evaluation of measures); strong construct validation and the testing of rival hypotheses as to interpretation of scores

Readings for this session: Cronbach (1990) chapter 5; Messick (1988); Borsboom, Mellenbergh, & Heerden (2004)

April 17

Factor analysis and important applications in personality measurement and in test construction; illustration with lexically derived factorial models for personality assessment (e.g., the Big Five) and related ones for psychopathology

Readings for this session: Goldberg and Velicer (2006); Kline (1998) ch. 3 (pp. 51-69); Saucier and Goldberg (2002)

April 24

Measurement error; reliability assessment and unidimensionality; conventional test construction

Readings for this session: Kline (1998) pp. 25-38; Schmitt (1996); Simms (2009); Loevinger (1954)

May 1

Beyond 20th century test-construction conventions: Measurement invariance and cross-cultural generalizability, equidiscrimination and item response theory (item and test information curves, differential item functioning)

Readings for this session: DiStefano & Motl (2009); Steenkamp & Baumgartner (1998); Nunnally & Bernstein (1994), ch. 8, pp. 326-332; Murphy & Davidshofer (2001) pp. 192-203; Warne et al. (2012)

May 8

Halo effects, response biases, response styles, and the interfusion of norms and values into measurement of behavioral and affective tendencies; integrity assessment

Readings for this session: Edwards (1953); Wiggins (1973) pp. 415-425; Paulhus (1991); Smith & Ellingson (2002)

May 15

Normal-range personality scales and inventories: comparative validity and comparisons across time; comparability and generalizability across culture

Readings for this session: Lanyon & Goodstein (1997) pp. 29-87; Clifton, Turkheimer, & Oltmanns (2005); Krueger (2005) or Krueger (1999); Wood, Nye, & Saucier (2010)

May 22

Projective or 'operant' approaches and their relative utility, and other topics TBA

Readings for this session may include: MD pp. 392-401; Lilienfeld, Wood, & Garb (2000); Hibbard (2003); Woike & McAdams (2005) pp. 171-183

May 29 (this session may need to be moved to 5/31 or another date)

Comparative validity studies and other content TBA; also, presentations by students

Readings for this session: Grucza & Goldberg (2007); Roberts et al. (2007); Thalmayer, Saucier, & Eigenhuis (2011)

June 5

Session content TBA; also, presentations by students

Readings for this session: TBA

Final paper is due at the conclusion of the final exam date/time for this time slot
(10:15 am, Weds. June 13)

Readings listed above are drawn from the following sources:

Borsboom, D., Mellenbergh, G. J., & van Heerden, J. (2004). The concept of validity. Psychological Review, 111, 1061-1071.

Clifton, A., Turkheimer, E., & Oltmanns, T. F. (2005). Self- and peer perspectives on pathological personality traits and interpersonal problems. Psychological Assessment, 17, 123-131.

Cronbach, L. J. (1990). Essentials of psychological testing (5th ed.). New York: Harper/Collins.

DiStefano, C. & Motl, R. W. (2009). Self-esteem and method effects associated with negatively worded items: Investigating factorial invariance by sex. Structural Equation Modeling, 16, 134-146.

Edwards, A. L. (1953). The relationship between the judged desirability of a trait and the probability that the trait will be endorsed. Journal of Applied Psychology, 37, 90-93.

Goldberg, L. R., & Velicer, W. F. (2006). Principles of exploratory factor analysis. In S. Strack (Ed.), Differentiating normal and abnormal personality (2nd ed.; pp. 239-247). New York: Springer.

Grucza, R. A., & Goldberg, L. R. (2007). The comparative validity of 11 modern personality inventories: Predictions of behavioral acts, informant reports, and clinical indicators. Journal of Personality Assessment, 89, 167-187.

Hibbard, S. (2003). A critique of Lilienfeld et al.'s (2000) "The scientific status of projective techniques." Journal of Personality Assessment, 80, 260-271.

Kline, P. (1998). The new psychometrics: Science, psychology, and measurement. London: Routledge.

- Krueger, R. F. (2005). Continuity of Axes I and II: Toward a unified model of personality, personality disorders, and clinical disorders. Journal of Personality Disorders, 19, 233-261.
- Krueger, R. F. (1999). The structure of common mental disorders. Archives of General Psychiatry, 56, 921-926.
- Lanyon, R. I., & Goodstein, L. D. (1997). Personality assessment (3rd ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Lilienfeld, S. O., Wood, J. M., & Garb, H. N. (2000). The scientific status of projective techniques. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 1, 27-66.
- Loevinger, J. (1954). The attenuation paradox in test theory. Psychological Bulletin, 51, 493-504.
- Messick, S. (1988). The once and future issues of validity: Assessing the meaning and consequences of measurement. In H. Wainer & H. I. Braun (1988), Test validity (pp. 33-45). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Murphy, K. R., & Davidshofer, C. O. (2001). Psychological testing: Principles and applications (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). Psychometric theory (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Paulhus, D. L. (1991). Measurement and control of response bias. In Robinson, J. P., Shaver, P. R., Wrightsman, L. S. (Eds.) Measures of personality and social psychological attitudes (pp. 17-59). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Roberts, B. W., Kuncel, N. R., Shiner, R., Caspi, A., & Goldberg, L. R. (2007). The power of personality: The comparative validity of personality traits, socioeconomic status, and cognitive ability for predicting important life outcomes. Perspectives on Psychological Science, 2, 313-345.
- Saucier, G. & Goldberg, L. R. (2002). Assessing the Big Five: Applications of 10 psychometric criteria to the development of marker scales. In B. De Raad & M. Perugini (Eds.), Big Five assessment (pp. 29-58). Goettingen, Germany: Hogrefe & Huber.
- Schmitt, N. (1996). Uses and abuses of coefficient Alpha. Psychological Assessment, 8, 350-353.
- Simms, L. J. (2008). Classical and modern methods of psychological test construction. Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 2/1, 414-443.
- Steenkamp, J.E.M., & Baumgartner, H. (1998). Assessing measurement invariance in cross-national consumer research. Journal of Consumer Research, 25, 78-90.
- Thalmayer, A. G., Saucier, G., & Eigenhuis, A. (2011). Comparative validity of brief- to medium-length Big Five and Big Six questionnaires. Psychological Assessment, 23, 995-1009.
- Warne, R. T., McKyer, L. J., Smith, M. L. (2012). An introduction to item response theory for health behavior researchers. American Journal of Health Behavior, 36, 31-43.
- Wiggins, J. S. (1973). Personality and prediction: Principles of personality assessment. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Woike, B. A., & McAdams, D. P. (2005). Motives. In V. A. Derlega, B. A. Winstead, & W. H. Jones (Eds.), Personality: Contemporary theory and research (3rd ed.) (pp. 156-189).
- Wood, D., Nye, C. D., & Saucier, G. (2010).. Identification and measurement of a more comprehensive set of person-descriptive trait markers from the English lexicon. Journal of Research in Personality, 44, 258-272.

Name:

What makes you want to take this course (i.e., how does it fit with your goals and interests)?

Which concepts mentioned on the schedule have you already used? (and mention any statistical software you have used for methods associated with these concepts)

What kinds of software packages (basic and advanced) do you have access to and have used before?