Please read the information below about fulfilling the experiment participation requirement for Foundations of Psychology (PSYC 1101) and Inquiries in Psychological Science (PSYC 2290). Keep this document for your records.

In the United States, the science of psychology as it is applied to normal human behavior is based in large part on data collected from students in major universities who take introductory psychology courses. In fact, most human studies you read about in psychology textbooks are based on this population! This includes studies conducted by members of the Northeastern University Psychology Department, whose research is often cited in psychology textbooks.

To make this research enterprise possible, most psychology departments require introductory psychology students to let themselves be studied in research for a few hours, in an exchange that can well be described as a two-way street: By participating in experiments, students have a chance to experience what research is like first hand. Students also receive additional explanations about research in general and the particular experiments in which they participate, while the faculty and graduate students doing research are able to conduct their studies.

Requirements for Introductory Psychology Courses

The NU Psychology Department includes a six-hour research participation requirement in PSYC 1101 and PSYC 2290. All studies are approved by the University’s Human Subjects Research Review Committee and conform to the American Psychological Association’s guidelines on the ethical treatment of human subjects. If you have objections to participation, an Alternative Assignment of equivalent length is offered. This option involves reading an assignment on ethics in research and answering questions on it in essay format. (Note the Alternative Assignment must be completed well before the end of the term; see the Participation Schedule for the exact date.)

If you are under 18 years old, you cannot participate in experiments unless your parent/guardian signs the Informed Consent for the particular experiment you wish to participate in. If you wish to be in an experiment, you must contact the experimenter (the name will be shown when you sign up for the experiment) in advance, obtain the Informed Consent from him/her, get your parent/guardian signature, and then bring the signed Informed Consent form to the experiment when you go. NOTE: Each experiment has a unique Informed Consent, so you must get the correct one from the relevant experimenter in advance.

Most experiments give you 1 hour of credit, but occasionally an experiment offers 2 or 3 hours. Just complete enough experiments so that your total number of hours of credit comes to at least 6.

If you prefer, you may do the Alternative Assignment instead, in which case you should contact Prof. Judy Hall (225 NI, x3790, j.hall@northeastern.edu) in advance of the date indicated on the Participation Schedule.
Research participation is a required part of your course and failure to complete your hours will result in an Incomplete grade, which will be changed to a letter grade when the requirement is completed. (An exception is if you are earning a failing grade; in that case, an F will be recorded rather than the Incomplete.) If you receive an Incomplete for failure to finish your hours, you may make up the hours any time the pool is running, up to one year from the end of the term.

To Sign Up for an Experiment

The Psychology Department uses its PsyLink website (http://psylink.psych.neu.edu) to handle experiment sign-ups and credit tracking. To access the PsyLink system, follow the detailed instructions attached to this handout (Psychology Participant Pool Scheduling System (PsyLink) Student Manual). You will be able to see available experiments and sign up for them, and you will be able to track your current status (how many experiment hours you've completed, how many you have left, etc.).

New experiments are posted often, so if you do not see an experiment that fits into your schedule, check again a few days later. If you have repeated difficulty finding a convenient time slot, please contact the Participant Pool Coordinator, as described below.

Be careful not to sign up for the same experiment code more than once. In most cases, the PsyLink system will not show you experiments in which you have already participated (or for which you are already scheduled), but you should also check this yourself. If you accidentally sign up for the same experiment twice, you will not receive credit for participating a second time.

When you sign up, you should remember any instructions shown with the experiment. For example, it is your responsibility to remember where to report for your experiment, and when you need to be there. You should also be sure when signing up that you fit the requirements for the experiment (shown in the Experiment Notes). If you sign up for an experiment for which you are not eligible, you will not receive credit, regardless of whether you attend.

You must arrive for your experiment on time. If you cannot attend, you must cancel your experiment at least one day in advance. You can do this using the PsyLink system, or you can call the extension listed with the experiment and leave a message with your name, as well as the date, time, and experiment number of the experiment you had scheduled.

When you arrive for the experiment, if the experimenter is not available, please wait 10 minutes to see if the experimenter becomes available (the experimenter may be working with another participant). If the experimenter is not around after you have waited, leave a voicemail or written message (including your name and phone number) with the staff in the Psychology Dept. office (125 NI) so that the experimenter can contact you and arrange to give you credit for the experiment. At that time you must indicate at least the experiment number, the experimenter’s name, and the time/date of the experiment.

After completing an experiment, you will receive a paper receipt for it from the experimenter. Be sure to keep your receipts; in case there is a problem with PsyLink, this serves as evidence that you received credit for the experiment.
Northeastern University Psychology Department
Introductory Psychology Participant Pool Procedures

Failure to Attend a Scheduled Experiment

Attending your scheduled experiments is critical. If you miss an experiment, you will waste a time slot that could have been used by another student, you will waste the experimenter’s time, and in some cases, data from other students who did attend at that time will be of no value as well.

If you do not attend and do not cancel a scheduled experiment, the experimenter may give you a “no-show”, which will appear on PsyLink in your account and which will be visible to your instructor. It is your responsibility to know when you missed a scheduled appointment and to keep track of your hours. You can do this by accessing PsyLink, which will show you the experiments for which you've received credit, the experiments for which you've received a no-show, experiments which have been cancelled, and any other scheduled experiments for which you have not yet received either a credit or a no-show.

If you believe that a mistake in credit-tracking has been made, you should first contact the appropriate experimenter. If needed, you may also contact the Participant Pool Coordinator, as listed below, who will then contact the appropriate experimenter.

Questions or Concerns, and Participant Pool Coordinator Contact Information

If you have questions or concerns regarding the research participation requirement, you may contact the Instructor for your course, your Teaching Assistant, or a Participant Pool Coordinator. The current Coordinator is Prof. Neal Pearlmutter (431 NI, x3040, n.pearlmutter@northeastern.edu).

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