

**Interventions II: Aging  
Psychology 5463  
Research Grant Project**

The goal of this project is to give you experience designing a clinical trial to evaluate a psychosocial intervention that addresses a need among older adults. I encourage you to think broadly about the topic you choose to investigate. You might select a specific mental health syndrome and evaluate the effectiveness of a particular type of psychotherapy (e.g., interpersonal therapy for depression). Or you might choose an intervention with a more broad focus (e.g., a combined psychoeducational-behavioral program to promote prescription medication compliance). Or you could investigate an intervention with important people who provide care or support older adults (e.g., a stress management program for certified nursing assistants in long-term care).

Other examples of the type of topics you might explore include:

- reducing wandering in older adults with dementia
- promoting positive marital adjustment at retirement
- relaxation training for chronic pain
- behavioral interventions to improve sleep
- cognitive training to improve memory
- treatment for post-stroke depression
- promoting social engagement to reduce loneliness in assisted living facilities
- intergenerational tutoring to improve mood
- motivational interviewing to reduce alcohol use
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to address distress at the end of life
- improving dietary compliance among dialysis patients
- solution-focused psychotherapy for dementia caregivers
- biofeedback interventions to address sexual dysfunction

I would suggest talking with me about your topic before you go too far in your research; I may be able to provide some perspective on the availability of previous research in the area.

There are two components to the project.

**#1) Grant proposal.** The 10-page proposal (not including references) should include the following sections:

- Abstract – a brief paragraph that states the problem, the goals of your study, and the general design you plan to employ to answer your research question.
- Specific Aims – an enumerated list of the goals for your project (2-3 is sufficient).
- Background – concise literature review that summarizes relevant past research, theoretical framework for the current study, all of which should lead to a clear rationale for the current study.
- Methods – in which you describe your Participants, Procedure, Measures, and Data Analysis; this section also should include a timeline chart in which you outline the schedule for your research (not to exceed 2 years).

- Budget – in which you describe costs associated with expenses in the following categories: Personnel, Equipment, Supplies, and Other Expenses. You may request up to \$150,000 for your research (\$75,000/year).

Send an electronic copy of the draft of your proposal two weeks before your presentation to myself and 2 classmates (to be assigned; see the course website for due dates). We will provide written feedback in 1 week, and you will have another week to revise your proposal before the final version is due on the day of your presentation. The proposal should follow these formatting guidelines:

- Single-spaced
- 1-inch margins
- 12-point, Times Roman font
- Pages numbered, bottom center
- Proofread your proposal carefully for grammar and spelling

#2) Class presentation. You will have 1 hour to present your research proposal to the class. You should plan to review the background literature in the area, leading up to the rationale for your project. This should be a comprehensive review in which you outline the magnitude of the problem you are targeting and previous attempts to address the issue. Then you should discuss the research design you have chosen to use, describing each section of your grant proposal. Ten days before you present you should e-mail me 2 relevant readings for the class, and I will post them on Ares.

### **Grading algorithms**

#### Research proposal (40 possible points)

Points	Criterion
/ 5	Abstract provide a concise summary of the issue and research design.
/ 5	Aims are specific and clearly derived from the Background that follows.
/ 10	Background provides a thorough and current review of previous research and leads logically to the aims of the current study.
/ 3	Method – Participants are chosen with clear logic, source is reasonable, and power analysis to address projected sample size is included.
/ 3	Method – Procedure is described in detail and is reasonable for answering the questions of interest.
/ 3	Method – Measures will provide information to answer the questions of interest and are justified for use with older adults.
/ 3	Method – Data analysis describes statistical approaches that will make full use of the data collected and will answer the aims of the project.

/ 3	Timeline is realistic.
/ 5	Budget is detailed and reasonable.
/ 40	TOTAL

Class presentation (20 possible points)

Points	Criterion
/ 4	Selected readings provide a useful context for the research and orient classmates to the topic.
/ 4	Presentation includes a comprehensive, concise introduction to the topic.
/ 4	Research design is presented succinctly.
/ 4	Presenter engages the class with important issues and questions.
/ 4	Presenter is well-prepared, has assembled an easy-to-follow presentation with useful visual aids.
/ 20	TOTAL