COURSE SYLLABUS

Introduction
This section of Psychology 420R: Senior Practicum: Community Projects provides you with a community-based experience in academic tutoring. Typically, you will meet with individual students at a local middle school for a few to several hours each week, depending on your personal schedule and the number of credit hours for which you enrolled. During that time you will work with the students on their seatwork or homework in an effort to assist completion of such assignments and, over time, improved understanding and performance. The subject matter should be familiar to you—mathematics, science, language arts, social studies, etc.

The classroom teacher will direct your work with the students. They may be individually assigned to you by the classroom teacher or may be part of a group the teacher asks you to work with. In the course of your experience, you may find the students inattentive, the materials inadequate, the classroom discipline lax, the teacher’s purposes unclear, the experience more one of policing rather than tutoring, etc. Should this occur, recognize that it is not unusual and that the responsibility rests on you to work within the constraints of the situation and to be resourceful in promoting improvement of the situation. If you consider it suitable to approach the teacher directly with your observations and suggestions, do so. Otherwise, please contact me to discuss the situation and possible tactics for improving it.

The most important characteristics you bring to the Academic Tutor’s role are (a) dependability, (b) a genuine interest in those you will assist, and (c) resourcefulness in fitting your tutoring to the student’s needs. Remember that, in addition to your effort to boost the student’s academic competence and confidence, you also may become a confidante. If that occurs, you should not betray the student’s trust or seek to take advantage in any way. As an Academic Tutor, you serve as instructor, coach, and model. You can make an important difference for good in more ways than one. So, to succeed, be dependable, be genuine, and be resourceful.

The learning objectives of the course are to:
(a) Provide first-hand experience in a community-based setting that aligns your knowledge of psychology with volunteer service
(b) Encourage your initiative and resourcefulness in establishing and maintaining a productive experience for those you serve
(c) Regularly reflect on your experience in order to improve it and understand it within larger contexts of life

Credit Hours and Tutoring Schedule
You will receive 1 credit hour for an average of 3 hours of tutoring work per week throughout the semester, including time spent in transit to and from the tutoring site. The times at which you provide tutoring will depend on the school’s schedule and your personal schedule. Tutoring may occur during the morning only,
throughout the school day, or after school. I will help you resolve difficulties of scheduling or other issues with the school that may arise during the semester.

If you are ever unable to keep your schedule, be sure to contact the teacher with whom you are working (or her or his designate) in order to notify the teacher of your absence. Also, be sure to report your absence in your weekly update (see below).

There is no need to make up hours you miss due to school holidays or cancellations, illness, or university-excused travel. However, if you are aware of upcoming absence with sufficient advance and are inclined to make up hours either before or after the absence, you are encouraged to do so.

The last week of tutoring will be that ending on Saturday, 19 April 2014.

Requirements
In addition to maintaining your schedule of tutoring each week, the following requirements exist:

(a) Weekly Updates
Please e-mail an update (100-300 words) to me before midnight on each Saturday beginning 13 September 2014. You should report your hours of work, briefly summarize your activities that week, emphasizing highlights (as well as lowlights, if any), and then indicate any concerns, problems, or needs that arose during the week. I will contact you subsequently about the latter in an effort to assist you in resolving them.

In the subject line of your Weekly Update, you should write your first and last name, followed by the date of the Saturday on which the week ends and the course number (for example: Hal Miller, Sept 13 2014, Psych 420R).

(b) The Tutoring Innovation Project
By mid-semester you should take stock of the specific academic needs of the students you are tutoring. During the following few weeks, you should identify one of those needs and do some background research in order to become better informed about how best to meet the need. Then you should devise your own approach to meeting the need and, after discussing that approach with the teacher and receiving her or his approval, you should implement your innovation during the remainder of the semester and observe the effects of the implementation. It will be appropriate to include the project and its progress as part of your Weekly Updates. At the end of the semester, you should author a brief report (no longer than two double-spaced pages) describing the need, your innovation, and its observed effects, and should attach your report to your End-of-Semester Reflection Essay (see below).

It is not necessary for the innovation project to assume large, formal dimensions. A small, modest innovation is quite acceptable. What is essential is that it be something new, something not already in place, something that you introduce
and implement in order to assist at least one student. It may be something that remains in the classroom or with the teacher for future use.

If you find that you are working with the same student(s) as another Academic Tutor is, you may wish to consider the prospect of producing a joint innovation project.

c) The Applications Book Review
You should select a novel or a book-length work of non-fiction in which the characters, plot, major issues or arguments, etc., are, in some way, applicable to the work that you perform for the course during the semester. **After reading the book, you should write a 2-3 page, double-spaced review that contains each of the following:**

1. A brief summary of the characters and plot or the major issues and arguments found in the book;
2. A description of the most important “lessons,” insights, or other merits of the book that are related to your role as Academic Tutor; and
3. A summary statement in which you state the importance of the book for someone who might follow you in the same or a similar tutoring role.

Your review will be evaluated for its clarity of expression, conciseness, accuracy in describing the book, insightfulness in likening the book to your Internship experience, and freedom from technical errors (grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.).

The review should contain a title page and a References page that includes the book and other works you may have referred to in your review. **It is due no later than Thursday, 11 December 2014 before midnight. It should be e-mailed to me in a Word file.** Failure to submit the review by the deadline will result in a penalty of 10% of the total score for each day it is late.

d) End-of-Semester Reflections Essay
**You should submit a 2-3 page (double-spaced) Reflections Essay on your tutoring experience at the end of the semester.** Your essay should include the following:

1. A brief description of the institution where you worked;
2. A brief description of your specific duties there;
3. A statement of what the experience has meant to you in terms of your career as a Psychology major and a possible future career;
4. A statement addressed to future Academic Tutors in which you provide three suggestions that, given your experience, would be most profitable for their success in the role; and
5. Specific suggestions for improving the Academic Tutoring program in the future.
Please e-mail your Reflections Essay in a Word file to me no later than Thursday, 11 December 2014 before midnight. Be sure to attach the report of your Innovation Project to it.

(e) Course Meetings
Attend monthly meetings with other Academic Tutors and me. These meetings will be devoted to conversation about your experiences, lessons learned, and the deeper appreciation of psychological concepts and principles that has resulted. **The meetings will be held on selected Mondays—8 September, 6 October, 3 November, and 1 December at 3 p.m. in 245 SWKT.**

The Final Grade
Your final grade will be determined by your response to each of the requirements in the following proportions:

- Weekly Updates: 20%
- The Innovation Project Report: 20%
- The Applications Book Review: 20%
- The End-of-Semester Reflection Essay: 25%
- Participation in Course Meetings: 15%

The Instructor
I am a professor of psychology, with scholarly interests in the experimental analysis of behavior, behavioral economics, evolutionary psychology, innovative educational assessment, and education reform. My office is 1074 SWKT, where I will be for consultation on Wednesdays, 1-1:50 p.m., and Thursdays, 4-4:50 p.m., except when I am out of town. Otherwise, you can contact me at 801-422-8939 or harold_miller@byu.edu. I welcome your contact.

Additional Information from the Provo School District

**Background**
The population to which the Academic Tutoring program is directed are mainly at-risk children and adolescents. Many of these youth have poor academic skills and are struggling in school. They need special tutoring assistance to help them succeed. When youth enjoy a regular, positive activity with an adult over the course of a year, they are 46% less likely to begin using drugs, 27% less likely to begin using alcohol, and 52% less likely to skip school. Youth guided by a successful role model are more likely to improve their academic performance through better decision-making skills, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging (www.charityguide.org). At-risk youth need guidance and assistance so that they can turn their lives around, be successful in school, and have a bright future.

**Rules**
Your particular school in which you tutor will have a set of rules and guidelines but, here are five general standards to follow at any of the schools.
(1) Do not take certain personal items into the facility; backpacks, purse, wallet, expensive jewelry, cell phones, address books, weapons of any kind (this includes small key chain knifes or tools and toy guns)
(2) Do not bring food for yourself or treats for the students.
(3) Be sure to dress modestly. Use the BYU honor code as a guide. No hats or clothing that could be considered gang-related should be worn.
(4) Keep information confidential. Do not question students about their judicial record or other personal information. Use your first name only when at a facility. Never give out your address or phone number.
(5) Do not deliver notes, telephone messages or maintain contact with the students once they are released from the facility.

Ethical Standards
Be patient and courteous to the students you tutor. Remember that the students are there because they need extra help in school so don’t belittle them or become easily frustrated with their work. Be a friend to the students, but don’t become too emotionally involved. Be a good example and a role model to the students but avoid religion in your conversation. Be a good listener and provide positive feedback.

Tutoring Strategies
Object lessons: Use items such as pennies, paper clips, etc., in order to make the math or reading problems more visible. Teaching using this kind of hands-on learning will increase student’s attention and understanding.
Story Problems: It is sometimes helpful to make a math problem into a story problem that may be of interest to the student. Discover what the students are interested in and tailor story problem accordingly.
Re-teaching: Encourage students to re-teach what they have learned to you or to another classmate. This can be done immediately after the lesson or after a period of time as part of a review.
Highlighting: Encourage students to highlight or underline words that they do not understand.
Create Sensory Images: Encourage students to ask themselves questions when they read; What am I picturing in my head as I read? If I were there, what would I see/hear/smell/feel? Help students make connections between the assignments and their own experiences.

Excerpts from the Reflections of Former Academic Tutors
With all of these guidelines, the idea of working in the schools as an Academic Tutor may seem overwhelming. Just remember to enjoy your time with the students. You have a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in their lives.

The following anonymous quotations are from Academic Tutors in past semesters and are used by permission:

- “This experience was very interesting and fulfilling. Like I said, it taught me the importance of individual attention. Many of the students I tutored have amazing potential and with support and love they can most definitely reach it.”
- “I went into this semester with a naïve understanding of what I was to expect. My first thought of the boys was that they were all bad, hard, locked up
criminals…. [however] Getting to know some of these boys has taught me that some people have really been dealt a hard hand…. It is important not to judge these individuals."

- “I learned a lot from watching the teachers and their interactions with the students…. It was a wonderful learning experience that I will be able to apply with my family and in my future career.”
- “I had always been blessed with a good family and good experiences at public school. I came to respect those kids for the challenges which they were facing. Also, I came to appreciate the work that the teachers and staff perform.”
- “Being a good example to them is the best gift you could give them, many of those kids are simply lacking good role models, and we can make a small difference in their lives.”
- “It was interesting to see how some of the boys still had the mentality of someone who had not yet changed their lives. I found that some of the boys did not realize that this was a place that would strengthen them and help them. However many of the boys, like (E), took full advantage of this great opportunity to rehabilitate, which was evident in how they behaved in the school setting.”

Department of Psychology Expected Student Learning Outcomes for Majors
The objectives of the department's undergraduate curriculum are closely matched to those advocated by the American Psychological Association, the discipline's primary professional body. Graduates with a B.S. degree in psychology will:

(1) Be able to demonstrate that they understand and can apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretation of results in light of previous findings.

(2) Be able to use computers and other research-related technology to competently collect, access, and manage information, communication, and other purposes.

(3) Be able to express realistic ideas about how to implement their psychological understanding, skills, and values in occupational and family-related pursuits in a variety of settings.

(4) Be able to critically reflect on the content of psychology as well as on disciplinary values in light of their knowledge of and commitment to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and to sustain personal values that are true to the gospel while maintaining their serious study of psychology.

University Policies

Honor Code Standards
In keeping with the principles of the BYU Honor Code, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. Academic honesty means, most fundamentally, that any work you present as your own must in fact be your own work and not that of another. Violations of this principle may result in a failing grade in the course and additional disciplinary action by the university.
Students are also expected to adhere to the Dress and Grooming Standards. Adherence demonstrates respect for yourself and others and ensures an effective learning and working environment. It is the university’s expectation, and my own expectation in class, that each student will abide by all Honor Code standards. Please call the Honor Code Office at 422-2847 if you have questions about those standards.

**Preventing Sexual Discrimination or Harassment**

Sexual discrimination or harassment (including student-to-student harassment) is prohibited both by the law and by Brigham Young University policy. If you feel you are being subjected to sexual discrimination or harassment, please bring your concerns to the professor. Alternatively, you may lodge a complaint with the Equal Employment Office (D-240C ASB) or with the Honor Code Office (4440).

**Students with Disabilities**

If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this course, you should get in touch with the University Accessibility Center (2170 WSC) 801-422-2767. This office can evaluate your disability and assist the professor in arranging for reasonable accommodations.

**A Final Word**

For several years I volunteered at the Slate Canyon Youth Center, where I worked with adolescent males in an advisory role. The experience with them taught me a great deal for which I am thankful, not least that there was goodness in each of them but that each struggled against difficult odds to assert that goodness in an ongoing way. Your influence as an Academic Tutor may tilt the odds more favorably in the lives of the students assigned to you. Certainly you have my continued thanks for serving in that role. I am anxious to see you succeed and ready to assist you in the interest of that success.

Hal Miller