Department Contacts

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Notes

The Department of Psychology

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Psychology...

...is the science of mental life and of the relations between mind, brain, and behavior. It involves the systematic observation and analysis of human perception, cognition, and social interaction, and includes relevant study of other species. Research in the Department focuses on several areas of psychology: perception and attention, learning and memory, judgment and decision making, development, language and communication, stereotypes and prejudice, social cognition, and social neuroscience.

The major in psychology provides a unique opportunity for students to explore and to combine different approaches to the study of mind and brain. It includes a comprehensive, but flexible, distribution of courses, along with two years of independent work. Students work closely with one or more faculty members throughout that period and eventually design and carry out an original piece of research.

We believe that no matter what aspect of psychology they pursue, our majors emerge with greater knowledge of human nature, and a better understanding of the power of empirical research.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CONCENTRATION

PREREQUISITES

Successful graded completion of:

PSY 251 - Quantitative Methods (or a pre-approved statistics course in another department; e.g., ORF 245 or ECO 202)

+ Two courses from the following:
  PSY 101 (Introduction to Psychology)
  PSY 252 (Social Psychology)
  PSY 254 (Developmental Psychology)
  PSY 255 (Cognitive Psychology)

Either:

PSY 258 (Fundamentals of Neuroscience) or NEU 200 (Functional Anatomy)

DEPARTMENTAL CONCENTRATION

Students must successfully pass at least eight courses in the department, in addition to the three prerequisite courses.

If not taken as prerequisites, students must take PSY 252, PSY 255, and either PSY 258 or NEU 200.

One of the eight departmental courses must be PSY 300 (Research Methods in Psychology), which must be completed by the end of the Junior year.

For the remaining departmental courses, the following requirements must be met:

- All must be 200-level or higher
- At least four must be 300-level or higher
- No more than two pre-approved cognate courses are permitted, which count as 300-level-and-above departmental courses

INDEPENDENT WORK

Junior Year

Junior Independent Work consists of a fall and spring Junior Paper. The primary goal of the fall JP in Psychology is to learn how to critique and synthesize the primary scientific literature. Many students also join a laboratory and gain valuable research experience during this time. A major goal of the fall JP is to learn how to read and analyze primary scientific literature, and the fall JP may take many formats. The format for the spring JP is flexible and depends on discussions between Juniors and their advisors. Most students write a research proposal, which in some cases lays the groundwork for the Senior Thesis. The goal of writing a research proposal is to learn how to read the literature, identify an interesting scientific question, and design an experiment that might address that question. In some cases, students actually perform the proposed experiments.

Senior Year

Each Psychology Senior works in close consultation with a faculty advisor to develop, carry out, and write a Senior Thesis. Students can conduct an experimental thesis, a computational thesis, or a theoretical thesis. If the Senior Thesis is an extension of the JP, then some of the background material, the design of an experiment, and in some cases even some of the data, may overlap between the two projects. Students must consult with an advisor about how much overlap is reasonable. Students are required to present the Senior Thesis to primary and secondary readers as part of the Senior Thesis Oral Exam.