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 numerous areas, including but not limited to learning and memory, perception and attention, judgment and decision making, development, language and communication, stereotypes and prejudice, social cognition, and social neuroscience.

The psychology major provides a unique opportunity for students to explore and combine different approaches to the study of mind and brain. To earn their degree, students enroll in a comprehensive but flexible distribution of courses along with two years of independent work, where they work closely with one or more faculty members and eventually design and carry out an original piece of research.

No matter which aspect of psychology they pursue, our majors are equipped with a rigorous understanding of human behavior and empirical research that prepare them for a range of possible careers and educational pathways.

For more information, please see our website at psychology.princeton.edu.
Fast Facts about the Department of Psychology

2023-2024

1893 is when the first ‘Psychology Laboratory’ was built in Nassau Hall.

29 research labs are now active in the Department and investigate a range of topics, such as how people learn to make decisions, remember information, or develop a sense of self, how prejudice impacts us, how emotions influence mental health, & much more.

31 Faculty members advise and teach within our Department, many of whom are jointly appointed in other departments such as Neuroscience or Public and International Affairs as well as Computer Science or ACEE.

18-20 unique PSY courses taught every year, with some of our newest courses examining topics in adversity, self-knowledge, sex & gender, teamwork, social neuroscience, psychotherapy, cognitive science, beliefs, and mind-machine interactions.

Psychology majors pursue various pathways after graduation! 67% go into full time employment (e.g., education, policy, advocacy, science, healthcare, or business), 19% pursue advanced degrees (e.g., masters, PhDs, MDs, JDs), & 16% explore other options.

Degree Requirements

The Department of Psychology requires graded completion (without PDF) of at least three prerequisite courses to declare the major and at least eight additional courses within the department in order to earn a degree. Students must also complete independent work during their junior and senior years.

1) PREREQUISITE COURSEWORK

PSY 251 - Quantitative Methods
(or a pre-approved statistics course in another department; e.g., ORF 245, ECO 202, SPI 200)
+
Two courses from the following list:
PSY 101 (Introduction to Psychology)
PSY 252 (Social Psychology)
PSY 254 (Developmental Psychology)
PSY 255 (Cognitive Psychology)
Either NEU 200 (Functional Neuroanatomy) or NEU 201 (Fundamentals of Neuroscience)

2) DEPARTMENTAL COURSEWORK

PSY 300 - Research Methods in Psychology
(must be completed by the end of Junior year)
+
At least four additional departmental courses that are 300-level or higher.
+
Of your remaining eight departmental courses, all must be 200-level or higher.
If not taken as prerequisites, students must take PSY 252, PSY 255, and NEU 200 or PSY 258 as part of their departmental coursework.

No more than two pre-approved cognate courses are permitted.

Degree Requirements cont.

3) INDEPENDENT WORK

Junior Year

Junior Independent Work in the Department of Psychology consists of a Fall and Spring Junior Paper (JP). Midway through each semester, students give a brief presentation showing their progress.

JPs may take many formats, which depend on discussions between students and their advisors. The primary goal of the Fall JP is for students to practice how to formulate a question and to query the literature. The primary goal of the Spring JP is to prepare students for writing a thesis by having them formulate an original idea and embody it in a paper. To achieve this, most students write a research proposal in which they learn how to read the literature, identify an interesting scientific question, and design an experiment that might address that question. In some cases, students may actually perform the proposed experiments.

Senior Year

Each Psychology Senior develops, carries out, and writes a Senior Thesis in close consultation with a faculty advisor.

Students may conduct an experimental, computational, or theoretical thesis. If the Senior Thesis is an extension of the JP, then some of the literature, experimental design, and, in some cases, even data may overlap between the two projects. Advisors will consult on 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.

a Our exact number of course offerings may vary year to year.

b Psychology graduate average rates (2018-2022) assessed via Center for Career Development's post-graduation outcome survey.