Psychology

View Psychology Department website

The general objective of the psychology major is to enhance understanding of behavior and mental processes and to examine their connections to the fields of biology and the social sciences.

This general objective is translated into specific objectives that concern the understanding of (a) scientific methodology, (b) the current state of psychological knowledge, and (c) the application of both methodology and knowledge to real-world problems and events.

The psychology major consists of five components. First, a required core of courses introduces students to the field and to communication skills within the field. This core includes required methodology courses in writing, library research, statistics, and experimental design. Second, students take a required core of content breadth courses providing students with exposure to the key sub-disciplines of psychology. Third is a set of upper-level laboratory courses that represent psychology’s close alliance with both social science and natural-science approaches to the study of behavior. Fourth, psychology majors select upper-level credit hours from a group of elective offerings. Fifth, every psychology major must complete a senior capstone experience.

Learning Outcomes

- An understanding of the scientific method, including its application and the evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. Students should be able to formulate testable research hypotheses, collect and statistically test data, interpret the results, and appropriately generalize results.
- An understanding of the diverse theories and content of psychology, including their use in description, explanation, and prediction of behavior and mental processes. Students should be able to integrate, contrast and compare, and generalize theoretical perspectives, maintaining awareness of different worldviews, methodological approaches, research, and theories on human thought, emotion, and behavior.
• The ability to use critical thinking to analyze problems related to behavior and mental processes, including the ability to evaluate the quality and credibility of information, develop sound arguments based on reasoning and evidence, and recognize, evaluate, and tolerate new ideas.

• Effective communication skills, demonstrated by the clear articulation of concepts, theories and data in psychology both in written and oral form.

• Information literacy skills, including the ability to (a) locate and access relevant sources from appropriate databases; (b) identify different types of sources, including primary versus secondary sources, empirical versus non-empirical sources, and peer-reviewed versus non peer-reviewed sources; and (c) analyze and use sources in the construction of an argument or idea.

Degree Requirements for the Major

General College Requirements
General College Requirements (see “Curriculum” section), including the following requirements to satisfy the major:
At least 48 credit hours as specified in Required Core Courses, Content At least 48 credit hours as specified in Required Core Courses, Content Breadth, Laboratory, Upper-Level Electives and Capstone below. A grade of C- or better must be received in each of the courses and a cumulative grade point average of 2.00 in courses used to satisfy the major. Courses taken for credit/no credit may not be used to satisfy requirements for the major.

Required Core Courses: 12 credit hours
• PSYC 101: Introduction to Psychology
• PSYC 301: Psychological Statistics
• PSYC 303: Writing and Research Methods in Psychology

Content Breadth Requirement (16 credit hours)
• PSYC 205: Learning and Cognition
• PSYC 230: Lifespan Development
• PSYC 235: Physiological and Sensory Psychology
• PSYC 250: Social Psychology OR PSYC 270: Personality Psychology
Laboratory Requirement (eight credit hours)
Two of the following courses:
- PSYC 320: Psychology of Learning with Laboratory
- PSYC 322: Biological Psychology with Laboratory
- PSYC 324: Cognitive Psychology with Laboratory
- PSYC 326: Perception with Laboratory
- PSYC 330: Developmental Psychology with Laboratory
- PSYC 340: Social Psychology with Laboratory
- PSYC 370: Counseling and Psychotherapy with Laboratory

Upper-level Electives (four credit hours)
One additional four credit course at the 300- or 400-level not used to fulfill any other PSYC major requirement.

Capstone Courses (eight credit hours)
Capstone Courses (eight credit hours): Every psychology major must complete a senior capstone experience. This requirement may be fulfilled in one of two ways:

St. Mary’s Project (eight credits):  
- This project may be in psychology or in another major discipline or study area. The guidelines established in the selected area apply.

Alternative Capstone Experience. (eight credits), distributed as follows:
- PSYC 490: Senior Seminar (four credits)
- An additional upper-level four-credit course, not used to satisfy any other requirements for the major, chosen from the following options:
  - PSYC 402: Advanced Research Methods and Statistics
  - PSYC 405: History and Systems of Psychology
  - PSYC 410: Service Learning
  - PSYC 474: Psychological Assessment
  - PSYC 497: Directed Research (four credits) (all four credits must be taken for graded credit during the same semester)
  - An additional laboratory course in psychology

Sequence of Study
The following sequence of courses is a typical model for fulfilling the requirements of the psychology major:
• First Year:
  PSYC 101, two content breadth courses (PSYC 205, 230, 235, 250 or 270)
• Second Year:
  PSYC 301, PSYC 303, one content breadth course (PSYC 205, 230, 235, 250 or 270)
• Third Year:
  One content breadth course (PSYC 250, 230, 235, 250 or 270), two lab courses
• Fourth Year:
  Senior capstone experience, upper-level elective

Faculty

FACULTY Aileen M. Bailey, Anne Marie Brady, Renée Peltz Dennison, Nathanial Foster, H. Anna Han, Wesley P. Jordan, Cynthia Koenig, Scott P. Mirabile, Deborah A. O’Donnell, Richard D. Platt, Jennifer J. Tickle, James Mantell, Ayse Ikizler, Elizabeth Nutt Williams (department chair)