

DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW OF PSYCSMPs

SMP COORDINATOR	Angie Draheim Office: GH125 Phone: x4290 ardraheim@smcm.edu
WEEKLY MEETINGS	<p>Tuesdays 12:00 – 1:50 p.m.</p> <p>The Psychology Department sets aside this time so that you will have the opportunity to meet with your mentor to develop, discuss, and receive important information and feedback on your SMP. The nature of these meetings will change week to week depending on where each student is in the development of his/her project. Although you and your mentor may agree upon a different regular meeting time, students are occasionally required to attend group meetings during this timeslot. It is expected that you will attend <i>all</i> group meetings so you should not plan or schedule any other classes, meetings, work schedules, etc. during this time period.</p>
GENERAL INFORMATION	Students majoring in psychology may complete 8 credits of SMP with a grade of C- or better to fulfill the senior capstone experience requirement. Students may conduct their projects within the discipline of psychology or in another discipline, including in established cross-disciplinary programs, provided they have completed sufficient required coursework in the relevant discipline(s). Students who complete their SMPs in disciplines other than psychology should be certain that they have fulfilled the upper division psychology coursework requirements.
COURSE PREREQUISITES	Submission of a Declaration of Intent form to the SMP Coordinator during the advising period prior to your first semester of PSYC493 and placement with a faculty mentor. Successful completion of PSYC203 before PSYC493 enrollment. <i>Approval of faculty mentor and department chair of the student's major(s).</i>
GUIDELINES FOR PROJECT DESIGN	<p>A St. Mary's Project is a student-initiated, coherent, eight-credit experience that results in a product relating to some domain of psychology. This project is typically completed over two semesters but can also be extended to additional semesters. Because it is a capstone experience, it must demonstrate the mastery that is ordinarily expected of a person receiving a BA degree. Specifically, your project must demonstrate (at a minimum) satisfactory performance in regard to the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Methodological Competence. The St. Mary's Project must identify an area to be explored and propose a method of inquiry appropriate for this topic. Because psychology uses a variety of methods of inquiry, substantial latitude will be allowed. For example, some students may choose a well-controlled laboratory experiment, whereas others may select a case-study approach. Paramount in judging the methodological competence of the project is that the method is an appropriate one, and that it is executed adequately.2. Knowledge of the domain. In order to conduct a new and original investigation, the student must understand the principles and theories relevant to the topic. This understanding will be reflected in the development of the theme of the project, in the completeness and clarity of the ideas presented, and in the degree of elaboration and documentation. Particularly essential is that the student be aware of the most current state of knowledge in the field, as demonstrated by the use and citation of recent sources. You will need a current APA Manual for this project.

* Your mentor may provide a supplemental syllabus with additional information, requirements and deadlines.

3. **Synthesis, analysis, integration, and reflection.** At a senior level, it is expected that students will be able to synthesize a variety of basic psychological principles, integrating them with varied sources of evidence, to derive a project rationale, an appropriate methodology, and an accurate analysis of results and conclusions. The form that these critical thinking skills will take is not narrowly defined. Students doing a project that evaluates a semester long internship in a community mental health setting on standards established in the mental health field will demonstrate these skills in quite a different form than those who must decide what statistical test to use for a given set of data. All projects must be amenable to the use of critical thinking skills.

4. **Presentation to the public.** All projects must involve a dissemination component. The ways in which this dissemination takes place will vary, depending on the nature of the project. For some St. Mary's Projects, a paper or poster presentation will be appropriate. Sometimes, presentation to the non-college public will be most appropriate, as in a workshop for teachers, parents, or human service workers, or at a national or regional conference for undergraduate research presentations. The project must also be recoverable and available beyond the student's tenure at the college.

These criteria were established when the faculty approved the St. Mary's Project requirement in 1996. The final grade on your SMP will reflect the degree to which you successfully meet *each* of these four criteria. Simply completing the project on time and meeting all assigned deadlines will not guarantee a high or even passing grade on your project.

The St. Mary's Project encourages students to apply their years of accumulated knowledge in breadth and depth to the origination and completion of meaningful, self-designed research or other appropriate scholarly work. Failure to complete this requirement in a timely and satisfactory manner will prevent or postpone graduation.

FUNDING YOUR RESEARCH

Departmental funding

Students requesting funds for their SMPs must prepare a comprehensive budget indicating all anticipated costs associated with the project. Potential categories of expense include travel (e.g. to remote data collection sites), contractual services (e.g. photocopying), supplies, equipment, postage and telephone. The budget must be approved by the mentor and the request form (available via Blackboard) submitted to me on **Oct 28 (fall493s)**. Students will have a chance to submit /resubmit budget requests on **Mar 12** (first submission date for spring493s); it is better, however, to submit earlier rather than later. This also serves as a grant application for a college grant, if needed.

As for any coursework, students are expected to bear reasonable costs associated with St. Mary's Projects. The College has determined that it is reasonable for students to be responsible for \$200 of the project expenses (based on \$100 per 4 credits). College funds are available for additional support. Submission of a budget, approved by the mentor, in excess of \$200 serves as an application of support. The department chair and I will review all applications and notify students of their awards. The average award is not expected to exceed \$200 (though it may be considerably more \$ for certain projects). **Students who do not anticipate that their project expenses will exceed \$200, and are therefore not requesting funds, do not need to submit an itemized budget.**

Students must maintain accurate records, including receipts, of project expenses. Before students may receive any reimbursement funds from a grant for their project, they must

submit a summary of their expenses (using the final expense report form available via Blackboard) and the original receipts to their mentor for review, who will forward them to the SMP coordinator. The SMP coordinator will receive final approval for all reimbursements from the department chair.

Any reasonable expense that is directly related to a St. Mary's Project is, in principle, supportable. Where possible, however, students are encouraged to conduct the project (and the research for it) in ways that do not require outside support.

Funds for conference travel

Travel grants are also available from the Psychology Department for students presenting at professional meetings. To apply for a travel grant, submit a conference intent form (available on Blackboard) to me when budget forms are due.

Outside funding

Be aware that there are other ways to obtain funding, such as applying for a Sigma Xi grant for undergraduate research. Please see your mentor for assistance in applying for outside grants.

GRADING

Students who enroll in the St. Mary's Project will ultimately receive their 8 credits by the end of their project work. A grade of IP (in progress) will be submitted in semesters prior to the completion of the eight credits of St. Mary's Project work. The mentor will assign letter grades to each semester during which a student was working on a St. Mary's Project.

Grading for the St. Mary's Project will be based on the quality of the final product (using the criteria described on pages 4-5 of this document) and on the process (observable level of investment and self-initiation in the project) used to arrive at the final product.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

All students completing an SMP are required to present the results of their projects in a public forum. There are many ways to satisfy this requirement (e.g., presenting at a regional or national conference such as EPA, presenting a Poster, PowerPoint or webpage at either Heritage Weekend or St. Mary's Project Days, presenting at a relevant venue, such as a class, public school, HSMC, museum or aquarium, or conducting a separate presentation open to the college community). Do you have a unique idea for your public presentation? If so, please share it with your mentor to verify that it would qualify. We would love to see creative ideas for your public presentation! Department chairs are ultimately responsible for making arrangements for and publicizing project presentations for the College community.