

FAQS

PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

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HOW DO I DECIDE WHICH COURSES TO TAKE?

Obviously, the requirements of the major partially determine which courses students must take. However, most psychology requirements involve selections from among several courses, rather than one specific course, and students typically have a significant number of unrestricted elective hours and considerable flexibility in course selection. Some students complete the requirements for a second major or a minor in a related field, and others use their electives to expand their background in psychology or to satisfy their curiosity about entirely different fields. Let your goals for your post-Purdue years and your general interests guide you as you select courses, and remember that your advisors and the faculty will be happy to help you.

STRIVE FOR A SOLID, BROAD FOUNDATION

As a general rule, it is wise to take a wide variety of courses rather than restricting your education to one specialized area. Remember that behavior is determined by a combination of factors including the physiology of the nervous system, level of development, learning and past experience, perception, memory and cognition, social influences, and others. To understand behavior within a specific context requires an understanding of these contributing influences.

The Area B courses represent “core” topics in psychology. Taking more of these courses than required will strengthen your psychology background. Especially important for students who hope to do graduate work in psychology, however, are the advanced-level (Area C) courses and undergraduate research experience.

BUILD SKILLS USEFUL IN A JOB SEARCH OR CAREER

Computer skills are becoming increasingly important in the workplace and in graduate school, so many students find a course in computer science (e.g., CS 11000) a useful asset. There is a growing emphasis on good quantitative skills. You might consider taking PSY 20200 or additional mathematics courses to further develop your statistics knowledge and quantitative skills.

Business-oriented courses in management, accounting (e.g., MGMT 20000), or supervision (e.g., TLI 11200) are those very relevant electives for students who hope to work in a business setting after graduation or after graduate study. Also, consider the Certificate in Entrepreneurship. Similarly, many psychology courses, especially those in social, consumer, and industrial/organizational psychology, build skills directly related to business and industry. Students who hope to establish a private practice as a psychologist should not ignore the need for basic business skills, either. A private practice is a small business, after all, and requires management, accounting, and personnel skills like most other small businesses.

BUILD A FOUNDATION FOR POST-GRADUATE PLANS

Try to take courses that may be a good background for your post-graduate plans, whether you plan on heading into the workforce or plan further education. Even if you choose to go on to law school, medical school, business, etc. there are many psychology courses that will be helpful in each of those areas.

Although graduate admissions committees look primarily at your GRE scores and GPA, the specific courses you have taken are also important. Most programs prefer that students have a strong background in certain “core” courses, regardless of the student’s intended area of specialization. In psychology, these correspond to Areas A, B, and C courses. Thus, consider taking more of these courses than are required. Research experience is also highly valued, so PSY 39000 is a “must take” course (see the section that discusses PSY 39000), no matter what area of psychology interests you. Most graduate programs also value backgrounds in laboratory sciences (especially biology and other natural sciences). In fact, Master of Social Work programs (an alternate route to a career in therapy) specifically require their applicants to have taken a human biology course. Check with your academic advisor for more information about the kinds of courses that would be most useful for the area of graduate study that interests you.

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HOW DO I DECIDE THE ORDER IN WHICH TO TAKE COURSES?

USE THE COURSE NUMBER AS A GENERAL GUIDE

Courses numbered in the 10000s and 20000s are appropriate for freshmen and sophomores. This doesn't mean they are necessarily easy—just that they are courses to consider taking during your first two years. Courses in the 30000s and 40000s have more prerequisites, are more specialized, and are more appropriate for advanced students. This doesn't mean a sophomore shouldn't take a 30000-level course or a senior shouldn't take a 20000 level course, but the numbering does give a general indication about the amount of background expected. Courses in the 50000s are "dual-level" (undergraduate/graduate) and require at least junior standing. Don't be afraid to try one of these courses. If you have concerns about what will be required, talk with the instructor.

FIRST TAKE COURSES THAT ARE PREREQUISITES FOR OTHER COURSES

PSY 12000, PSY 20100, and PSY 20300 should all be taken by end of the first semester of your junior and, preferably, by the end of your sophomore year. Note, too, that you must pass MA 15300 (or a more advanced MA course) with a grade of C- or higher before you will be allowed to take PSY 20100.

TAKE THE ADVANCED CLASS SOON AFTER TAKING ITS PREREQUISITES

For example, once you have completed MA 15300, go ahead and take PSY 20100 before your newly acquired mathematics skills have gotten rusty. Then take PSY 20300 before you've had time to forget your statistical knowledge.

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WHAT ARE PSY 390, PSY 391, PSY 392, PSY 492 AND PSY 498, AND HOW DO I REGISTER FOR THEM?

PSY 39000: RESEARCH EXPERIENCE IN PSYCHOLOGY

This is a highly recommended course for all psychology students. PSY 39000 involves assisting faculty and graduate students in their research. Student involvement can include the preparation of experiment materials, conducting experiment sessions, scoring data, or any other research-related activity. Students often will be required to read a few articles related to the research, attend lab meetings, or complete a written assignment. Based on departmental guidelines, during the fall or spring semester students are expected to work three hours per week for every credit earned. Thus, students who enroll in a three-credit PSY 39000 must work nine hours per week. During the 8-week summer session, however, students are expected to work six hours per week for every credit earned. Therefore, students who enroll in a three-credit summer PSY 39000 must work 18 hours per week. Students must complete missed hours if a project begins late, ends early, or experiences interruptions.

The experience gained in PSY 39000 can have multiple benefits:

- helps develop insight about how psychology research is conducted
- teaches research skills and provides valuable hands-on experience
- builds a variety of other skills, depending on the project (e.g., analytical, computing, or interpersonal skills)
- allows evaluation of whether research might be a desired component of a future career
- makes students more competitive applicants for graduate school in psychology and related areas
- makes students more competitive candidates for employment in various fields (e.g., marketing, pharmaceutical sales, human resources, etc.)
- creates contacts for great letters of recommendation (for jobs or graduate school) due to closer contact with a faculty member than is possible in most classroom settings

Lists of PSY 39000 opportunities are [available each semester online](#). Students must contact the faculty members with whom they hope to work and have a registration form signed by the faculty member.

Before signing up for a specific PSY 39000 position, make sure that you know what your most common duties will be and with whom you will have close contact. PSY 39000 activities vary considerably depending on the nature of the project and the person in charge. Some might involve mostly scoring data and involve little regular contact with the faculty member. Others might involve conducting experiments and meeting with the faculty member very frequently.

Either situation provides useful experience, but the more you know about your duties, the better prepared you will be. For example, if you have contact primarily with a graduate student working in the faculty member's lab, you might be able to get a letter of recommendation only from the graduate student, and that is not worth as much as the same letter from a faculty member. If you do little but score data, the kinds of things that the faculty member can include in a letter of recommendation will be more limited than if you have done a good job in a greater variety of duties. You might not care about anything other than

getting 3 hours of a good grade with no lectures or tests, but if you have other goals, make sure your particular PSY 390 will help you reach them. Faculty are encouraged to provide all this information prior to registering students. If that does not occur, do not be afraid to ask.

Students may take PSY 39000 at any time in their studies, but many begin taking PSY 39000 in their sophomore year or at the beginning of their junior year. PSY 39000 may be taken several times so that you can gain more experience. Some students choose to work with different professors each time to gain more varied experience, while others will stay in the same lab and help with the various phases of one project. You may take 6 hours for graded credit; additional hours may be taken on a Pass/No Pass basis. A PSY 39000 can be used toward the major requirements if taken for three credits and a grade and subject to the restrictions listed on the Psychology Major bingo sheet.

PSY 39100: READINGS IN PSYCHOLOGY

In this course, the student does an in-depth study of a topic under the supervision of a faculty member. The student may want to explore thoroughly a topic addressed in a previous course or in a PSY 39000 experience, or to explore one not available in regularly offered courses. The student will read extensively in the research literature on the topic, discuss these readings with the faculty member, and complete a written assignment on the readings. This course is an excellent way to develop an idea for research to be carried out as a senior research project (PSY 49800).

Six hours may be taken for graded credit, with additional hours taken on a Pass/No Pass basis. Students must contact the faculty member with whom they would like to work and have them sign a registration form obtained from an academic advisor.

PSY 39200: SPECIAL TOPICS IN PSYCHOLOGY

Faculty often “try out” new courses under the listing of PSY 39200. The specific topics offered in PSY 39200 courses vary each semester. Each specific topic will have a different title and a letter as a suffix to PSY 39200. PSY 39200 may be repeated for credit. Students normally do not need special permission to enroll, but some courses will have prerequisites. Watch the Psychology Club bulletin board on the third floor of PRCE and the web for course announcements.

PSY 49200: INTERNSHIP IN PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology internships offer students the opportunity to bolster their classroom education with experience in an applied setting. Internships involve performing work related to your area of interest in an outside organization. Rather than focusing on what you know, internships emphasize how you can use that knowledge. Credit-bearing internships also involve an academic component that is supervised by a faculty member. Internships generally last for a semester or summer. You can earn one to three credits, depending on the number of hours you work. However, full-time students are discouraged from working more than 10 hours per week during a regular semester, and no more than two credits will be awarded. All internships must involve specific responsibilities and learning objectives. Internship credit will not be given for experience that is unrelated to your education and career goals.

Psychology students are preparing for careers in a variety of areas such as counseling, education, human resources, law, management, medicine, public relations, and social services. Consequently, a wide range of internships are available. Opportunities exist at corporations, non-profit organizations, schools, hospitals, government agencies, etc. Students should select internships that are consistent with their interests and goals. Many students use their own resources to locate an appropriate internship (e.g., family, newspaper listings, etc.). Alternately, the Department of Psychological Sciences has made arrangements with numerous organizations. Details about these internships are available from the Lead Academic Advisor for Psychology, Dr. Janet Proctor.

If you are planning to attend graduate or professional school, internship experience can strengthen your application. Most programs are highly competitive, so prospective students must have credentials that will set them apart from other candidates. Combined with a strong academic record, an internship in your chosen field can provide a competitive advantage.

If you are planning to go directly into the workforce, an internship can increase your marketability. Previous work experience in your area of interest can boost your chances of finding suitable permanent employment.

To qualify for PSY 49200, students must:

- complete PSY 12000, PSY 20100, and PSY 20300
- have a graduation index of at least 2.5
- have a major index of at least 2.5.

Particular internships may impose additional requirements. Students who do not meet the requirements for PSY 49200 can still complete internships, but they are not eligible to receive Purdue credit for the experience. In most cases, students must apply for the internships in which they are interested. If you are selected for the position, you must complete an internship registration form and obtain the consent of a faculty sponsor.

For additional information about psychology internships, please contact Dr. Janet Proctor (jproctor@purdue.edu).

PSY 49800: SENIOR RESEARCH

This course allows seniors to develop an independent project which serves as a senior thesis. Although a faculty member provides guidance, students develop projects of their own. Quality research can set a student apart from other students and might lead to a publishable article. Prior to registering for PSY 49800, most students should have taken PSY 39000 (an introduction to research) and PSY 39100 (a thorough examination of a specific research topic) and will have developed a specific research idea, all under the direction of the faculty member sponsoring the PSY 49800 project. For PSY 49800 to impact applications for further education, it should be taken no later than the semester before applications are due (e.g., the fall semester of the senior year).

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WHAT IS PSY 12000 HYBRID?

Are you the kind of person that likes to take control of your time? Do you like it when you can get to know your fellow students? Do you like to learn with interactive tools rather than just lectures? Are you the kind of person that wants to get the most out of what a course in psychology has to offer?

Congratulations! This course was designed with you in mind. By the end of this course, not only will you know all about psychology (and psychology at Purdue), but you will know how to use psychology to enhance your study skills, to understand people (including your friends and relatives) and hopefully, have a better understanding of yourself.

The hybrid version of PSY12000 uses a combination of online recorded lectures combined with once-a-week recitations (e.g., meetings). While not for everyone, we think this hybrid approach is something special. The format gives you great flexibility in your schedule and provides numerous innovative ways to learn. It serves as a unique gateway to the field of psychology in general and it will give you a close-up view of what psychological researchers at Purdue are studying.

To explain: Let's imagine I was teaching an introductory course in Aviation. I don't know if you know this, but Amelia Earhart was an instructor here at Purdue. Wouldn't it be great if you could learn about the early days of flight from her? How about modern aviation safety? Wouldn't it be fantastic to learn this from Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger (the "Hero on the Hudson" pilot and also a Purdue alum)? Instead of listening to just one instructor, you could learn from one of the field's pioneers and get a modern expert's take on things.

We happen to have the modern-day equivalents of Amelia Earhart and Captain Sullenberger (for psychology) right here at Purdue--pioneering new frontiers of research and able to give you a unique perspective of what you really need to know in each of their respective areas of psychology (from sensation and perception, to learning and memory, to clinical psychology, and more).

Given the status of Purdue as one of the best research universities in the country, arguably, any one of our 40+ faculty knows more than anyone else in the world about their specific area of psychology. While we can't hear from all of our faculty members in this hybrid course, we are lucky enough to have professors who have recorded lectures about their respective areas and their passions. As an added bonus, most of these instructors teach introductory courses in these areas as well. By watching their lectures, you can get a preview of what you can expect in additional psychology courses if you choose to take them. Most importantly, you will hear about the cutting edge of research in psychology from the researchers on the cutting edge. And we think that's a great way to learn. In fact, this course could end up the most important course you ever take at Purdue.

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WHAT ARE PSYCH MAJORS EXPECTED TO LEARN?

The American Psychological Association publishes guidelines for undergraduate majors in Psychology. The [most recent guidelines](#) published in 2013 describe 5 learning goals for current Psychology majors. The 5 major goals (taken from APA's guidelines):

GOAL 1: KNOWLEDGE BASE IN PSYCHOLOGY

Students should demonstrate fundamental knowledge and comprehension of the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, historical trends, and empirical findings to discuss how psychological principles apply to behavioral problems.

GOAL 2: SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY AND CRITICAL THINKING

The skills in this domain involve the development of scientific reasoning and problem solving, including effective research methods.

GOAL 3: ETHICAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN A DIVERSE WORLD

The skills in this domain involve the development of ethically and socially responsible behaviors for professional and personal settings in a landscape that involves increasing diversity.

GOAL 4: COMMUNICATION

Students should demonstrate competence in writing and in oral and interpersonal communication skills.

GOAL 5: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The emphasis in this goal is on application of psychology-specific content and skills, effective self-reflection, project-management skills, teamwork skills, and career preparation.

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