

Career Orientation Overlay (COOL) Experimental Psychology

The COOL for Experimental Psychology emphasizes specific coursework for psychology majors who wish to study the science of normal human behavior, and the academic or scientific, rather than the applied, aspects of psychology. Advanced degree programs offered in psychology departments around the nation include experimental, developmental, social/personality, quantitative, cognitive/learning and others. (See the handout entitled Applying to the Graduate School: Areas of Specialization in Psychology, available in the Advising Center).

Experimental psychologists carry out research on basic areas of psychology (e.g., learning, memory, cognition, perception and language). Most experimental psychologists work in academic settings, but some experimental psychologists work in industrial or federal research laboratories on applied problems. (See also the COOL for Behavioral Neuroscience)

Developmental psychologists study how we develop intellectually, socially, and emotionally over the lifespan. Some developmental psychologists focus on just one period of life (e.g., childhood or aging). Developmental psychologists usually do research and teach in academic settings, but many act as consultants to daycare centers, social service agencies, etc.

Social psychologists study how our beliefs, attitudes and behaviors are affected by other persons. Some topics of interest are attitude formation and change, aggression, prejudice, interpersonal attraction, and social influence. Most social psychologists work in academic settings, but some work in federal agencies, businesses and health care settings doing applied research. (See also the Cool for Industrial Psychology and Business).

The focus of Experimental Psychology programs is on training individuals to carry out research and to teach in their specialty area. When you apply to graduate school, in most cases you will be applying for a program in a specialized area of psychology, rather than for a general psychology degree. For example, you would apply to a developmental program, a cognitive psychology program, etc. Most of the admission requirements to these programs will involve a general background in psychology, although having a solid background in your specialty area will definitely be an asset.

Your successful application to graduate school will depend on at least four things: (a) good grades, particularly in your psychology classes during your junior and senior years (3.0 overall is a minimum at many schools); (b) your letters of reference; (c) your research experience; and (d) your test scores such as the GRE (minimum requirements can vary from 500 to 650 on each of the Verbal and Quantitative portions of the exam). Note that an especially good way to get involved in research and to get to know professors who can write you letters of reference is to volunteer as a research assistant. This research experience can be taken for PSYC 494 (Independent Study) course credit. For more information about increasing your chances of being accepted into graduate school, talk to your advisor and instructors, and consult the handout entitled APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL: STRATEGIES AND TIME-LINE which is available in the Self-Advising Center in the Psychology Department.

Department Requirements

The Department of Psychology requires at least 30 credits in psychology, which must include PSYC 111 (Introduction to Psychology), PSYC 350 (Research requires successful completion of an elementary statistics course (Stat 330), and 15 credits of courses in psychology at the 400 level. See Degree Programs for Majors in Psychology located in the advising center for specific information regarding psychology requirements for 400 level courses. All of these courses are recommended to acquire a strong background in Psychology; however, this COOL suggests that you choose one of the two options.

Option 1: Cognitive/Sensation- Perception/Learning/Experimental/Cognitive Development

Take all of the following psychology courses:

250	Developmental Psychology	465	Psychobiology
440	Experimental Methods	468	Personality
460	Sensation and Perception	480	History and Systems
461	Memory and Knowledge	494	Independent Study
463	Experimental Developmental Psychology	331	Regression
464	Attention and Thinking		

Take at least five of the following:

PSYC 472	Advanced Psychopathology	PHYS 120	Fundamentals of Physics
PSYC 486	Neuropsychology	BIOL 220	Human Anatomy and Physiology
PSYC 471	Psychology of Aging	BIOL 220L	Human Anatomy and Physiology (Lab)
PSYC 489	Honors Thesis	CSCI 122	Visual Basics
PHIL 257	Traditional Logic	CSCI 212	Self-paced C++ (Programming Language)
BIOL 150	General Biology	CSCI 426	Intro to Artificial Intelligence
BIOL 126	Human Biology	MATH 103	College Algebra
CHEM 150	Principles of Chemistry I	STAT 461	Applied Regression Models
CHEM 160	Principles of Chemistry I (Lab)	STAT 463	Nonparametric Statistics

Option 2: Social Psychology/Social Developmental

Take all of the following psychology courses:

250	Developmental Psychology	468	Personality
214	Social Interaction	470	Experimental Social Psychology
440	Experimental Methods	480	History and Systems
461	Memory and Knowledge	494	Independent Study
464	Attention and Thinking	331	Regression

Plus take Stat 331 - Regression

Take at least eight of the following:

HDFS 330	Child Development	CHEM 150	Principles of Chemistry I
HDFS 450	Middle Childhood and Adolescent Development	CHEM 160	Principles of Chemistry I (Lab)
HDFS 460	Adult Development and Aging	BIOL 220	Human Anatomy and Physiology
HDFS 482	Family Dynamics in Aging	BIOL 220L	Human Anatomy and Physiology (Lab)
SOC 115	Social Problems	CSCI 122	Visual Basic
SOC 233	Sociology of Organizations & Work	CSCI 212	Self-paced C++
SOC 412	Sociology of Gender	MATH 103	College Algebra
STAT 461	Applied Regression Models	PSYC 463	Experimental Developmental Psychology
PHIL 257	Traditional Logic	PSYC 471	The Psychology of Aging
BIOL 126	Human Biology	PSYC 489	Honor Thesis

