

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:

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|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|---------------------|
| 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:

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|----------|---------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| 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:

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|-----|--------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| 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:

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|----------|---|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| 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 |

