

TEXAS STATE[®]

PSYCHOLOGY

Guide for Undergraduate Psychology Students

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Texas State University

About Psychology

Psychology is a behavioral science that focuses its attention on the behavior of people and animals. Psychologists ask the question, "Why do living organisms do the things they do?"

Many people have a very limited view of the field of psychology. They think all psychologists are primarily involved with the treatment of mental patients. Indeed, many psychologists are classified as clinical and counseling psychologists and work with people having various degrees of difficulty in dealing with their world. However, other specialties in psychology are far removed from counseling. Experimental psychologists attempt to understand the fundamental causes of behavior in people and animals and are usually found in a laboratory doing experiments. Industrial psychologists apply psychological principles in industries and organizations, primarily in selecting and placing employees, training personnel, and generally relieving problems associated with any organization of people. Human factors psychologists work with engineers to design and modify equipment to be user friendly. Educational and school psycholo-

gists apply psychology principles to improve the teaching-learning process. Social psychologists study how people influence each other. Psychometric psychologists develop various types of tests, including IQ tests and personality tests. Developmental psychologists study how living organisms change from the moment of conception until death.

Psychology is a very broad field that includes many different subfields of specialization. The American Psychological Association (APA), the professional organization of psychologists, lists 54 individual subdivisions of psychology. APA represents clinicians and counselors, the practitioners of psychology, as well as the scientists.

The American Psychological Society (APS) is primarily oriented to research and academics. The goal of all these psychologists is to advance or to apply the scientific understanding of behavior. All psychologists in all these areas need to know how to use the scientific method. Beyond this common reliance on the scientific method, however, psychology is a multi-faceted field.



Because there are so many facets to psychology, there are many decisions you will need to make concerning your course of study here at Texas State University. Therefore, the *Advising Checklist* has been prepared to assist you in planning your degree program. The checklist is to be used only as a guide. The University catalog is the final authority. Any deviations from the catalog must be approved in writing by the appropriate department chair and dean.

This information is just a brief introduction to psychology. For further details about the field and the degree at Texas State University, we encourage you to visit our website:

www.psych.txstate.edu

For career information and access to resources on graduate schools visit the website of the American Psychological Association at: www.apa.org and the website of the Association for Psychological Science at www.psychologicalscience.org

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Degree Decisions

With a major in psychology, a student can pursue 1 of 2 degrees at Texas State University, a Bachelor of Arts (BA), or a Bachelor of Science (BS). Psychology requirements are the same for either degree. The major differences between the two degrees involve science and modern language requirements. The BA degree, for example, requires sophomore level modern language (whereas the BS requires only first-year modern language). The BS degree requires a science minor. See the *Advising Checklist* in the department for the exact requirements.

Career Planning

Most psychology majors find employment after graduation in a wide range of professions in business, education, social services, government, and healthcare. A BA or BS degree does not directly prepare you for a job as a professional psychologist. If you want to work as a psychologist you should plan to go to graduate school and obtain an advanced degree (see p.3). However, these are some of the jobs for which a bachelor's degree in psychology prepares you:

- Program Director
- Human Resources
- Consultant
- Service Coordinator
- Sales Representative

A bachelor's degree indicates to a potential employer that you are able and will-

ing to learn, that you are driven to complete goals, and responsible. Large companies and state and federal agencies will train you after are hired so long as they have been assured that you are flexible, intelligent, and responsible. In addition, a degree in psychology indicates that you are interested in people and have "people-skills"—a valuable trait for jobs involving sales, personnel recruiting, and management.

Psychology is a valuable pre-professional major for several fields. Former Texas State psychology majors have received graduate degrees in medicine, theology, business, computer science, criminal justice, nursing, physical therapy, and social work, as well as in psychology.

To prepare for these other careers, you might consider pursuing one of the specialty minors available in the depart-

ment. These minors are in Forensic Psychology and Sports Psychology. Psychology majors can pursue these minors as long as courses are not "double counted". See the departmental advisor for details on obtaining these minors. Also, you should visit Career Services in the LBJ Student Center.

Careers in Psychology

If you are interested in working more directly in the field of psychology, you may want to earn a master's degree in psychology. With a master's degree you may be able to:

- Work with patients in a mental hospital
- Teach in a junior college or small college
- Be part of a research team in industry or government.
- Work in industrial psychology
- Supervise psychological technicians in schools and government agencies
- Work as a school psychologist
- Become a licensed professional counselor

If you are interested in teaching at the university level or practicing clinical psychology you will want to earn a doctorate in psychology. Members of the psychology department will be pleased to talk with you about advanced graduate training in psychology.

More career information is available in the main psychology office, UAC 253. Please feel free to make an appointment with the department chair, adviser, or faculty who teach in areas relevant to your area of interest to discuss career-related concerns. To see faculty career advising interests, visit: www.psych.txstate.edu. Also, the "Academic Advising" and "Career Advising" links on the departmental home page contain a variety of good information.

Helpful Hints

1. The psychology major includes 36 hours; 18 must be advanced hours (courses numbered 3000 and above). Students must have 9 hours of Writing Intensive (WI) courses. PSY 3402, PSY 3341, PSY 4342 or PSY 3321 (Group C), and PSY 4391 are all WI and satisfy this requirement.
2. There is a critical three-semester sequence of courses that must be started early if you are to graduate on time. Math 1312 is a prerequisite for Intro to Statistics PSY 2301 (lecture) and PSY 2101 (lab), which is a prerequisite for PSY 3402 (Research Methods). PSY 3402 is a prerequisite for Group C and PSY 4391. Therefore we strongly recommend taking Math 1312 during your freshman year, PSY 2301/2101 and PSY 3402 during your sophomore year.
3. Of the 120 hours required for graduation, 36 must be advanced (3000 or 4000). Eighteen advanced hours are required in psychology, as many as 28 of these 36 may be taken in psychology. This means that you must take at least 8 advanced hours outside your major.
4. Plan your sequence of courses ahead of time to avoid missing courses that are taught only once a year or every other year. Some ungrouped courses are taught even less often, so take advantage of them whenever they appear on the schedule.
5. For academic advising, please go to Flowers Hall or call 512-245-1852 to make an advising appointment with a Psychology Department advisor. More information can be found at <http://www.liberalarts.txstate.edu/advising/>
6. Your catalog is a contract between you and the University. Because you are bound by requirements listed in the catalog assigned to you, you should at least become familiar with the sections most relevant to your degree, major, and minor.
7. If you are seriously considering the pursuit of a doctoral degree in clinical psychology, experimental psychology, or any other area of psychology, it is advisable to take as many theory- and research-based courses as possible. Most graduate psychology departments prefer a student who has had a strong background in general experimental psychology plus mathematics and the biological and physical sciences. Suggested psychology electives include 3321, 3341, 4318, 4322, 4342, 4391, and 4395.
8. For a student wishing to pursue the doctorate, the department of psychology strongly recommends a minor in computer science, biology, biochemistry, chemistry, physics, math, philosophy, or writing.
9. The psychology faculty are eager to help you with career counseling, especially in their area of expertise. They will

refer you whenever possible to a member of the department with expertise in your area of interest. It is your responsibility to ask for help.

10. If you apply for admission to a doctoral graduate school in psychology, your chances of being accepted and given financial support depend on the following things:

Objective criteria

- A. Graduate record exam (GRE) score. Most doctoral programs have minimum GRE scores, for details, see the book *Graduate Study in Psychology*, which can be found in the main office.
- B. Grade point average. Most schools refuse to even consider students with a GPA less than 3.0. For the best schools a GPA of 3.5 to 4.0 is probably necessary. For most schools, the GPA in your major and the GPA for your last two years may be more important than your overall GPA.

Nonobjective criteria

- A. Research experience with a professor is essential. (PSY 4395 Individual Study is a way to gain it.)
- B. Letters of recommendation. (Get to know at least two psychology faculty members well!)
- C. Clinically related service experience. (PSY 4396 Internship is one way to gain it.)
- D. Extracurricular activities. (These include participation in Psychology Association and Psi Chi.)
- E. Work experience that is related to Psychology.

A listing of faculty by research area or career advising area can be found at <http://www.psych.txstate.edu/faculty/directory.html>

Faculty Mentoring

Departmental faculty are excellent mentors. Students engage in research projects with faculty, present at regional, national and international conferences, and publish their work. In recent years, students have presented their faculty co-authored work in Hawaii, Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco, Scotland, and London—just to name a few places. If you are interested in research, we encourage you to talk with the faculty, find out what they are doing and get involved!

Minors in Forensic Psychology

—Forensic is defined as, “Relating to, used in, or appropriate for courts of law.” This minor looks at forensic issues from both psychological and criminal justice perspectives. The minor is suitable for criminal justice majors or any individual wishing to pursue a background in psychology and criminal justice. The minor also would be good preparation for those individuals wishing to pursue pre-law, and for individuals considering graduate coursework in forensic psychology.

Complete the following courses in Criminal Justice:

- 1.) CJ 1310 - Intro. to Criminal Justice
- 2.) CJ 2360 – Fund. of Criminal Law
- 3.) CJ 3329 - Forensic Evidence

Complete 1 additional course:

Anthropology (ANTH 3344: Forensic Anthropology)

or

Criminal Justice (CJ 4340: Crime Theory & Victimization)

or

Sociology (SOCI 3343: Criminology).

Complete the following courses in Psychology:**

- 1.) PSY 3335: Forensic Psychology
- 2.) PSY 3331: Social Psychology
- 3.) PSY 3315 Abnormal Psychology or 3316: Personality Psychology

* = assumes that students will have taken PSY 1300 – Introduction to Psychology as part of their social science perspective hours.

** = students pursuing the minors in Forensic or Sports Psychology who are also Psychology majors cannot double count courses toward the major and the minor.

Minors in Sport Psychology

—With the growing emphasis on sports, the increased awareness of the need to exercise for overall health and wellness, and the increased aging of our population, it is imperative that we provide individuals with some expertise in understanding the relationships between psychology, sports and exercise. Although many programs are being developed at the graduate level, but few programs (outside of Exercise Science programs in Health Education and Recreation Departments) have offerings at the undergraduate level. The Sport Psychology minor supports degrees in health care, health and physical education, and exercise science. This minor offers the combination of skills these employers appear to be seeking.

Physical Education Perspective

Take both of the following:

ESS 3323: Psychosocial Exercise & Sports Science

ESS 3329: Intro. to Motor Learning (Both courses above require ESS 1310 as a prerequisite)

Elective

Choose 1 of the following:

PHIL 3326 : Philosophy of Sport **or**

SOC 3340: Sociology of Sport & Leisure or other elective approved by the Psychology Department.

Psychological Perspective

Take both of the following:

PSY 3331: Social Psychology

PSY 3336: Sports Psychology

Take 1 from each of the following groups: Group 1 = Health Psychology & Wellness (choose one of the following)**:

PSY 3350: Behavior Modification

PSY 3361: Health Psychology

Group 2 = Biological Bases of Behavior (choose one of the following)**:

PSY 3321: Sensation & Perception

PSY 4322: Brain & Behavior