

Thesis Requirements for 2010-2011

Department of Psychology

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How to Get Involved with Research

Getting involved in research is a fairly straightforward process. If you have taken a class with a professor and loved the topic (or the professor), chat with that person about how you can become involved in research ("the earlier the better," but it really is never too late to get some research experience). Don't be afraid to talk to professors -- working with you is part of their job, and you will not be the first student who has approached them!

If you are eligible for work-study assistance, you might also keep an eye open for flyers posted in Judd Hall, visit the Office of Financial Aid web site, or talk with a professor. Usually work-study positions involve a fixed number of work hours per week, and often the work schedules are so flexible that students can come into the lab and complete their work when it is convenient for them. To compete effectively for these positions, act quickly when the notices are posted and have a résumé or transcript available. Your best bet is to contact Margaret Loomer (mloomer@wesleyan.edu), if you're looking for a position or have been hired.

Writing an Honors Thesis

A thesis topic, although the subject of much worry and anticipation, is generally not something you have to think about immediately after declaring your Psychology major. The prerequisites for writing a thesis and the appropriate paperwork to be submitted to the Registrar's Office are covered in more detail later in this section.

The Psychology Department does not have a formal application process to be accepted to write a thesis -- **it's up to you to find a faculty member willing to supervise you.** During your junior year, talk with professors about your ideas and ask them whether it might be possible to work on a thesis during your senior year. Ideally, this process could start around the end of first semester junior year, although it often doesn't occur until second semester.

Many students end up writing a thesis as a result of previous research they have carried out with that professor (which is why many theses are offshoots of professor's research). Because a professor can only take on a limited number of advisees, preference tends to go to those who have had previous experience working with that professor. However, do not become discouraged if you are not already working with a professor. Even well into your second semester junior year, you can talk to professors about their areas of interest and explore the possibility of working with a professor with whom you've had little prior experience. Or, talk with your faculty advisor to brainstorm about thesis ideas.

Once you've decided that a thesis is something you want to do, talk to your advisor and other faculty members or students for advice. All in all, graduating students report that writing a thesis was among the most challenging and exciting academic experiences available to them at Wesleyan.

Achieving Departmental Honors in Psychology

The Process

- Step 1: Determine eligibility (see “Basic Requirements section below)
- Step 2: Find an advisor (see the “Advisor Requirements” section, providing specific information for each psychology professor)
- Step 3: Thesis students must also: (1) enroll in the fall (PSYC409) and spring (PSYC410) thesis tutorials; and (2) file a Statement of Intention with the department (Cathy Race) by October 1 of their senior year. This statement should include the student's name, name of the tutor, and the topic of the thesis. Honors or High Honors in psychology will be awarded on the basis of completed research presented in the thesis. A completed thesis must be handed in by a date (in mid-April) specified by Honors College. A thesis will be evaluated by a minimum of two readers jointly determined by the tutor and the student, one of whom is the tutor.

Basic Requirements

Honors Thesis in Psychology. By the beginning of their spring semester junior year, Psychology majors who have earned at least a B+ average in all psychology courses, and have earned at least a B average in all non-psychology courses, may pursue Honors in psychology by writing a thesis. Honors will be awarded only if both readers evaluate the thesis worthy of Honors.

High Honors Thesis in Psychology. In addition to the above, Psychology majors must also have met the University’s General Education requirements, in order to pursue High Honors in Psychology by writing a thesis. High Honors will be awarded only if both readers evaluate the thesis as truly exceptional, i.e., worthy of High Honors.

Calculating GPA. In order to evaluate eligibility for High Honors, grades are needed for all courses, including transfer courses; to calculate psychology GPA, only use the grades earned in your psychology classes.

University Grading System

Only letter graded courses receive a numerical value.

A+	= 98.3	C-	= 71.7
A	= 95.0	D+	= 68.3
A-	= 91.7	D	= 65.0
B+	= 88.3	D-	= 61.7
B	= 85.0	E+	= 58.3
B-	= 81.7	E	= 55.0
C+	= 78.3	E-	= 51.7
C	= 75.0	F	= 45.0

Converting Grade to Numeric Value. The grade needs to be converted to its numeric value and then multiplied by the credit value of the course. You then sum these computed values for all courses and divide it by the sum of the credits.

Example:

Eng 111, A for 1.00 credit = $95.0 \times 1.0 = 95.0$

Psyc 115, B for .5 credit = $85.00 \times .5 = 44.5$

Fren 113, B+ for 1.5 credit = $88.3 \times 1.5 = 132.45$

The sum of above calculated course value is 271.95 you divide this by the sum of credits 3.0 which give the GPA of 90.65 for the three courses.

Advisor Requirements

Listed below are the research interests (in italics) and requirements each psychology faculty has specified for students who wish to complete thesis research with the professor. Also noted is whether the professor will be accepting thesis students for 2010/11.

Professor Barth

Cognitive development

- Course with Professor Barth, minimum grade of B+
- Statistics and Methods courses pre-thesis (ideally)
- Thesis research beginning second semester junior year
- 2010/11: Accepting thesis students

Professor Dierker

Patterns of psychopathology in families, development of substance abuse and dependence, treatment of emotional and behavioral disorders in children

- Methods course with Professor Dierker OR research with Professor Dierker the summer prior to senior year
- 2010/11: Accepting thesis students

Professor Juhasz

Reading in adults, general visual cognition.

- Research with Professor Juhasz (as a volunteer, for work-study, or as an individual tutorial for credit) prior to senior year).
- 2010/11: On sabbatical. Not accepting thesis students.

Professor Kurtz

Identification and treatment of neuropsychological deficits in schizophrenia

- Statistics course (PSYC or in another department)
- Clinical neuropsychology class with Professor Kurtz
- Research with Professor Kurtz by second semester of Junior year.
- 2010/11: Planning on sabbatical: not accepting students.

Professor Morawski

History of Psychology, Social Psychology, Psychology of Gender, Science Studies, Feminist Studies

- Course with Professor Morawski
- 2010/11: On sabbatical, not accepting thesis students

Professor Patalano

Categorization, planning, decision making, neuroscience of reasoning

- Minimum grade of B+ in PSYC 220 with Professor Patalano
- Statistics and quantitative methods courses before senior year
- Research with Professor Patalano prior to senior year
- 2010/11: Accepting thesis students

Professor Plous

Prejudice and discrimination, ethical issues relating to animals and the environment, the development of mobile and web-based psychology

- Psychological Statistics
- One course with Professor Plous
- 2010/11: Accepting thesis students

Professor Rodriguez Mosquera

Culture and ethnicity; emotions; insult and devaluation

- Cultural Psychology course or Emotions seminar with Prof. Rodriguez Mosquera.
- Statistics course (in Psychology or in another department).
- Prior research with Professor Rodriguez Mosquera (for work-study, as a volunteer, or as an individual tutorial for credit).
- 2010/11: Accepting thesis students.

Professor Sanislow

Psychopathology, Personality, Clinical Neuroscience

- Psychopathology and Advance Research Methods with Professor Sanislow, both courses completed junior year or before
- Statistics Course must be completed pre-thesis
- 2010/11: May consider students in spring 2010 who enroll in my advanced research methods course.

Professor Seamon

Memory, cognitive processes, cognitive neuroscience

- Psyc/NS&B 221: Human Memory
- Research with Professor Seamon beginning sophomore or junior year (through Psyc 381 or a research tutorial)
- Planning on sabbatical: not accepting students.

Professor Shusterman

Language and conceptual development, language and thought, spatial and numerical reasoning

- Research Methods, Advanced Research Methods, a Research Tutorial, OR summer research with Professor Shusterman;
- Statistics
- Developmental Psychology, AND 1+ other courses covering content in developmental or cognitive psychology
- Contact Professor Shusterman by the end of junior year at the latest
- 2010/11: On sabbatical. Not accepting thesis students.

Professor Steele

Cultural psychology (race, class, and gender), modern myth.

- Psyc 204 and Psyc 261
- 2010/11: accepting students

Professor Stemler

Intelligence, psychometrics, educational psychology, conflict resolution

- PSYC 245 OR research with Professor Stemler for at least one semester
- 2010/11: accepting students

Professor Striegel-Moore

Etiology and treatment of eating disorders; body image concerns

- Statistics
- One course with Professor Striegel-Moore
- At least one semester research or work study experience with Professor Striegel-Moore
- 2010/11: On leave for academic years 2010 and 2011. Not accepting thesis students.