Psychology

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PSYCHOLOGY is the scientific study of brain, behavior, and
cognitive processes. At Vanderbilt, the undergraduate program
introduces students to the major areas of contemporary
psychology: clinical science, human cognition and cognitive
neuroscience, developmental psychology, neuroscience, and
social psychology. Clinical science studies human personality,
emotion, abnormal behavior, and therapeutic treatments.
Human cognition and cognitive neuroscience includes the
study of processes such as learning, remembering, perceiving
environmental objects and events, and neural mechanisms
underlying these processes. Developmental psychology examines
human development from conception through adulthood,
including cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects.
Neuroscience studies the structure and function of the brain
and how nerve cells process sensory information about the
environment, mediate decisions, and control motor actions.
Social psychology examines interpersonal and intergroup
relations and the influence of social conditions on cognitive,
emotional, and behavioral processes.
The Department of Psychology offers a general program of
study for students who desire a broad background in contemporary
psychology, a research concentration for students who
plan graduate study in psychology or related disciplines, and a
research with as well as an honors program. The department offers a wide
variety of opportunities for undergraduates to gain research
experience through active participation in faculty research projects. Such research experience is encouraged as a basic aspect of education in psychology.

**Programs of Concentration in Psychology**

**General-Program**
PSY 101
PSY 208
PSY 209 or PSY 2101 (Peabody)
- **4 3 Distribution Courses***
- **5 4-Psychology Electives**

Total hours: **30**  **36**

**Research Concentration**
PSY 101
PSY 208
PSY 209 or PSY 2101 (Peabody)
- **3 Distribution Courses***
- **2 Research Skills & Tools***
- **3 Concentration Courses****
- **1 Psychology Elective**

Total hours: **36**

**Research with Honors Program**
PSY 101
PSY 208
PSY 209 or PSY 2101 (Peabody)
- **4 3 Distribution Courses***
- **2 Concentration Courses****
- **PSY 295a and/or 295b and both PSY 296a and 296b**
- **3 Psychology Electives**

Students who only take one semester of PSY 295 will need to take an additional elective course to fulfill their **36 42** hours.

**Total hours: 36-42**

*General Program.* The General Program is designed for students who desire a broad background in contemporary psychology but do not plan graduate research training in psychology or related disciplines.

*Research Concentration Program.* The Research Concentration Program is designed to offer additional background for students whose career plans involve continued research in psychology or a related discipline. This program differs from the general program by requiring additional (a) Research Skills & Tools courses relevant to psychological research and
(b) Concentration Courses relevant to research in a specialized area of psychology. Both the Research Skills & Tools and Concentration Courses categories include many courses offered by other departments, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary psychology. Many different course options might be selected for a specific area of research concentration, depending on the student's career plans. Students should meet with their major adviser (or honors supervisor) prior to selecting courses in the Research Skills & Tools and Concentration Courses categories.

Research skills and experience are highly valued for admission to graduate training programs in psychology and other areas, and are relevant to the needs for creativity that arise in many professions. Students in both the General Program and the Research Concentration Program are strongly encouraged to obtain research skills and experience through Directed Study, in a summer internship, or as an undergraduate research assistant. Students should meet with their major adviser for advice on seeking research experience.

Research with Honors Program. The Research with Honors program is a two-year program that offers qualified majors the opportunity to conduct research projects in collaboration with faculty members. This research culminates in the writing and public presentation of a senior thesis.

The Research with Honors program offers unusual opportunities for interested and qualified students, including special seminars and individual research projects. The program should substantially aid those intending to do graduate work.

The program requires two years of honors research, and participation in the Honors Seminars, PSY 295a and/or 295b and both PSY 296a and 296b. Under special circumstances (e.g., a semester abroad or student teaching), students may enroll in only three semesters of the Honors Seminars—provided they can complete the research project by extra work during three regular semesters and/or a summer, and provided this arrangement is acceptable to the faculty mentor and to the director of the Honors Program. The program also requires two Concentration Courses. Students in the Research with Honors program must assure that their two Concentration Courses are consistent with the theme of their honors research, so the courses must be selected with the advice and consent of the faculty mentor for the honors project. Students who only take one semester of PSY 295 will need to take an additional elective course to fulfill their 36-42 hours.

Students who are majoring in psychology apply to the Honors Program at the end of their sophomore year if they have at
least a grade point average of 3.2, both overall and in psychology courses. Students must also find a faculty mentor who is willing to sponsor them in the program. Students who complete the program successfully and have a final grade point average of 3.2 or higher will receive honors or highest honors in psychology.

* Distribution Courses
(at least 3 of the following 5 courses are required)
The following courses provide a grounding in core content areas of experimental psychology.
PSY 215, 225, 231; NSC 201; PSY 1630 (Peabody)

** Electives
Any course in the Department of Psychology (A&S) or the Department of Psychology and Human Development (Peabody) that is not being used to meet another psychology requirement can be used as an elective. With the exception of PSY courses offered through Peabody, the courses listed under the various concentration areas (as specified below) that are taught in other departments may NOT be taken as elective courses. All electives counting toward the psychology major must be PSY courses, either through A&S or Peabody.

*** Research Skills & Tools
(at least 2 of the following courses are required for the Research Concentration)
The following courses aim to develop laboratory, analytical, and quantitative skills and tools relevant to specific areas of research in contemporary psychology. Students planning to attend graduate school in psychology or a related discipline are strongly encouraged to obtain additional laboratory experience through Directed Study, a summer internship, or an undergraduate research assistantship. With permission of the instructor and the College of Arts and Science, students may also take 300-level (graduate) classes dealing with research methods (e.g., PSY 304b, PSY 310, PSY316) to meet their Research Skills and Tools requirement. Only seniors with at least a B average can pursue this option. The total course load, graduate plus undergraduate courses, must not exceed 15 hours in the semester in which the graduate course is taken.
To take a graduate-level course, students must complete an Undergraduate Enrollment Request for Graduate Level Course form, signed by the student’s major adviser and the director of undergraduate studies. Students exercising this option are treated as a graduate student with regard to class requirements and grading standards.
PSY 290 (3 credit hours only); BME 258, 260, 271, 276, 277; BME/EECE 263; CS 101, 103, 201, 274; EECE 112, 116, 218; PSY
Concentration Courses provide advanced training in a contemporary interdisciplinary area of experimental psychology. Each Concentration Area requires one or two specified Distribution Courses, plus three advanced Concentration Courses. Possible Concentration Areas are listed below. Other specialized Concentration Areas may be formulated with approval of the student's major adviser or honors mentor and the director of undergraduate studies. Of the three Concentration Courses and one Elective, at least two of the four courses must be in the Department of Psychology (A&S). Students should consult with their major adviser or honors mentor in selecting specific Concentration Courses. Note that many Special Topics (280–289) and Independent Study (293) courses can be included within the Concentration Courses. Relevant Concentration Courses may be in other academic programs or other schools or colleges of the university. Arts and Science students are reminded that a bachelor's degree requires at least 102 hours of course work within the College of Arts and Science. Students with an approved second major outside the College must complete at least 90 hours of course work within the College.

Possible Concentration Areas:

Cognitive Development
Cognitive Neuroscience
Cognitive Science
Comparative and Systems Neuroscience
Psychopathology and Clinical Neuroscience
Social and Cultural Influences
Vision

Relevant Concentration Courses for Specific Areas of Research Concentration

Each set of Concentration Courses must include at least one course offered by the Department of Psychology.

Cognitive Development (required Distribution courses:
PSY 225 and PSY 1630 (Peabody))
PSY 232, 252, 282, PSY 1500, 1600, 1750, 2000, 2250, 2310, 2320 (Peabody)
Cognitive Neuroscience (required Distribution courses:
PSY 225 and NSC 201)
Comprehensive Exam
In order to graduate with a psychology major, students must take a comprehensive exam during their senior year. Students are expected to take the comprehensive exam in the fall of their senior year (students who are on leave or are studying abroad during the fall semester of their senior year should schedule to take the exam upon their return to campus). The exam is not graded, and no grade will appear on the student’s transcript. The purpose of the exam is to test the extent to which psychology majors are retaining core aspects of the psychology curriculum.

Minor in Psychology
The minor in psychology is intended for those students who want to gain an overview of the science of psychology and its methodological foundations, and to sample more advanced work in the areas of specialization within psychology at Vanderbilt.

Students are required to complete 18 hours of course work inside the department, distributed as follows:
Psychology 101       3
Psychology 208 and either 209 or PSY 2101 (Peabody)   6
Two courses from the list of Distribution Courses specified for the major  6
One additional course at the 200 level Psychology elective 3
Total hours: 18

Students may elect undergraduate seminars (Psychology 280–289) as the additional course at the 200 level, but not Directed or Independent Study (Psychology 290 and 293). Independent/Directed Study courses (293/2970 and 290/2980) may not be counted as the elective course for minors.

101 (or 115F, sections 1, 2, and 3) is prerequisite for all other psychology courses except 115F. PSY 115F – 01, 02, 03 – General Psychology, First-Year Writing Seminar – covers the same material as PSY 101 and also serves as the introductory prerequisite for all 200-level courses in psychology. Credit cannot be earned for both PSY 101 and PSY 115F – 01, 02, or 03. PSY 115F – sections 4 and higher – is a First-Year Writing Seminar on special topics in psychology. PSY 115F – section 4 and higher – does not replace PSY 101 as a prerequisite for all 200-level courses in psychology and may be taken in conjunction with PSY 101.

Note: NSC courses 201 (Neuroscience), 235 (Biological Basis of Mental Disorders), 269 (Developmental Neuroscience), 272 (Structure and Function of the Cerebral Cortex), and 274 (Neuroanatomy) count as courses in the Department of Psychology (A&S). Prior to the 2008/2009 school year, these courses had a PSY designator. The courses are equivalent and count equally toward the psychology major. See the Neuroscience course listings for descriptions of these classes.

Course descriptions begin on page 198.