



GRADUATE STUDIES

Psychology



JOIN OUR COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

Based in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at Villanova University, the Master of Science in Psychology program provides a strong foundation if you are seeking entry into doctoral programs in most subfields of psychology or if you seek a terminal master's degree to advance in your field.

PHD PREP OR BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE CAREERS

While the program is not designed to provide training for mental health care professionals, many of our graduates continue on to doctoral programs in clinical or counseling psychology. Others accept positions in the private sector as science writers, lab technicians, data analysts, marketing researchers and mental health workers.

The program enjoys a strong national reputation, and our graduates gain admission to some of the top doctoral programs, including: Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, University of California, Berkeley, University of Colorado, Johns Hopkins University, Michigan State University, New York University, Pennsylvania State University, University of Pennsylvania and Rochester University.

RESEARCH-BASED CURRICULUM

The two-year curriculum provides excellent training in research skills. Students gain expertise in the formulation of research designs and in the acquisition, analysis and interpretation of data. Laboratory courses in cognitive psychology, statistics and biological psychology are complemented by electives in many of the other subfields of psychology. In addition, students may elect to take a graduate course in a department other than psychology to round out their area of special interest, such as biology, chemistry, computer science, human organization science or applied statistics.

Students are required to complete a total of eight courses, including statistics and at least two laboratory courses, and to conduct an original piece of research under faculty supervision in the form of a thesis. The elective courses allow students the flexibility to tailor the program to their particular goals. The master's thesis is required and additional independent research is strongly encouraged. There is no comprehensive examination or foreign language requirement.

FACULTY

The Department is composed of 18 core faculty members who maintain active research laboratories in their specialties. Strong research specializations within the department are provided in behavioral and cognitive neuroscience, comparative cognition, clinical, cognitive, developmental, organizational, perception, personality and social psychology. The psychology faculty has maintained a consistently strong record for productivity and scholarly research.

Graduate students frequently co-author the research published by their mentors, thereby enhancing their graduate education and preparation for a top-quality doctoral program.

DR. REBECCA BRAND studies infants' understanding of the behaviors and mental states of other people. Recent investigations have examined the role of infant-directed teaching behaviors, as well as infants' own experiences, in the development of this understanding.

DR. MICHAEL BROWN'S research is focused on understanding basic cognitive processes by studying the behavior of nonhuman animals. Most recently, this research has centered on spatial cognition, social cognition and decision processes in rats, bees and fish.

DR. DAVID BUSH investigates gender differences in work related issues such as gender stereotyping of jobs, performance appraisal, compensation, innovation, entrepreneurship, and negotiating strategies. He also conducts research on generational effects on knowledge transfer and the effects of personality on outplacement counseling.

DR. DIEGO FERNANDEZ-DUQUE studies social cognition in healthy and clinical populations.

DR. CHARLES FOLK has been studying the nature of visual distractibility. What kinds of events “capture” attention and to what degree is such “capture” under voluntary control? The outcome of his work has important implications for applied settings such as aircraft cockpits as well as for theoretical models of selective attention.

DR. JANETTE HERBERS studies risk and resilience in child development, seeking to understand how children adapt to adverse circumstances such as trauma, poverty and homelessness, and how self-regulation skills and positive parenting can support healthy development in contexts of risk.

DR. IRENE KAN uses behavioral, neuropsychological and electrophysiological approaches to examine the cognitive architecture and neural bases of human memory. Research in her lab investigates how different memory systems complement each other, as well as the evaluation of the role of the frontal executive system in memory retrieval.

DR. DEBORAH KENDZIERSKI’S social psychology research program focuses on the links between intentions and behavior in the context of health-related behavior such as exercising and nutritious eating. She also seeks to understand the process underlying self-definition.

DR. STEVEN KRAUSS studies moral judgement, values and personality from a cross-cultural perspective. He also examines how people conceptualize social relationships across cultures. In addition, he maintains an interest in psychopathology.

DR. JOHN KURTZ studies issues and techniques related to psychological assessment and the diagnosis of mental disorders. His research is concerned with factors related to change versus stability in personality traits during adulthood and the use of informants in personality assessment.

DR. PATRICK MARKEY’S research focuses on how behavioral tendencies develop and are expressed within social relationships. These behavioral tendencies range from fairly mundane interpersonal behaviors (e.g., acting warmly during an interaction) to behaviors of real life importance (e.g., unhealthy dieting, personality judgement, sexual behaviors, interpersonal aggression after playing violent video games, etc.).

DR. MATTHEW MATELL is interested in the cognitive and neural mechanisms underlying the perception of time and sequence. Primary techniques include ensemble electrophysiological recordings, pharmacology, and lesion techniques in rats, with a current focus on the role of cortical-striatal-thalamic interactions. Computational models of timing are also being developed.

DR. BENJAMIN SACHS studies how genetic and environmental factors contribute to behavioral dysfunction using genetically engineered mice. His research combines pharmacological, behavioral and cellular/molecular techniques to examine the mechanisms leading to depression-, anxiety- and compulsivity-like behaviors and excessive drug and alcohol consumption.

DR. ERICA SLOTTER’S research interests lie at the intersection of the self and social relationships. She studies how we think about who we are as individuals in the context of close interpersonal bonds. How do our self-views change—or stay the same—as a function of the experiences we have and motivations we possess in our close relationships? Conversely, how do our self-views influence how we think, feel, and behave in our relationships?

DR. CHRISTIAN THOROUGHGOOD studies leadership, workplace diversity and the “dark” side of organizational behavior. His current work examines the role of positive psychology in improving the work experiences of marginalized groups, as well as dysfunctional social-cognitive processes in shaping employees’ job attitudes, wellbeing and behavior.

DR. THOMAS TOPPINO studies human cognitive processes and their development. His research focuses on basic mechanisms by which repetition and testing affect learning and memory and on metacognitive control of self-regulated learning. Other research concerns the relationship between sensory and cognitive processes in visual perception, with respect to the perception of ambiguous patterns.

DR. JOE TOSCANO studies how human listeners recognize speech and understand spoken language. His lab uses cognitive neuroscience techniques, computational modeling and behavioral methods to address questions about hearing, speech perception, learning and development, and to study how these processes unfold in real time during language comprehension.

DR. DEENA WEISBERG investigates children’s and adults’ scientific reasoning abilities. Her work explores how children and adults think about scientific content, why scientific reasoning is sometimes difficult, and how science fiction stories and other imaginative pursuits can bolster the development of these skills.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO APPLY:

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