AUGUSTANA UNIVERSITY
PSYCHOLOGY

Guidelines for students interested in completing PSYC 4960

PSYC 4960 Catalog Description:

Psychology majors with a Psychology GPA of 3.5 or higher may complete an independent research project under the supervision of a Psychology faculty member. To enroll in this course, students will need to complete an Independent Study proposal form (available through the registrar: http://www.augie.edu/online-forms) describing the proposed project. Interested students should begin discussing their project with an advisor a year before they plan to complete their project, and project proposals must be submitted to the Psychology Department faculty for review by October 1 (if graduating in May or summer) or March 1 (if graduating in December or January). Students should enroll in PSYC 4960 during the semester they plan to finish their project. See handout for further details.
Credits 1-4.

Prerequisite: PSYC 2062; Approval of Supervising Faculty Member; PSYC 3961 (The PSYC 3961 prerequisite may be waived if the student has obtained relevant hands-on research experience in some other context.)

Students enrolling in PSYC 4960 are expected to pursue their own, original research question that will meaningfully extend knowledge within the field of psychology. The topic and design of the proposed project should be of a quality that might reasonably be expected to meet peer review standards in the field for presentation at a professional conference or submission to a scholarly journal. Prior to approaching a faculty member about supervising a 4960 project, students should have both a research question, and a study design/plan for answering the question in mind.

Eligibility: Must be a Psychology major with a Psychology GPA of 3.5 or higher; must have completed PSYC 2062 and PSYC 3961 (PSYC 3961 may be waived with faculty member approval if the student has other hands-on research experience); must obtain approval from a supervising faculty member in the Psychology Department.

Scope of the project: Students are expected to identify projects that will result in at least a full semester of work (equivalent to at least 160 hours regardless of how many credit hours enrolled). The final paper should represent a pinnacle of achievement--it is likely to be at least 15 pages (page count for introduction, method, results and discussion) and incorporate a carefully curated list of references (generally 20+ sources). While students will enroll in PSYC 4960 during just one semester, students should plan on their project taking a full year to complete including work over the summer. Students should begin discussing their project with an advisor a calendar year before they plan to complete their project, and proposals must be submitted to the Psychology Department faculty for review by October 1 (if graduating in May or summer) or March 1 (if graduating in December or January). Students should enroll in PSYC 4960 during the semester they plan to finish their project.

Proposal process: Student meets with potential faculty mentor to discuss their idea and the qualifications for honors one full year before they hope to complete the project. Student finalizes proposal and distributes it to PSYC faculty at least 1 week before regularly scheduled department meeting in October / March (depending on intended semester of completion). Proposal needs to:

- Clearly define research question & state hypothesis
- Review some of the relevant literature (at least 10 sources; enough to support predictions/ methodological approach)
- Delineate research methods for proposed study and data collection and quantitative analysis plan

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Following PSYC department approval of the project, students seeking honors designation should form their thesis committee and get committee approval of the project. The thesis committee is made up of the faculty mentor in the PSYC department and two other faculty members–at least one of which must be from outside the PSYC department.

Grading: The grade in this course will be based on the quality of the final product, in addition to the student's ability to adhere to professional standards while conducting research. Students should take responsibility for communicating progress to their faculty advisor on a regular basis, manage time effectively, and make steady progress on the project throughout the academic year. The highest possible grade in the course (A+) will be reserved for students conducting their research with the utmost professionalism and producing ready-to-submit manuscripts. However, students working diligently and producing well-written reports on original research questions that thoroughly portray an accurate understanding of the literature in the chosen area, use and clearly describe methodology that is appropriate for the goals of the research project, and meaningfully clarify or extend knowledge within the field of psychology can expect to receive an A in the course. Final papers must earn a B+ or higher (in addition to meeting the rest of the honors requirements) to earn the honors designation.

Honors in Psychology

As stated in the Catalog, **"**A student may graduate with Honors in Psychology by: 1) earning a cumulative college grade point average of 3.0 or higher; 2) maintaining a department grade point average of 3.50 or higher; and 3) successfully completing a senior research project (see PSYC 4960 and Honors in Psychology handout for full instructions)."

Honors in Psychology: Students taking PSYC 4960 to fulfill the requirements for a departmental honors in psychology will also need to satisfy the Augustana University requirements for Departmental Honors as specified in the Undergraduate Catalog. Of particular note:

- Interested students should apply for admittance to the program through the chair of their major department one year prior to their expected date of graduation.
- A formal project proposal must be submitted to the Psychology department (see above)
- A thesis committee of at least 3 faculty members (the project advisor, one member outside of the department, and one other member) should be formed to evaluate it upon completion, and determine whether the work deserves honors distinction. This committee should be formed in consultation between the student and the project advisor.
- The paper the student produces must be presented and defended at an open meeting attended by the committee as well as at least one other faculty member of the psychology department, or at a meeting of a professional society no later than one month prior to graduation.

Defense: The completed paper should be provided to all members of the committee at least a full week before the scheduled defense date and time. The presentation of the paper should be approximately 30 minutes, followed by up to 15 minutes for general audience questions. After the question and answer session has concluded, the student and general audience members will be dismissed to allow the committee to privately discuss the grade for the honors project and whether it merits honors distinction.