SJSU Annual Program Assessment Form  
Academic Year 2015-2016

Instructions

1. Complete the attached form and submit it as an email attachment to Graduate and Undergraduate Programs (academicassessment@sjsu.edu) on or before June 1, 2016.

2. Please copy your college’s Associate Dean and Assessment Facilitator on the email submission. Assessment Facilitators are also available to provide support - please feel free to contact them with any questions or concerns.

3. Completed forms will be posted on your Program Records webpage.

Please note that this form has been updated since last year. We have made several minor changes that we believe will streamline the reporting process and increase focus on the implementation of changes based on assessment results (“Closing the Loop”). The program data elements (graduation rates, headcounts, SFR, etc.) have been dropped from this annual assessment report. This data is still available through the Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics (IEA) website and we encourage programs to examine this data on a regular basis. However, this information will only be required to be reported as part of the Program Planning process. This report is organized into three sections designed to organize your annual assessment efforts and to inform your department’s Program Planning. Here is the rationale behind each section.

Part A – The Big Picture

- This section will likely only need to be prepared once at the beginning of your assessment cycle, although it should be reviewed each year and updated as necessary. This information should be included in each annual report, even if it has not changed.

- This section lists your Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and, more importantly, how they connect with your curriculum within the program and the University Learning Goals (ULGs).

- Finally, this section presents your assessment plan for the current planning cycle in the form of a multi-year schedule (usually 5 years, updated as part of Program Planning). This schedule should indicate which PLO(s) will be assessed each year, as well as your plans for implementing changes based on assessment results, and re-assessment after changes have been given time to take effect.

Part B – What We Did This Year

- This section details your assessment efforts over the last year (AY 2015-16).

- Which PLO(s) were assessed, how was the data collected, and what do the data tell you with regard to student achievement on this PLO? What do you plan to do, if anything, to improve future achievement levels (i.e., “close the loop”)?

Part C – Keeping Track of the Changes (“Closing the loop”)

- This section is meant to keep a running record of your efforts to improve your students’ outcomes. This table should grow throughout your assessment cycle and will be an important part of your next Program Plan.

- Create a new row in the table each time you propose a change as a result of your assessment efforts. Then be sure to keep track of your change efforts in subsequent years.
Part A

1. **List of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)**
(PLOs should be appropriate to the degree and consider national disciplinary standards, if they exist. Each outcome should describe how students can demonstrate learning.)

1. **Program Learning Outcomes:**

   - **Goal 1. Knowledge Base:** Students completing the MA in Psychology program will understand the major theoretical perspectives and research methods across areas of experimental psychology, i.e., Developmental, Social, Cognitive, and Physiological.
     - **Outcome 1.1** – Understand the major theoretical perspectives and research methods across areas of experimental psychology, i.e., Developmental, Social, Cognitive, and Physiological.

   - **Goal 2. Research Methods & Scholarship** – Graduates of our program will possess an advanced level of competence in research methods, statistical techniques, and technical writing skills. Students completing the MA in Psychology program are required to complete a thesis. The thesis will...
     - **Outcome 2.1** – demonstrate creative problem-solving in the design, implementation of empirical research.
     - **Outcome 2.2** – demonstrate project management skills in the implementation of empirical research.
     - **Outcome 2.3** – demonstrate advanced competency in the statistical analysis and interpretation of empirical research findings.
     - **Outcome 2.4** – be able to communicate (oral and written) their research findings at a professional level.

   - **Goal 3. Career Enhancement** – Graduates of our program will experience career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master’s in psychology in the public or private sector. Students completing the MA in Psychology program will.
- **Outcome 3.1** – achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master’s in psychology in the public or private sector.

2. **Map of PLOs to University Learning Goals (ULGs)**

(Please indicate how your PLOs map to the University Learning Goals below by listing the PLO under each relevant ULG, or including this map in table form (see examples [here](#)). Use the link above for a full description of each ULG.) See Appendix A for further mapping.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ULG 1 – Specialized Knowledge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLO-1 (Advanced Knowledge) maps directly on to ULG-1 (Specialized Knowledge). All seminars and the thesis in the MA program are oriented toward the development of advanced, theoretical, empirical and specialized knowledge in the field of experimental psychology.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ULG 2 – Broad Integrative Knowledge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLO-2 (Research Methods and Scholarship) maps on to ULG-1 (Specialized Knowledge) and ULG-3 (Intellectual Skills). In particular, our seminars in statistics and research methods as well as the cumulating MA thesis (an original and empirical piece of science) develop both integrative knowledge (brainstorming, planning, hypothesis construction and testing, and designing, conducting, and communicating results of the study). These also foster fluency in theory, tools, technology, and graphical representation, as well as critical and creative thinking and quantitative skills. The MA thesis also fosters the development of applied knowledge in the thesis discussion section and oral defense, but also in public and private research settings post-MA training.</td>
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<tr>
<th>ULG 3 – Intellectual Skills</th>
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<tr>
<th>ULG 4 – Applied Knowledge</th>
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<tr>
<td>PLO-3 (Career Enhancement) maps on to ULG-4 (Applied Knowledge) in that our training in research and statistical skills, as well as in oral and written communication involve the ability to integrate theory and practice and to problem-solve to practical issues. Team research projects (e.g., as practiced in Psychology 220, Seminar in Research &amp; Experimental Methods) foster the ability to work productively as individuals and in groups.</td>
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<tr>
<th>ULG 5 – Social and Global Responsibilities</th>
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</table>
| The only ULG not mapped directly on to MA PLOs is ULG-5 (Social and Global Responsibilities). Portions of our program do in fact map onto ULG-5, however. For instance, the “ability to act...
“intentionally and ethically to address a global or local problem” is partially developed by the written Institutional Review Board (IRB) proposal of their research as well as in seminars (e.g., Psychology 280—General Seminar) in which ethics and scientific conduct are discussed and emphasized. Broadening these to include societal, civic, and global responsibilities is an area that need further development.

3. **Alignment – Matrix of PLOs to Courses**
(Please show in which courses the PLOs are addressed and assessed. The curriculum map should show increasing levels of proficiency and alignment of curriculum and PLOs. See examples [here](#))

   Each of our 10 core and breadth seminars in the MA program map onto the first PLO, Advanced Knowledge. At least three other seminars in the required sequence directly map onto both PLO-2 (Research Methods and Scholarship) and PLO-3 (Career Enhancement). (see Appendix B).

4. **Planning – Assessment Schedule**
(Please provide a reasonable, multi-year assessment plan that specifies when a PLO will be assessed (A), when you might plan to implement changes as a result of your assessment (I), and, if applicable, when you might reassess a given PLO (R) to gauge the impact of the change. All PLOs should be assessed at least once during each program planning cycle (usually 5 years). Add rows and columns as necessary.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLO 1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>A, I</td>
<td>R</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLO 2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>A, I</td>
<td>R</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLO 3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>A, I</td>
<td>R</td>
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5. **Student Experience**
   a. How are your PLOs and the ULGs communicated to students, e.g. websites, syllabi, promotional material, etc.?
   b. Do students have an opportunity to provide feedback regarding your PLOs and/or the assessment process? If so, please briefly elaborate.

   Every syllabus for each MA seminar (Psych200, 204, 220, 230, 235, 240, 254, 280, 299, and Stat 245) lists the PLOs and CLOs (see attached examples, Appendices C, D, and E). In addition, the MA, Research and Experimental Psychology website list the PLOs [http://www.sjsu.edu/psych/plo/index.html](http://www.sjsu.edu/psych/plo/index.html)

   The initial creation of the PLOs did not involve student feedback. However, since May of 2013 we have surveyed the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} year MA students explicitly on the extent to which they believe we are meeting our PLO goals (see 11 in Part C).
Part B

6. **Assessment Data and Results**
(Please briefly describe the data collected for this report (e.g., student papers, posters, presentations, portfolios, assignments, exams). The instruments used to evaluate student achievement (e.g., rubrics or other criteria) and actual data (e.g., assignment description or instructions) should be attached as appendices.)

Assessment data for the current report come from three sources:
- End of Year Student Survey Data: PLO Satisfaction
- Seminar Performance
- Job and Career Outcome Data

**End of Year PLO Student Survey Data (2014-2016)**
To supplement performance and outcome evidence for where we are achieving (or not) our PLO goals, we surveyed students starting in May 2013 (both 1st and 2nd year cohorts each year) and asked them the extent to which they were satisfied the MA program is achieving its stated PLO goals.

As you can see from the student feedback, overall satisfaction that we are meeting our PLOs goals is high: with means above 4.0 out of a 1-5 scale for both classes at the end of Academic Years 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 (Appendices F, G). One interesting and telling trend each year, is 2nd year students are generally more satisfied that we are meeting our PLO’s than 1st year students. This suggests, the full two years provide a better sense of our PLO goals than just the first year.

What do our PLO satisfaction results look like for the same group from year 1 and then when they move to year 2? Those data are a more important index of change since the ratings come from the same individuals over time. In Appendix H we see that only two of the six PLOs were evaluated more negatively in year 2 compared to year 1 in the incoming class of 2015 (n = 8), and that was PLO2.3 (demonstrating advanced competency in the statistical analysis and interpretation of empirical research findings) and PLO 3.1 (achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master’s in psychology in the public or private sector). This PLO clearly had the largest drop in satisfaction from Yr 1 to Yr 2 in the 2015 cohort. PLOs 2.1 and 2.2 showed the biggest improvement from Yr1 to Yr2 (demonstrate creative problem-solving in the design, implementation of empirical research). From these data, we can say that this cohort of students felt better about their research methods skills but less competent in their statistical skills in the 2nd year in the program compared to the first. They experienced no change in their competence in understanding of theoretical knowledge (PLO1.1) or their ability to communicate (oral and written) their research findings at a professional level (PLO 2.4).

Moreover, the PLO with which students are least satisfied is 3.1 – achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master’s in psychology in the public or private sector. Absolute satisfaction ratings on career or PhD placement are not bad (above 3.3 on a 5 point scale), but clearly that is the one PLO that students feel least satisfied in. Future
assessments therefore will focus on ways to improve career and PhD placement among our graduates.

Seminar Performance Data
Seminar performance directly relevant to PLO-1 (Advanced Knowledge) is assessed in every seminar that is part of the core and breadth requirements and relevant to PLO-2 (Research Methods and Scholarship) in at least three seminars (although, each seminar does elements of this with long written assignments and oral presentations; see Course-PLO matrix, Appendix B).

The General Seminar (Psy280) offers one of the best opportunities to train students on core overall mission elements as well as across all PLOs. In the Fall of 2015, assessment data were collected over a broad range of assignments: Essays, Questions and Interviews with Faculty, conducting power analyses and writing up a complete study (Intro, Method, Analytic Plan, and References) and an Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol. Moreover, students had to attend a session where former MA students who are working in research came back to talk about how the program prepared them for the careers. They also had to give an oral presentation on their proposed study and write a Statement of Intent for a PhD application. These assignments, broken down by PLO, overall percent for student performance (N = 9) was 98% for PLO 1.1, 88% for PLO 2.1, 87% for PLO 2.2, 90% for PLO 2.3, 90% for PLO 2.4, and 97% for PLO 3.1. Given this seminar is in their first semester of Graduate School, it is not surprising that students are relatively weakest in their research and empirical skills (PLO 2.1 and 2.2).

![Seminar (Psy280) Performance on PLO Assignments: Fall 2015](image)

PhD and Career Outcome Data
To assess PLO-3, we collected data on career and PhD program outcomes from the entering class years between 2000 and 2013 (the entering class of 2014 is just this semester finishing up and outcomes are
In line with our mission of preparing MA students either for a PhD program in Psychology or careers in research/teaching, we have collected as extensive data as we can over the last 15 years on percent who were admitted to PhD programs, and percent who obtained jobs in research-related careers. These outcomes are mapped in figure below. About 6 in 10 obtained a job in research and/or teaching. About 1 in 7 (15%) were accepted into PhD programs following their MA training at SJSU. The remaining 22% either left the program or we could not obtain career or educational outcome information. But the last five years (2010-2014) has seen significant improvements in the drop out rate—it’s down to 7.8% (see Appendix I).

Given the high percentage of MA students who obtain jobs in research, the MA in Research and Experimental Psychology is meeting its mission of providing professional training for research jobs in psychology. Indeed, the General Seminar (Psy280) recently began bringing MA graduates who obtained research jobs in to the seminar and having these former students talk to entering students about how the program trained them for their careers. Student feedback on this has been extremely positive.

Our concern and an area in need of improvement is the 15% median acceptance rate of our MA graduates in to PhD programs in Psychology. We would really like to see a number close to twice the current number (25%) entering into PhD programs. In service of meeting this goal, the General Seminar has begun (Fall 2013) to implement some preparation for the PhD application such as a section on writing an outstanding statement of purpose. The first year this was implemented saw a dramatic increase in PhD acceptance rate: 5 students from that one cohort were accepted into PhD programs!

7. **Analysis**

By all accounts, the MA in Research and Experimental Psychology Program does a very good job meeting its goals for PLO-1 and PLO-2, Advanced Knowledge Base and Research Methods and Scholarship respectively. We see this both from student perceptions, seminar performance.

PLO-3 (Career Enhancement) continues to be to portion of the program that needs attention and focused energy. Fifteen percent of our graduating students enter PhD programs and 58% obtain research or teaching jobs. Those are not bad numbers, but they could be improved.

8. **Proposed changes and goals (if any)**

(Given your findings, please list the proposed changes and goals for the next academic year and beyond – that is, how will you “close the loop”?)

As was mentioned in the 2014 and 2015 MA Assessment Reports, our primary focus on development and change in the program will be on providing more direct enhancement of outcomes (PLO-3) once students finish our program, that is on the two outcomes listed in our mission statement:

- To ultimately earn a doctorate in psychology - the coursework and experience obtained in the Psychology Program is designed to enhance students' credentials when applying to highly competitive doctoral programs.
• To succeed in business, industry and or a research setting - our program's emphasis on the mastery of statistical and methodological procedures, research experience, and critical thinking produces graduates that are well suited for many careers in business, government, and/or research settings.

Due to the number of graduating students who do find jobs in private and public sector research settings, our program could improve its career placement activities. Just as we did with PhD applications and added a statement of purpose writing exercise in Psychology 280 (General Seminar), we have added a segment on job applications and job seeking strategies in that seminar.

In addition, although the drop out rate has improved significantly over the past 5 years the overall satisfaction with career preparation is still relatively high (PLO 3.1). Therefore, it behooves the program to assess ways in which the admission’s’ process can nevertheless be improved and additional career preparation tasks should be developed in seminars. One solution would be to do a systematic analysis of how predictive application ratings and rankings are of course and career outcomes. That is, what are the strongest and weakest predictors in the application ratings of actual graduate school performance? Are letters of recommendation, undergraduate GPA, GRE or faculty ratings of academic preparedness the best predictor of performance in the program and of graduation? Of being accepted to a PhD program? Of obtaining a research job? Data from application ratings and the current outcome data could be used in a logistic regression analysis (yes/no) on these outcomes. Results of such an analysis would then inform any changes we might make in weighing criteria during the selection process. Furthermore, we could conduct a survey of PhD programs to examine the qualities of students who do versus do not get accepted and then determine whether our MA Program could develop students better in the areas that are negatively affecting their acceptance into PhD programs.

Career preparation has been recently increased in Psych 280 (General Seminar) by having former MA students who are in research careers come in and talk to students for 1 hour about how the SJSU program prepared them or didn’t for their careers. Students really enjoy these sessions and rate it highly, but nevertheless feel the program could do better to prepare them for jobs and/or PhD programs. More seminars should attempt to incorporate aspects of career enhancement.

Three major positive changes have taken place in the MA program over the last 3–5 years due to assessment recommendations and institutional changes. First, we have dropped the years to completion time from 4.11 years for the years 2000 to 2009. For example, once continuous enrollment was implemented (2010) that time dropped to 2.37 years—more than a 1.5 year decline! Second, and related to the graduation time, the program has seen a noticeable decline in the number of drop-outs. For example, between 2000 and 2009 the average annual drop-out rate per cohort was 30%. Between 2010 and 2014 that had dropped significantly to 7.8%! Third, as a result of student feedback about their relative dissatisfaction with the PhD preparation, we implemented more PhD prep (Appendix J) in the General Seminar in 2013 and that cohort had 5 students of 14 accepted into PhD programs—more than the previous 5 years combined. The schools they were accepted to were Iowa State, Old Dominion University, University of Michigan, UC Riverside and UC Santa Cruz.
**Part C**

(This table should be reviewed and updated each year, ultimately providing a cycle-long record of your efforts to improve student outcomes as a result of your assessment efforts. Each row should represent a single proposed change or goal. Each proposed change should be reviewed and updated yearly so as to create a record of your department’s efforts. Please add rows to the table as needed.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Changes and Goals</th>
<th>Status Update</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The PLO with which students are least satisfied is 3.1 – achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master’s in psychology in the public or private sector. Absolute satisfaction ratings on career or PhD placement are not bad (above 3.3 on a 5 point scale), but clearly that is the one PLO that students feel least satisfied in. Future assessments therefore will focus on ways to improve career and PhD placement among our graduates.</td>
<td>We added a segment to the curriculum in the General Seminar (Psy280) where we now have former MA students talk in the seminar about their current careers in research and how the MA Program in Psychology prepared them for it and how it did not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About 1 in 7 (15%) students were accepted into PhD programs following their MA training at SJSU. In 2013 we added a segment to the General Seminar (Psy280) where they learn to perfect writing Statements of Intent for PhD programs. Our goal is to move closer to 25% acceptance rates into PhD programs.</td>
<td>The first cohort that received this Statement of Intent training resulted in 5 students being accepted into national PhD programs</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### M.A. Research & Experimental Psychology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ULO 1 Specialized Knowledge: Depth of knowledge required for degree, as identified by its program learning outcomes.</th>
<th>ULO 2 Broad Integrative Knowledge: A mastery in each step of an investigative, creative or practical project (e.g., brainstorming, planning, formulating hypotheses or complex questions, designing, creating, completing, and communicating), an understanding of the implications of results or findings from a particular work in a societal context (e.g., social or economic implications of a scientific finding).</th>
<th>ULO 3 Intellectual Skills: a. Fluency in the use of specific theories, tools, technology and graphical representation. b. Skills and abilities necessary for life-long learning: critical and creative thinking, effective communication, conscientious information gathering and processing, mastery of quantitative methodologies, and the ability to engage effectively in collaborative activities.</th>
<th>ULO 4 Applied Knowledge: a. The ability to integrate theory, practice, and problem-solving to address practical issues. b. The ability to apply their knowledge and skills to new settings or in addressing complex problems. c. The ability to work productively as individuals and in groups.</th>
<th>ULO 5 Social &amp; Global Responsibilities: a. The ability to act intentionally and ethically to address a global or local problem in an informed manner with a multicultural and historical perspective and a clear understanding of societal and civic responsibilities. b. Diverse and global perspectives through engagement with the multidimensional SSU community.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M.A. Research &amp; Experimental Psychology</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLO 1. Advanced Knowledge 1.1 Students completing the MA in Psychology program will understand the major theoretical perspectives and research methods across areas of experimental psychology, i.e., Developmental, Social, Cognitive, and Physiological.</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLO 2. Research Methods &amp; Scholarship 2.1 Creative problem-solving in the design, implementation of empirical research.</td>
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<td>PLO 3. Career Enhancement 3.1 Students completing the MA in Psychology program will achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master’s in psychology in the public or private sector.</td>
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<td>Students completing the MA in Psychology program are required to complete a thesis. The thesis will demonstrate project management skills in the implementation of empirical research. 2.3 Demonstrate advanced competency in the statistical analysis and interpretation of empirical research findings. 2.4 Be able to communicate (oral and written) their research findings at a professional level.</td>
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(see Attachment for original excel file)
### Appendix B

(see Attachment for original excel file)

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<td>PLO 2: Research Methods &amp; Scholarship 2.1 Creative problem-solving in the design, implementation of empirical research. 2.2 Demonstrate project management skills in the implementation of empirical research. 2.3 Demonstrate advanced competency in the statistical analysis and interpretation of empirical research findings. 2.4 Be able to communicate (oral and written) their research findings at a professional level.</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>PLO 3: Career Enhancement 3.1 Students completing the MA in Psychology program will achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master's in psychology in the public or private sector.</td>
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San José State University
College of Social Sciences/Psychology Department
PSYC 204 (Seminar in Developmental Psychology)
Section 01

Fall 2015

Instructor: Dr. Mildred Alvarez
Office Location: DMH 323
Telephone: (408) 924-5640
Email: mildred.alvarez@sjsu.edu

- Please write PSY 204 on the subject line of your email
- Please note that I do not regularly check email on evenings or weekends. While I try to check email regularly during the day, please allow 1 business day for a response.

Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:30-5:45pm & Thursdays 12:30-1:15pm and by appointment

Class Days/Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:30-11:45am
Classroom: DMH 353
Prerequisites: PSYC 102 (or an equivalent undergraduate course in developmental (child) psychology)

Faculty Web Page
Course materials such as the syllabus or other handouts can be found on my faculty web page at http://www.sjsu.edu/people/mildred.alvarez/courses/psyc204/index.html

[I will announce in class if course handouts are available on this website]

Course Description
SJSU Course Catalog Description: “An examination of significant theories, perspectives, and research in developmental psychology. Prerequisite, PSYC 102 (or equivalent).”
Specific Course Description: The overall goal of this course is to provide a graduate-level seminar of the field of developmental psychology so that students will acquire a broad understanding of the major theoretical and research issues in the field. Several broad areas of human development will be examined in the course, including cognitive, social-emotional, and social cognitive aspects of psychological development. Students will work to develop a deep understanding in at least one specific, narrow area of developmental psychology.

Learning Outcomes and Course Goals
Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

CLO1: describe the major claims of dominant theoretical positions within developmental psychology.

CLO2: describe major points of theoretical disagreement and controversy within developmental psychology.

CLO3: describe the strengths and weaknesses of various research methods used to investigate development.

CLO4: describe current empirical knowledge about specific developmental phenomena within such areas as cognition, language, social, and personality development; appreciate the role of certain factors (e.g., culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender) on the process of development in the areas of empirical study.

CLO5: demonstrate deep understanding of the theoretical and empirical issues within a specific, narrow area of current research in developmental psychology.

Course Learning Outcomes will be met through class activities (weekly readings, preparation of comments/questions, class discussions), essays, a term paper, and final exam.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
MA Program Goals and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs):

1. KNOWLEDGE BASE
Students completing the MA in Psychology program will understand the major theoretical perspectives and research methods across areas of experimental psychology, i.e., Developmental, Social, Cognitive, and Physiological.

2. RESEARCH SKILLS
Graduates of our program will possess an advanced level of competence in research methods, statistical techniques, and technical writing skills.

3. CAREER ENHANCEMENT
Students completing the MA in Psychology program will achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master’s in psychology in the public or private sector.
San José State University
Department of Psychology

PSYC 256 – Seminar in Perception (Graduate)
Fall 2015 Course Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Cary S. Feria
Office Location: DMH (Dudley Moorhead Hall), Room 312
Telephone: (408) 924-5620
Email: cary.feria@sjsu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 11:45am -12:10pm, 2:45-3:10pm; Thursday 11:45am -12:10pm, 2:45-3:10pm
You are welcome to schedule an appointment with me for a different time, if you are unable to make these times.
Class Days/Time: Tuesday, Thursday 10:30-11:45am
Classroom: DMH 356

Course Description
SJŠU Course Catalog Description: Selected issues in visual sensation and perception. Topics include the perception of color, form, depth and motion. Emphasis on the relationship of perception to sensory physiology. Prerequisite: PSYC 158 (or equivalent).

Specific Course Description: This course is intended to provide students with a graduate-level overview of perception research, with a focus on the sense of vision. We will cover the biology of the eye and brain that makes perceptual processing possible, and examine the relationship between the physical world and our perceptual experiences. Students will read and critically evaluate journal articles reporting research studies. Class meetings will include lectures and discussions, so student participation is an important component of the class. Finally, students will compose an original research proposal. The course will provide basic broad knowledge of perception, as well as in-depth examination and critical analysis of specific topics within perception.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives
Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

CLO1 – know the biological parts of the visual system, and the functions of those parts.
CLO2 – understand how our senses and perceptual processes work, and what factors affect our perceptions.
CLO3 – understand the experimental methods that are used to study sensation and perception.
CLO4 – critically evaluate research studies.
CLO5 – discuss research orally with colleagues.
CLO6 – synthesize several research studies and draw conclusions, in written format.
CLO7 – understand the applications of perception research (to disorders, human factors, etc.).
Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Goal 1. Advanced Knowledge – Graduates of our program will have advanced understanding of the major theoretical perspectives in psychology. Students completing the MA in Psychology program will...

Outcome 1.1 – Understand the major theoretical perspectives and research methods across areas of experimental psychology, i.e., Developmental, Social, Cognitive, and Physiological.

Goal 2. Research Methods & Scholarship – Graduates of our program will possess an advanced level of competence in research methods, statistical techniques, and technical writing skills. Students completing the MA in Psychology program are required to complete a thesis. The thesis will...

Outcome 2.1 – demonstrate creative problem-solving in the design, implementation of empirical research.
Outcome 2.2 – demonstrate project management skills in the implementation of empirical research.
Outcome 2.3 – demonstrate advanced competency in the statistical analysis and interpretation of empirical research findings.
Outcome 2.4 – be able to communicate (oral and written) their research findings at a professional level.

Goal 3. Career Enhancement – Graduates of our program will experience career enhancement resulting from the receipt of a master’s degree in psychology. Students completing the MA in Psychology program will...

Outcome 3.1 – achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master’s in psychology in the public or private sector

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

Other Readings
Journal article readings for the course will be made available on the course’s Canvas website.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Exams:
There will be 2 exams (one midterm and a final). Exams will cover material from lecture and readings. (aligned with CLO 1, 2, 3, 7; PLO 1.1)

Research Proposal:
Each student will individually write a research proposal describing an original experiment examining a particular issue within the field of perception. This assignment is intended to provide you with the opportunity to explore a particular topic of interest to you in greater depth. The proposal should be a maximum of 10 pages long (double-spaced), and have at least 10 journal article references. Further information on the proposals will be provided later.

To facilitate timely progress, the progression of your proposal will be divided into 5 Proposal Steps. The timeline on page 7 of this syllabus gives the due dates for each step. You will lose 10% of the point value of the proposal for each day it is late. (aligned with CLO 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; PLO 1.1)

Step 1: Submit 2 possible research topics
Step 2: Submit summaries of 3 articles that you have read as background for your proposal
Step 3: Submit a brief abstract describing your final research topic
Step 4: Submit your completed research proposal
Step 5: Give a brief oral presentation of your proposal to the class
San José State University  
Department of Psychology  
PSYC 230, Seminar in Physiological Psychology, Spring 2016  

Instructor: Valerie Carr  
Office Location: Dudley Moorhead Hall (DMH), Rm 318  
Telephone: (408) 924-5630  
Email: valerie.carr@sjsu.edu  
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs, 4:30-5:30pm, and by appointment  
Class Days/Time: Tues/Thurs, 9:00-10:15am  
Classroom: DMH 347  
Prerequisites: PSYC 30 equivalent  

Course Description  
The goal of this course is to help you build a strong theoretical and methodological foundation for understanding the nervous system. The field of neuroscience is incredibly extensive and interdisciplinary, and as such we will explore the nervous system through a variety of approaches—neuroanatomy, neuropharmacology, neurophysiology, and neuropsychology. Basic research will be discussed in lectures and in student-led discussions of recent scientific findings. Given that the function of the nervous system is never as conspicuous and astonishing as when it fails us, we will also focus on dysfunction of the nervous system and advances in treating disorders of the nervous system.  

Course Format  
This is a graduate seminar, and as such, student presentations and group discussions will comprise the majority of the course. That said, several lectures will be provided, particularly early in the course, to ensure basic understanding of assigned topics prior to discussion. Participation is essential for optimal performance in the course. Keeping pace with the reading schedule and being proactive about seeking help are similarly important in achieving a successful outcome. Please ask questions when you don’t understand information in lecture, in the readings, or during discussions -- asking questions and offering ideas is welcomed and encouraged!  

Canvas  
Course materials such as the syllabus, lectures slides, assignment instructions, readings, etc, can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website at http://sjsu.instructure.com. You are responsible for regularly checking Canvas to learn of any updates.
Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- **Content goals**
  - CLO1: Describe the major concepts related to basic neuroanatomy, neurophysiology and psychopharmacology.
  - CLO2: Describe the major transduction mechanisms, neuroanatomical pathways and theoretical perspectives associated with sensory systems, motor systems, emotional systems, language, and learning processes.
  - CLO3: Describe methodological approaches and associated findings used in neuroscience.
  - CLO4: Describe dysfunction of the nervous system and its association with various mental health issues.
  - Content goals will be assessed via three quizzes.

- **Critical thinking goals**
  - CLO5: Discuss how knowledge of neuroscience can be used to interpret a wide range of behavioral phenomena, including your own.
  - Critical thinking goals will be assessed with quizzes, reaction papers, and a final project.

- **Communication goals**
  - CLO6: Present and discuss empirical findings from the scientific literature concerning topics relevant to the course.
  - CLO7: Given a topic of your choosing related to neuroscience, review the relevant literature and propose a series of experiments that will further our knowledge of said topic.
  - Communication goals will be assessed via student-led discussions of empirical work and a final project with both oral and written components.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)
Upon successful completion of the psychology major requirements, students will be able to:

- **Knowledge Base**
  - Students completing the MA in Psychology program will understand the major theoretical perspectives and research methods across areas of experimental psychology, i.e., Developmental, Social, Cognitive, and Physiological.
    - PLO1: Understand the major theoretical perspectives and research methods across areas of experimental psychology, i.e., Developmental, Social, Cognitive, and Physiological.

- **Research Methods and Scholarship**
  - Graduates of our program will possess an advanced level of competence in research methods, statistical techniques, and technical writing skills. Students completing the MA in Psychology program are required to complete a thesis. The thesis will:
    - PLO2.1: Demonstrate creative problem-solving in the design, implementation of empirical research.
    - PLO2.2: Demonstrate project management skills in the implementation of empirical research.
    - PLO2.3: Demonstrate advanced competency in the statistical analysis and interpretation of empirical research findings.
    - PLO2.4: Be able to communicate (oral and written) their research findings at a professional level.

- **Career Enhancement**
  - Graduates of our program will experience career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master’s in psychology in the public or private sector. Students completing the MA in Psychology program will:
  - PLO3: achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master’s in psychology in the public or private sector.
Appendix F

MA Experimental Psychology: Student PLO Satisfaction 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLO Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Understand the major theoretical perspectives and research methods across areas of experimental psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Demonstrate creative problem-solving in the design, implementation of empirical research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Demonstrate project management skills in the implementation of empirical research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Demonstrate advanced competency in the statistical analysis and interpretation of empirical research findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Be able to communicate (oral and written) their research findings at a professional level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master's in psychology in the public or private sector.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix G

#### MA Experimental Psychology: Student Satisfaction Survey PLOs 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLO Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Understand the major theoretical perspectives and research methods across areas of experimental psychology</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>Demonstrate creative problem-solving in the design, implementation of empirical research</td>
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<td>Demonstrate project management skills in the implementation of empirical research</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.3</td>
<td>Demonstrate advanced competency in the statistical analysis and interpretation of empirical research findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Be able to communicate (oral and written) their research findings at a professional level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Achieve career advancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master's in psychology in the public or private sector</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

PLO Changes YR1 to YR2: MA Incoming Class 2015

Change Yr1 to Yr2

-0.8 -0.6 -0.4 -0.2 0 0.2 0.4 0.6

PLO1.1  PLO2.1  PLO2.2  PLO2.3  PLO2.4  PLO3.1

Yr1 to Yr2
Appendix J

Tips for Writing: General Seminar (Psy280)

Statement of Purpose for PhD Applications

Gregory J. Feist, Oct 2013 (and again 2014 and 2015)

Advice Notes

- Start a conversation they will want to continue
- You are creating a selectively engaging but factual version of yourself (by what you choose to highlight)
- Don’t get into personal matters unless it is directly relevant to your proposed field of study

Outline structure for next draft:

1. Identify what I want to study
2. Explain why it matters (scientific value, social good)
3. Explain what I think/suspect (critical analysis)
4. Describe what I will do (very rough sketch of research plan)
5. Connect to the specific institution

Read 2-3 recent articles by proposed faculty members

Tie your interests in with theirs but don’t be gratuitous and obvious

Fit is VERY important and can make up for quantitative shortcomings (e.g., GRE, GPA)

Helpful Links

1. Here is a detailed page with tips for writing a successful application statement. Here is their general description:

   http://www.essayedge.com/graduate/essayadvice/course/

2. This one is geared toward philosophy students, but still has very useful advice.

Part V: Statement of Purpose

I've never read a first draft of a statement of purpose (also called a personal statement) that was any good. These things are hard to write, so give yourself plenty of time and seek the feedback of at least two of your letter writers. Plan to rewrite from scratch at least once.

It's hard to know even what a "statement of purpose" is. Your purpose is to go to graduate school, get a Ph.D., and become a professor. Duh! Are you supposed to try to convince the committee that you want to become a professor more than the next guy? That philosophy is written in your genes? That you have some profound vision for the transformation of philosophy or philosophy education?

Some Things Not to Do

Don't let someone in business tell you how to write a statement of purpose. The kind of sales pitch that results will rub professional philosophers the wrong way. Indeed, bad statements of purpose can go wrong in many ways. For example:

Corny: "Ever since I was eight, I've pondered the deep questions of life."

Brown-nosed: "In my opinion, U.C. Riverside is the best philosophy department in the country." (Shh! Don't let out the secret!)

Unrealistic or arrogant: "I plan eventually to teach philosophy at a top ten philosophy department." (Do you already know that you'll be a more eminent philosopher than the people on your admissions committee?)

Self-important: "I will attempt to revive American pragmatism."

Ignorant: "U.C. Riverside suits my interests especially well because of its strengths in the philosophy of artificial intelligence." (No one here works on AI.)

Self-promoting: "I have always been at the top of my classes and active in class discussions."

Obvious (the least of these sins): "I hope to become a philosophy professor and teach philosophy."

A more subtle way in which statements of purpose can go wrong is in endorsing a particular substantive philosophical position. You are probably not far enough in your philosophical education to justifiably feel confident that you know enough about some particular philosophical issue that your mind is immune to change on it. Thus, saying things like "I would like to defend Davidson's view that genuine belief is limited to language-speaking creatures" comes off as a little bit close-minded and if not exactly arrogant at least not as charmingly humble as you might like. Similarly, "I showed in my honors thesis that Davidson's view...". If only, in philosophy, honors theses ever really showed anything! Much better: "My central interests are philosophy of mind and philosophy of language. I am particularly interested in the intersection of the two, for example in Davidson's argument that only language-speaking creatures can have beliefs in the full and proper sense of 'belief'."

Don't tout your accomplishments. Let your letter writers do that. It comes off so much better! (Make sure, in advance, that your letter writers know what your accomplishments are. See my discussion of letters in Part III.)

Don't tell the story of how you came to be interested in philosophy. It's not really relevant.

What To Write

So how do you fill up that awful, blank-looking page? With a cool, professional description of your areas of interest. If you have, say, three main areas of interest, devote one short paragraph to each of them -- a few sentences describing what questions or subareas within that larger area you find particularly intriguing or have already thought and written about. For example:
I took a two-term independent study course with Prof. Hoffman on Descartes' theory of the passions and its connection to freedom of the will. I anticipate that the history of modern philosophy will continue to be a central interest of mine, especially early modern philosophers' conceptions of the mind. For example, how is Hume's theory of the passions similar to and different from Descartes'? What is the relationship between mentality and personhood for Locke, Hume, and other philosophers of the era? To what extent was Malebranche's occasionalism about causation a development of views already implicit in Descartes?

A statement of this sort tells the committee two things. First, it tells them that you are knowledgeable about the areas of philosophy you plan to study -- not every undergraduate knows about Hume's theory of the passions and Malebranche's occasionalism! -- and it does so without risk of sounding arrogant or close-minded by making pronouncements about what philosophical views are right or wrong. And second, it gives the committee a sense of whether you would be a good fit for the department. If no one in the department teaches the history of modern philosophy (unlikely, actually, but if my example were different the issue could more plausibly arise) or if the people who do teach early modern really focus only on moral and political philosophy (possible), you won't seem like a good match. On the other hand, if the department has specialist(s) in your area(s) of interest, being a "good fit" can boost the likelihood of acceptance.

*Explaining Weaknesses in Your File*

Although hopefully this won't be necessary, a statement of purpose can also be an opportunity to explain weaknesses or oddities in your file -- though letter writers can also do this, often more credibly. For example, if one quarter you did badly because your health was poor, you can mention that fact. If you changed undergraduate institutions (not necessarily a weakness if the second school is the more prestigious), you can briefly explain why. If you don't have a letter from your thesis advisor because he died, you can point that out.

*Tailoring to Specific Schools*

It's not necessary, but you can tailor your applications to individual schools. I'm not sure I'd recommend changing your stated areas of interest to suit the schools, though I see how that might be strategic. (If you change them too much, however, there might be some discord between your statement of purpose and the letters of recommendation in your file.) If there is some particular reason you find a school attractive, there's no harm in mentioning that in a final paragraph. For example, you might mention 2-3 professors whose work especially interests you. (But if you mischaracterize them or they don't match your areas of stated interest, this can backfire, so be careful.)

Some people mention personal reasons for wanting to be in a particular geographical area (near family, etc.). Although this can be good because it can make it seem more likely that you would accept an offer of admission, I'd avoid it since graduating Ph.D.'s generally need to be flexible about location and it
might be perceived as indicating that a career in philosophy is not your first priority.

*On the bright side:* Most statements of purpose are flawed in one or more of the ways described above. Committees are used to it and generally don't hold it much against the applicant. Though you can shoot yourself in the foot by coming across as *particularly* arrogant or poetical or uninformed, this is the one part of the application where standards are low. Philosophers are not, as a rule, especially talented at self-presentation! (I include myself.) The main thing committees want to see is a match between (most of) your areas of interest and what they can teach.

For further advice, see [this discussion](http://www.uni.edu/~gotera/gradapp/stmtpurpose.htm) on Leiter Reports -- particularly for a discussion between the difference between U.S. and U.K. statements of purpose.

3. English Programs but still helpful

   [http://www.uni.edu/~gotera/gradapp/stmtpurpose.htm](http://www.uni.edu/~gotera/gradapp/stmtpurpose.htm)

4. Psychology

   [http://www.psychology.uga.edu/undergraduate/gradschool.php](http://www.psychology.uga.edu/undergraduate/gradschool.php)