

Beyond Traditional Courses: Internships, Fieldwork, & Independent Study

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An education is much more than taking courses. The Psychology Department offers a number of opportunities for students to get hands-on experience and explore career paths in the field of psychology. Internships, fieldwork and independent study experiences are especially valuable for students who are considering graduate studies in psychology.

Internships in Psychology

A *practicum* (*practicum* means the same thing as *internship*) or fieldwork placement is a wonderful way for students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to the real world. Students fulfill requirements for a 3 credit-hour practicum placement by completing 120 hours of experiences: 6-8 hours per week at a placement site, in conjunction with attendance and participation in a prescheduled seminar 2-3 hours per week. The seminar typically synthesizes the various elements of the field experience with lectures, assignments (e.g., journal entries), a term paper, and/or a presentation by each participant. Requirements will vary by instructor.

To be eligible for a practicum course, students must have completed 60 credits and have earned a GPA of 2.5 or higher. Although only 3 credits of the practicum experience can count toward the major, students may enroll for up to 12 credits as upper division coursework toward the general degree.

Our department offers two practicum courses, both of which are listed in the schedule of classes.

PSY497- 01, Practicum in Psychology

Students who enroll in this course gain valuable experience in settings that provide mental health and/or educational services to individuals in our community. **Only those students who have secured an internship site prior to the first day of classes will be eligible to take this course.** Therefore, students who are interested in registering for this course must meet with the instructor the semester prior to the placement in order to begin the process of applying for a practicum placement (see specific guidelines below).

In the fall and spring semesters, the department offers choices that may include the following placement sites:

- Devereaux Foundation (residence for children with dual diagnoses)
- The Chestnut Center/Gateway Community Industries, Inc. (rehabilitation and training center for people with mental and/or physical disabilities)

- Grace Smith House for Battered Women and Children
- Ulster-Greene ARC (non-profit agency serving individuals with developmental delays or disabilities)
- Hudson River Psychiatric Center (state hospital)
- The Children's Annex (school for children with autism or multiple disabilities)
- REHAB Programs (inpatient substance abuse program)
- RCAL: Resource Center for Accessible Living, Inc. (advocacy program for individuals with disabilities)
- Astor Home for Children (youth residential and outpatient mental health services)
- Family of Woodstock (various programs throughout Ulster County)
- New York Seniorcare (adult assisted living home)

Guidelines for PSY497- 01

Selecting a Practicum Site

1. It is your responsibility to secure a practicum site from the list provided.
2. If you don't have a site secured by the first meeting of class you must formally drop the "Practicum in Psychology" class.
3. Explore information regarding sites as soon as the list of sites is mailed to you by your instructor.
4. In researching sites, look for a site that provides a training setting compatible with your interests and goals. You might want to consider the following:
 - a. the kind of work you want to do in the future or the experiences you want to gain;
 - b. the kind of population you want to work with;
 - c. the hours you want to work;
 - d. additional activities, such as trainings, that might be required by the site.
5. Schedule a meeting with your instructor to discuss your interests and possible sites.
6. Begin the application process with your chosen site.
7. If your plans regarding your practicum placement change, notify both, your instructor and your site supervisor or contact person on site.

Application Process

1. Call the practicum site you are interested in and inquire about the application process.
2. Be prepared to provide a resume.
3. Be prepared to provide letters of recommendation for some of the sites.
4. Be aware of the fact that most sites will require a drug test and criminal background check.
5. Prepare for an interview with site personnel.
6. Schedule and complete interview process.
7. Finalize internship placement with the site.
8. Finalize start date of internship.
9. Inquire about any agency trainings you might be required to complete before starting the practicum.

PSY497- 02, Practicum in Psychology - Disaster Studies

Students who enroll in this course are trained by the instructor and the Red Cross to respond to potential emergencies and disasters. **This course is limited to students who have declared a minor in Disaster Studies.**

Fieldwork

PSY330, Crisis Intervention

Although this is a regular course within the major, it is unique in that you will learn specific skills such as active listening and how to empathize with another person. This course is intended to train those who, in subsequent semesters, volunteer as peer counselors for OASIS, helping students in crisis and non-crisis situations. OASIS is the campus crisis and non-crisis center run by peer counselors. Their center is located in Deyo Hall. Any students who are interested in taking Crisis Intervention should call the Psychological Counseling Center (257-2920) to schedule an interview appointment before registration begins.

PSY494, Fieldwork

Fieldwork, PSY494 (not on the course schedule) offers students supervised work experience within a specific field of psychology. Prior to registering for this course, students must (a) secure an internship site (e.g., human resources department), (b) identify a faculty member who will serve as instructor of record, and (c) complete a fieldwork form in consultation with this faculty member, outlining the requirements to be completed to earn academic credit. An affiliation agreement must also be established between the college and the placement site. The Chair of the Psychology Department can assist with this process.

Can I Get Paid to do an Internship?

The Campus Auxiliary Services (CAS) Internship Stipend Program, a service of the Career Resource Center, is a highly selective and competitive program that offers a limited number of scholarship stipends up to \$1,000 for the fall and spring semesters to students involved in a semester-long internship. For information, please go to:

<http://www.newpaltz.edu/careers/casstipend09.pdf>

Independent Study

Independent Study (PSY295 and PSY495)

The primary purpose of independent study is to enable students to gain knowledge and experience in areas not covered by other courses. Several options are available in the psychology department:

1. Students can work on research teams with faculty members who are (a) conducting empirical studies, and gain hands-on experience in designing a study, collecting data, and coding and analyzing data, or (b) gathering information in a particular area in order to write theoretical or review papers. Several students have co-authored conference and published papers of both types with faculty members.
2. Students can design and collect data for their own original empirical studies, or gather information about a particular area and write their own theoretical or review papers. Students have presented their original research papers at student, regional, and national conferences. In all cases, students work closely with a faculty member of the department.

To be eligible, a student must have a GPA of 2.50 or better (and at least a 3.00 in psychology). It is the student's responsibility to find a faculty member who will sponsor him/her. See the *Advising Handbook: Sum and Substance* for additional information on Fieldwork and Independent Study and the procedures that must be followed to register for them.

For more information: http://www.newpaltz.edu/psychology/undergrad/ind_study_guide.pdf