

Independent Study in Psychology at JMU

Independent study allows Psychology Majors to apply classroom learning to practical problems and focus their studies on areas that are not emphasized in the scheduled classes that we offer. As you participate in these projects, you can work independently or with a small group of students with similar interests. You will also interact and form mentoring relationships with faculty. The faculty consider these activities to be an essential part of the undergraduate psychology experience, and we encourage all students to participate. Instructor permission is required to participate in independent study projects. Some projects require specific courses or special skills to qualify. Contact potential instructors to apply for these experiences. A listing of independent study opportunities is available at: <http://psyc.jmu.edu/ug/training.html>.

The Scope of Independent Study

Research (Psyc 203* or 403*)

This is an opportunity for students to assist a faculty member with a research project. Students can design their own project. More typically faculty or faculty working with students develop the project. In some cases students work individually, but often a team that includes several students conduct the project. Students may participate in any or all phases of the research including completion of background research, study design, collection of data, data analysis, and interpretation. Sometimes projects culminate with the development of a professional conference presentation or publication of an article.

Practicum (Psyc 202 or 402)

This is an opportunity for students to apply Psychology learning to a field setting. Students may work on projects individually or in groups. Credit is never awarded for fieldwork alone. To earn academic credit, students must integrate their understanding of Psychology with the experiences they have in the field. Often this is accomplished by completing readings, preparing written materials, and participating in discussions with the project supervisor. To enroll, students must have a JMU Psychology faculty sponsor. Discuss the field experience you would like to have with your faculty supervisor first, before contacting field sites.

Readings (Psyc 202 or 402)

This is an opportunity for students to enhance their knowledge of an area of Psychology that is not available in the courses we offer. Typically the student completes extensive readings on a topic, has periodic meetings with their supervisor, and prepares a product that is evaluated by the instructor.

Teaching (Psyc 202 or 402)

This is an opportunity for students to assist a faculty member with a class. Students may be asked to help with a variety of class activities. For example, students may be asked to create supplemental materials, tutor students, or lead a class activity. Students meet with the instructor of the course regularly.

Preliminary or Advanced Work

Preliminary: Psyc 202 or 203* (1-3 credit hours)

This course allows you to work closely with a faculty member for approximately 40 clock hours per credit hour. Psyc 202/203 projects can include research, practicum, readings, teaching, or some combination of these options. Psyc 202/203 is intended to be an introductory experience. Psyc 101 (and permission of the instructor) is the only prerequisite. Psyc 202/203 credits cannot be counted towards the Psychology Major, but this course is considered an excellent experience for majors.

Advanced: Psyc 402 or 403* (1-4 credit hours)

This course is a 400-level elective in the Psychology Major that is intended to allow students to apply their knowledge of Psychology to a research, practicum, readings, or teaching project. As a 400-level course, students will be expected to complete Psyc 101, Psyc 210 or Psyc 212, Psyc 211 or Psyc 213, one Social Science Content Core course and one Natural Science Content Core course before enrolling. Project supervisors may waive these prerequisites, add additional ones, or require specific skills from the students they select for their projects. Psyc 402/403 projects must include the development of an evaluated product which demonstrates that learning objectives have been achieved.

Supervision by JMU Faculty

A faculty member in the Department of Psychology or Department of Graduate Psychology must supervise all Psyc independent study projects even when you also receive supervision from site supervisors not associated with JMU. Arrange for academic credit before starting your experience. Credit may only be awarded for work approved prior to completion of the work.

Course Syllabus

A copy of a course syllabus must be attached to your Independent Study application cover page. You should work with your instructor to design the syllabus for this course. Use the outline below as a guide to material that should be included in the syllabus, if possible. Independent Study experiences are varied, and not all sections of the outline will apply equally well across the range of activities that fall under the Psyc independent study umbrella. Students and faculty should work together to develop a syllabus that includes clear guidelines for the student. A copy of the syllabus is retained by the Department of Psychology.

Course Information

Include information on:

- Instructor Information – office location; how to contact the instructor; office hours
- Location and times of course meetings (if TBA; indicate frequency and duration of meetings)
- Inclement weather policy (e.g., "If the University is closed due to inclement weather, contact the instructor via e-mail immediately in order to reschedule meetings or other course activities.")

Learning Objectives

Describe what will be learned from participation in this project. This section can be brief, and can be in the form of a numbered list. If applicable, include the goals the course is expected to meet in the major and/or concentration.

Description of Project

Provide a brief description of the project that will be undertaken.

- ♦ For research projects, explain the rationale for the research, provide an overview of the method, your expected results, and potential implications.
- ♦ For practicum projects, describe the program in which you will participate.
- ♦ For readings projects, describe the area of study you intend to pursue.
- ♦ For teaching projects, describe the project you will complete with a statement of its rationale.

Required Activities

Describe your role in the project. What will you be expected to do? Include a description of readings and written assignments, if any. If your role will change over the course of the project, describe your expected activities during each phase. If you will be required to submit materials to the instructor, list them here. Planned supervisory meetings should also be described in this section. If you are required to complete a certain number of clock hours of work, state that requirement in this section.

Method of Evaluation

Describe how your grade will be determined. Ideally this section should list the percentage of your grade that will be derived from various activities or materials submitted.

Academic Honesty

Explain briefly how the JMU Honor Code applies to work in this course. For example, for a research experience, this may include a statement such as "All activities in this course, including data collection and analysis, writing and other assignments, attendance and participation, are to be completed in accordance with the JMU Honor Code." Students should consult with their faculty supervisors if they have questions or desire clarification concerning how the Honor Code applies to work in the course. The JMU Honor Code and information about policies are available from the Honor Council Website: <http://www.jmu.edu/honor/>

***Note: Students registering for Psyc 203 or 403 Research will be assessed a \$25 lab fee for each section enrolled, which will be added to the tuition bill.**