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Navigating undergraduate psychology can be difficult—we get that! This issue explores the various opportunities available to undergrads and the best ways to go about achieving them.

Good luck students!
One of the greatest things about studying psychology as an undergraduate is how applicable the classes are to real life. Surely many students of psychology can think back to a time in class when they heard a lecture and thought, “Wow, that sounds a lot like me.” GSU offers one engaging course in particular that addresses topics relevant to our everyday lives: Social Psychology (PSYC 4020). Happiness is one such topic.

What is happiness? If you really sit and think about it, you might come up with something other than what’s usually in your cup from Starbucks. Many people, however, are baffled when trying to come up with a definition. In social psychology, happiness is defined (in part) as physiological responses to stimuli. Happier people have more creative ideas, are more satisfied with their jobs and relationships, have less emotional and physical health problems, and lead more positive lives overall. So what can you do in order to achieve happier lives? According to the course, there are eight positive activities that correlate with happiness:

- Flow (Doing something that comes easy to you but is generally difficult for most people)
- Connecting to the community
- Helping others
- Counting your blessings
- Using your strength in novel ways
- Doing physical exercise in novel ways
- Writing letters of gratitude
- Writing about your best possible self

Helping others in particular is an important topic covered in Social Psychology. One factor that can influence whether or not you choose to help someone in need is the presence of other people (bystanders) around you. As the number of bystanders increases, the chances of someone helping decreases because people are less likely to assume responsibility. Each person thinks that someone else in the group will do something about it. This is referred to as the Bystander Effect.

Another interesting finding by social psychologists is that when we do something wrong, we are more likely to attribute that behavior to external characteristics (e.g., “I didn’t wash the dishes because I’ve had a really bad day and I’m exhausted”). When someone else does something wrong, we are more likely to attribute their behavior to internal characteristics (e.g., “He didn’t wash the dishes because he is a lazy person”). This bias in the way we explain the reasons we and others behave in certain ways is likely due to the fact we have access to more information about the motivations for our own behaviors. Try to remember to extend others the same courtesy we give to ourselves; in other words, maybe that person had a really bad day too. Social psychology helps us understand ourselves and others and can enhance the quality of our lives. Consider taking this fascinating course!

By Brytani Smith

Are Your Classes Making You Happy? Review of PSYC 4620
Unique Grad School Programs in Psychology

- **The University of Michigan**: While most universities feature labs focused on Cognitive, Clinical, Community, Social, and/or Neuropsychological research, the University of Michigan has a research field most do not offer—Gender & Feminist Psychology. This is a joint doctoral program from the fields of Psychology and Women’s Studies. This program consists of eight research labs with interests including mindfulness and intersectionality, gender and respect in organizations, social neuroendocrinology, and stigmatized sexualities.

- **University of Iowa**: This University offers an interdisciplinary research program for predoctoral students called the Behavioral-Biomedical Interface Training Program. This program teaches students how to apply biomedical methodologies to psychological research. It is partially funded by a grant from the National Institutes of Health.

- **New York University (NYU)**: This University has a program called the Institute for the Interdisciplinary Study of Decision Making. This neuroeconomics institute researches the roots of human behavior and how this affects decision making, subsequently affecting public policy. Graduate psychology students can choose to either do research on the psychological processes behind decision making or basic mathematical techniques for modeling neural systems. Research in this institute includes the decision-making processes behind finance, business, obesity, and addiction.

- **Ohio State University**: OSU offers a unique graduate degree in decision psychology. This program utilizes many disciplines of psychology to analyze theories of behavior and evaluation. Students in this program can choose a concentration of neuroeconomics, attitudes, behavioral decision research, quantitative modeling approaches, medical decision making, or environmental sustainability.

- **Purdue University**: Purdue offers many unique graduate degrees through their Ingestive Behavior Research Center, the brainchild of the psychology, neuroscience, and food & nutrition. This program is flexible to the needs of students considering its relation to multiple fields, but students can expect to study human feeding, ingestive behavior, and behavioral analyses in regard to food and/or fluid intake.

- **Princeton University**: Princeton has a joint degree program in Social Policy that was founded by the psychology, international affairs, population studies, sociology, politics, and economics departments. The joint degree is in one of the aforementioned programs and social policy. This program focuses on the current pressing social issues and how to best address them using research, both theoretical and applied.

*By Kristen Oyler*
Imagine waking up in a beautiful new city with a warm climate and the Indian Ocean just at your doorstep.

This scenario can be a dream come true for a month if you sign up for the study abroad trip to Tanzania, which will be led by both Dr. Lamoreaux and Dr. Weyermann this summer.

The purpose of this trip is to study the psychological and physical effects of skin bleaching in Tanzania. Skin bleaching is the practice of using chemicals, often which are harmful to the body, to lighten one’s skin tone. Skin bleaching has grown into a multi-billion dollar business, but the practice comes with dangerous side effects. The question then is, why is it so prevalent? This trip tries to answer this question by looking at the social aspect of skin bleaching and how it specifically affects the people in Tanzania.

During the trip, students will visit the cities of Dar es Salaam, Bagamoyo, Arusha, and Zanzibar. Students will also visit local orphanages, markets, hospitals and villages to get a firsthand look at how skin bleaching impacts its users. Students will speak to local experts on the history of slavery and colonization in Tanzania and its relationship to skin bleaching. I spoke with Dr. Weyermann about the trip and the type of work that students will be doing during the trip: “In terms of the assignments, this is a very experiential trip. The learning happens in the field. I will assign short reaction papers after we have explored something, but the emphasis on learning is what each student will be experiencing every day in this amazing country.”

In addition to excursions relevant to the course, students will go on a safari, visit the Great Rift Valley and the Olduvai Gorge, and get the chance to explore the local life and sceneries. Overall, the trip to Tanzania sounds absolutely fantastic and a great opportunity to study abroad. When asked how she felt about the study abroad trips that are offered at Georgia State, Dr. Weyermann responded: “I believe studying abroad is an expansive and creative form of learning. Experiencing different cultures and places teaches you not only about other perspectives, histories, cultures, religions, etc., but it teaches you about yourself. Studying abroad makes you think and reflect more deeply on who you are as a person, what your values mean to you, and how they fit in with the rest of the world.”
I believe strongly everyone should travel. A program like this is special because we will be exploring the country with Dr. Kelly Lewis, who has lived there, speaks the language, and knows the culture. That is a wonderful way to see a place. But, everyone should travel, even if it is more unstructured and on your own. Travel makes you realize that you are but one special speck in this amazingly varied and diverse place. It is wonderful.”

I highly encourage any student who is interested in studying abroad to consider making it a reality. Our university offers a variety of trips that are specialized around students’ majors, length of stay, and locations. The study abroad office also offers a variety of ways to help students fund these trips, making it much more affordable to learn while being immersed in a foreign culture. If you are interested in a study abroad program, view the following guide to get tips on how to do so! By Dominique La Barrie

Study Abroad Prep Tips

The idea of studying abroad as an undergraduate student can be exciting and terrifying at the same time. Traveling overseas is a great way to gain valuable knowledge about other cultures, learn in a new environment, and add a unique experience to your resume or CV. For those interested in studying abroad but don’t know how to complete the process, you can follow this step-by-step guide.

• Choose & Apply to your Program. Choose a program with an interesting subject matter in the course as well as a destination that appeals to you. An extra tip is to make sure you do your research on the country you will be visiting. Different countries have different customs that could interfere with your own. For example, if you are a hardcore vegan, studying in Argentina (a country that includes meat and animal byproducts in nearly every meal) may be difficult for you. Talking to faculty members and students who have been on the trip before is another great way to learn more about the program.
• Create a Financial Plan. One aspect of studying abroad that stops many students from participating is the cost which covers tuition, food/boarding, transportation, and visas. While this may sound daunting, there are ways to address this challenge.

A study abroad advisor will allow you to look at all scholarship opportunities. Students who study abroad typically apply for the International Education Fee (IEF) Study Abroad Scholarship, which most end up receiving (so make note of it!) Some of the additional fees to your tuition (such as activity and library fees) will not be included in your study abroad tuition because you will not be on campus to take advantage of those amenities. You could also set up a GoFundMe account and share the link with friends and family. This may seem like a strange tactic, but you would be surprised at who will help you reach your study abroad goal. If a GoFundMe isn’t your style, try arranging a bake sale to help you raise funds. If possible, take advantage of flyer miles you or family members may have racked up from frequent flying or credit card point perks. Even better, try to get a discounted stand-by flight ticket from someone who works for Delta or any other major airline.
If you cannot bear the thought of leaving your phone behind when studying abroad, consider upgrading to an international plan while you are gone. If you use cellular data while in another country without an international plan, you could be charged pricey fees that can be easily avoided. If you don’t want to upgrade and you have a smartphone, a good tip is to set your phone to airplane mode before leaving the country. That way, your phone will sync up to Wi-Fi and, therefore, allow you to text on SMS apps.

Note: If you are someone who works with bills to pay, make sure you save up enough money to pay them while you are gone. It is important to make sure that when you come home from your trip, you still have your car and a place to live (unless you are just going to become a world traveler… in which case, you would still need money).

• **Prepare for your Trip.** Talk to people who have been to the country or, better yet, have taken the study abroad course you are taking. Remember that your instructors are also there to help you, so don’t be afraid to email them if you have any questions or concerns before the trip. Once you are accepted into a study abroad program, your professor will send you a general list of things you should bring with you (classroom materials, types of clothing, etc.). However, as mentioned previously, it is always a good idea to do your research on where you will be visiting and what you will be doing to see whether you need to bring additional items. Here are a few suggestions on some of those items:
  - **Baby wipes/hand sanitizer**—many foreign countries have public restrooms without toilet paper, sinks, or soap. In order to avoid an uncomfortable situation, make sure you always have items to clean your hands if necessary.
  - **An extra duffel bag**—a common mistake that occurs when studying abroad (or traveling abroad in general) is that tourists will pack their suitcases to the brim before their trip. Because of this, they will have no room to put souvenirs from their trip to take back home.
  - **An emergency cheat-sheet**—this is especially important if to contact in case of emergency (your family, professors, American Consulate, and hotels you are staying in). Include common phrases in the country’s national language (how to say “Hello,” “Can you help me find ____,” “I am allergic to ______,” etc.), addresses to bus stations/airports your classmates may be at, and any other necessary information. Keep this emergency cheat-sheet in a folder along with other important travel documents (passport, visas, plane tickets, photocopies of important documents, etc.).

Studying abroad is an amazing experience. With the variety of programs available at Georgia State University, all students have a chance to visit another country and become immersed in an entirely new culture. There are resources available to those who need it as well as students who are more than willing to share their own experiences with the programs. If you ever get the opportunity to take part of it, I highly recommend you do it!

*By Victoria Kelly*

“The real voyage consists not in seeing new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”

—*Marcel Proust*
October 30, 2015: At PURC 2016, there were a total of 51 posters, including those from Reinhardt and Georgia Tech. This conference is held each fall and is co-sponsored by the GSU Department of Psychology, and the GSU chapter of Psi Chi (the National Undergraduate Honorary Society for Psychology).

The Awards Go To...

**CBN Award:** Geraldo Valdez (co-authors Smith and faculty sponsor Chris Conway)

**Diversity Award:** Ashley Lauterbach (co-author Deocampo and faculty sponsor Chris Conway)

**3rd Place:** Yamini Patel (co-author Hrabic and faculty sponsor Becky Williamson)

**2nd Place:** Lauren Sargent (faculty advisor Rob Latzman)

**1st Place:** Nadia Quyyum (co-authors Clark, Ahmadi, and faculty sponsor Jessica Turner)
Dr. Eyal Aharoni double majored in Psychology and Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara and graduated in 2000. He remained at the university and received his Ph.D. in Developmental and Evolutionary Psychology in 2009. He is an assistant professor of both Psychology and Philosophy as well as being the lab director of the Cooperation, Conflict, and Cognition Lab at Georgia State.

What are your research interests?

EA: My research lab draws upon interdisciplinary approaches to understand and shape the ways in which extra-rational factors, such as emotionally-relevant stimuli, influence decision making in legal, criminal, interpersonal, and policy domains. Of particular interest are (1) how folk intuitions about justice are expressed in criminal guilt and sentencing decisions, (2) the role of emotion in anti-social behavior, and (3) the potential benefits and ethical concerns surrounding the use of cognitive neuroscience in legal decision making about punishment, responsibility, and risk assessment. We bring together perspectives from cognitive science, neuroscience, law, criminology, philosophy, economics, clinical psychology, evolutionary psychology, and computer science. When did you know this was what you wanted to focus your career on?

EA: Growing up with stories of the Nazi atrocities to modern-day spree killings and wrongful convictions, I’ve always been moved by social injustice. I believe that if we ever hope to remedy this injustice, we first must understand ourselves. In that way, I never felt that I chose to study psychology—Rather, psychology chose me. I was fortunate to have had inspiring mentors who equipped me with the tools I needed to seek answers to some of society’s hardest questions.

What do you look for in a research assistant? What can a research assistant expect to learn in your lab?

EA: Successful research assistants are those who demonstrate: intellectual curiosity, strong academic standing, an aptitude for learning technical skills, an ability to work both independently and in group settings, strong written and analytical abilities, and strong organizational skills. Assistants
independently and in group settings, strong written and analytical abilities, and strong organizational skills. Assistants receive exposure to all phases of experimental research from research design and data collection to analysis and reporting.

Do you have any advice for students applying to graduate school?

EA: Students applying to graduate school should actively seek mentorship from graduate students and faculty who can advise them on general expectations, performance measures, funding, job market trends, etc. They should volunteer to assist in one or more research labs to get exposure to different research methods and topic areas. Oftentimes, the most useful skills today are methodological rather than topical. That might mean taking more methods courses than are required.

If you could have any other career, what would it be? Why?

EA: In another life, I would pursue a career in music. I find music composition, improvisation, and collaboration to be deeply inspiring, restorative, and socially unifying.

By Kristen Oyler

Let’s begin with the protagonists of the movie: Riley’s emotions are living in the “headquarters” of her brain. In the headquarters, new memories are formed, color-coded, and stored for a short period of time (AKA short-term memory) before they are sent away to long-term memory. The emotions have total control of how Riley interprets her real-life experiences. With this description, the headquarters seem to represent the limbic system. While the limbic system is in charge of an array of various tasks, it houses the amygdala, which primarily functions as emotion regulation. The limbic system also contains the hippocampus, which is in charge of creating episodic memories. Of course, the limbic system is a bit more complicated than what is portrayed in the film. However, considering the target audience, Pixar did a good job at explaining how this portion of the brain functions.

Another critical moment in Inside Out is the loss of Riley’s “personality islands.” Each island is powered by core memories that are associated with Riley’s personality traits. The five personality islands are gradually crumbling as Riley
Effective Study Habits (Supported by Research)

As psychology students, we are exposed to an abundance of new material in different courses. Though you may have breezed through high school without looking through notes, college certainly requires more of our attention in order to perform well in our classes. Many of us have more than just school going on—we have jobs, families, friends, and most importantly, sleep to worry about. With all of these outside responsibilities, how can we utilize our time to learn new material for our classes? You might have heard different theories on the best studying tactics, like highlighting only in blue ink or chewing gum while studying. Below I have listed a couple of highly effective study methods that are supported by psychological research.

- **Take practice tests & create a consistent study schedule.**
  John Dunlosky et al. (2013) from Kent State University conducted a research study in order to determine which common study methods utilized by college students worked the best and which ones were a waste of time for students to use. Taking practice tests allows students to get more experience with the method they will be using to measure their knowledge of the materials, while a consistent study schedule allows students to study small amounts of material throughout the semester rather than trying to cram large amounts before an important exam. Highlighting/underlining notes and subject-mixed study sessions...
were deemed ineffective.
• Explain what you are learning. Marissa Hartwig and John Dunlosky (sound familiar?) of Kent State University lead another research study in order to determine whether self-testing of material and the time of day one studies affects their academic performance. They discovered that while taking practice tests help, explaining yourself while doing practice tests helps confirm that you know the information you are studying. You can do this by giving yourself an open-ended practice test, or explaining what you are learning to your friends, roommates, or family members to better grasp the information for yourself. Teaching is a great way to make sure that you know your test material.

Although other study habits have been deemed somewhat successful (such as studying in the morning instead of at night and color-coding your notes), extensive research suggests that these three strategies appear to be the most reliable study methods. If you want to get that A in your PSYC classes (or ANY class) this semester, try to stick with these methods! By Victoria Kelly

**Grad Focus: Ruschelle Leone**

Ruschelle Leone is a doctoral student in the Behavioral Science Lab under Dr. Dominic Parrott. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology & Religious Studies from the University of South Florida. She recently obtained her Masters in Clinical Psychology from Georgia State University. In addition to her research, she teaches the Psychology of Women course to undergraduate psychology students. Ruschelle made time in her very busy schedule to answer a few questions about herself.

**What are your research interests/goals?**
RL: I’m interested in identifying risk and protective factors to reduce alcohol-related aggression, with a particular focus on bystander intervention. Additionally, I’m interested in research focusing on the environmental contexts in which aggression is likely to occur, including the influence of alcohol use, social norms, and masculinity.

**Which academic achievement are you most proud of accomplishing?**
RL: I submitted a Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award to fund my dissertation research and recently found out it is currently under consideration for funding. Regardless of funding, I’m very proud of the application and feel this was a big milestone in my graduate career.

**What is your favorite thing about Georgia State University?**
RL: The diversity of the student population.

**What are your hobbies?**
I love cooking, going to spin class, traveling, spending time with family, and trying out new restaurants.

**What is one social issue you feel passionately about? Why do you believe it is important?**
RL: Violence against women because it is a significant public health concern that impacts everyone, not just women. One in five women is sexually assaulted. If there are 50 women in your class, statistically 10 will be or have been a victim of sexual assault. We all know someone implicated by violence, and we have the power to stand up and intervene when we witness sexually aggressive behavior. That may
be as simple telling a friend who tells a sexist joke it’s not cool.

*If you could only eat at one restaurant in Atlanta for the rest of your life, what would it be?*

RL: Kimball House.

*Do you have any advice for future graduate students?*

RL: Take time before graduate school to explore your interests. If you do decide to pursue a doctoral degree, the best piece of advice I have is to make sure your advisor is a good fit. I feel fortunate to have a wonderful advisor who is supportive of my own research interests and helps foster my professional development across various domains.

*By Kristen Oyler*

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**The New Class Approach to PSYC 3530: A Different Way of Learning**

The majority of undergraduate psychology students at Georgia State University have reservations about taking Advanced Research Methods and Statistics, commonly referred to as PSYC 3530. In addition to rumors about its difficulty, the class is required and students only have two opportunities to pass it with a C. Needless to say, this course is a stressful endeavor for many students.

Recently, however, there has been a distinctive change in one professor’s section of 3530—Dr. Kim Darnell, PhD, has changed her teaching of the class from a traditional, lecture-based class to a more interactive approach.

*What made you want to try a different style of teaching?*

KD: I’m always interested in trying to find new ways to teach the classes so that students will learn better and have more fun, you know? I like to try new things, and I’m also interested in using information from the study of teaching to try and find ways that are demonstrated to be effective. I had students read these articles on how to teach research methods and statistics in a way that’s more fun and will help them learn, and, well, it sounded like an interesting thing to try. I took information from different published sources about how to create a project-based, active learning course and from another article about how about to integrate experiments involving video games into a course as learning tools. I thought, “Okay, I’m going to pull these pieces together.” I also took suggestions from papers that my students had written regarding their ideas about what they had thought would improve the teaching of Advanced Research Methods and Statistics at GSU with our own students. I fused all of this together into the new version of 3530 that I’m teaching--it has no lecture and is all about solving problems, designing experiments, playing games, and writing about those things.

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What do you see that works in here that didn’t work in the lecture style?

KD: A lecture style [does] work—it’s the standard treatment control. It certainly works and I’ve been successful for a very long time with it, but what I really like about this new, active, learning-focused model is that it’s more about the students discovering things and less about me telling them things. Research is really about doing—you can teach it, but it’s kind of like teaching someone how to swim by reading a book. In this class, everyone is doing something and, because of the special classroom*, it also creates a very dynamic feeling in the class. I think the classroom plays a really big part in active learning—it’s a really special space. I love the fact that I can say, “Today, I’m moving my station to a completely different side of the room,” so the focus is on the work and not me.

Is it easier for you to teach in this way?

KD: I guess I would have to say yes and no in some ways. It’s not easier in that everything is project-based. I start off the first day of class saying, “Here’s an article and here are some questions about the article. Look through these terms and tell me what you don’t know.” I don’t have a lot of material of control over what they say, so I have to be ready and on point to answer any questions they have at that moment. If I’m lecturing, I put up my PowerPoints and I’ve already decided what I’m going to tell you. Not using the lecture is nice because it’s not me telling you. Instead, it’s students asking and saying, “Here’s what I don’t understand.” I’m often really surprised when the active learning students ask a lot of the same questions I would expect because they seem to be more interested. Because they are questions that the students came up with on their own, they care more about the answers. It makes it easier, because the idea is for the students to do the majority of the thinking, but it is also harder because I have no idea what they are going to say.

This new method definitely seems to be working—students feel a sense of accomplishment after class and feel that they have the proper tools to complete homework. Dr. Darnell has created a classroom environment that feels more like a community—students aren’t afraid to ask questions when they are stuck on a certain problem. This merits the question, should other professors change their teaching approach as well? Maybe. This method works for Dr. Darnell, but it may not work for everyone—Dr. Darnell could be a confounding variable! The standard lecture style works well for some people, but it is nice to know that our university is able to give students options in how they choose to learn new material.

By Dominique La Barrie & Kayla Shy

*Author’s Note: The classroom is an important feature in Dr. Darnell’s 3530 course. The classroom is located in Classroom South and features mobile desks (including the teacher’s station) that allow students to organize the class in a manner most conducive to their comfort and learning. Multiple monitors line the walls so that students can connect their devices, which allow them to share assignments or any other material that may be useful in class.
So You Want to Be a Research Assistant?

As an undergraduate student, it can be overwhelming to make sure that you are getting the most out of your college career, especially if you plan on attending graduate school. One aspect of the undergraduate experience that many psychology students overlook is research experience. The specifics of working in a lab setting vary between each lab, but students typically learn about the focus of the research and the different steps that go into the research process. Though lab experience is not required to get into graduate school, it is highly recommended and can make you a more competitive candidate. If the graduate program you are considering requires you to do research as part of your graduate training, research experience as an undergraduate is essential.

To gain more insight on the matter, I spoke with Dr. Michael Beran, a cognitive sciences researcher and professor at Georgia State University. Dr. Beran runs a variety of research projects in his labs, most of which revolve around working with various monkey species at the Language Research Center. One of the first actions that Dr. Beran suggests for an undergraduate psychology student is to contact the lab director of a research project that most interests you. You can find these labs by searching on the psychology department website for a description of research labs (http://psychology.gsu.edu/research-labs/) paying attention to flyers seeking undergraduate research assistants around campus, or talking to your professors and seeing if they know of any labs opportunities.

“The easiest and fastest way is just to contact the lab director. We are often looking for more help with our research, and a motivated student who contacts us may be enthusiastically accepted into the lab. That said, there are a number of things one can do to stand out, things that most people do not think to do when they contact lab directors. First, write a professional email, not an informal ‘note.’ Treat this first contact just as you would treat being asked to send a resume to someone. Make the note detailed about who you are, what you have done in the past that is relevant to the lab, and why you are interested in a particular lab. Do your homework! Know the research in that lab. Know the professor, in terms of reading about her or his research. Explain (briefly) which projects in that lab most interest you. And, proofread your email! Grammatical errors already serve as a warning signal to lab directors about how detail-oriented and careful you are.” –Dr. Michael Beran

Something good to note is that you don't have to have research experience in order to join a lab. Researchers understand that you need to start somewhere to gain experience. As long as you are professional and passionate about the research that you want to do, the lack of experience will not be important to them. You also do not need to worry about staying within your university to work for a lab. For example, if you are a Georgia State University student who is interested in the organizational psychology lab at Georgia Institute of Technology, you are allowed to work in that lab. As an undergraduate student, your lab
possibilities are seemingly endless!

Nevertheless, you must know how to stand out from the crowd and appeal to lab directors. Similar to jobs outside of research, candidates should be detail-oriented, independent, responsible, and reliable. More specifically, candidates should show interest and enthusiasm in the research being conducted within the lab. As Dr. Beran mentioned, “A motivated person can learn to do almost anything, and so really learning about different labs and their research is important.” Additionally, if you are a student working in a lab within your interests, your lab experience will help you decide what to pursue in graduate school, or at the very least keep you interested in the work you are doing within the lab.

Another question many students have is about how long they are expected to stay within a lab. Typically, once a student is invited to join a lab, they are expected to stay for at least one semester. However, specific lengths of time vary in each lab. As Dr. Beran noted, “the time one spends in a lab is less important than what one learns and can demonstrate during that time. A summer internship in which you become integral to a particular study, and are relied on by the research team is better than a year in a lab where you do the same small task all of the time, even if it is important in the overall large picture of that research project.” Because what work you accomplish in lab is more important than the amount of time you spend there, it should also be stated that you do not need to join multiple labs in order to have a strong CV. If you have time out of your schedule to work in 2-3 different labs and complete great work, go for it! However, do not try to push yourself if you only have time for one. Juggling one lab and 12-18 credit hours of classes is a handful in itself. It is better to complete excellent work in one lab than to stretch yourself thin in three.

Joining a lab is a great way to build your CV for graduate school while also helping you discover what interests you. Psychology is such a diverse and widespread field that offers a variety of different areas to study. Whether you are a freshman who just claimed their major or a senior looking for something to do with their time before graduate school, joining a lab and being a part of a research team is an exciting endeavor and one that is highly suggested.

By Victoria Kelly

Georgia State University allows undergraduate psychology students to register for a research practicum (PSYC 4760), which is an excellent opportunity for students to learn firsthand how to work in a research setting while simultaneously earning credit hours. When gaining responsibilities to assist in the lab, you can quickly become immersed in all of the intricate details involved in a
research study. As a practicum student, you are learning tasks in a very fast-paced environment because labs are quick to hand you new responsibilities, which diversify your skills and give you more experience.

During my practicum, my first task was to conduct telephone interviews with potential participants for a study that recruits participants from the local area. Conducting multiple interviews with individuals required me research in order to answer any of their questions. Once I had become adept at the skill of interviewing people for our study, I was trained to be a confederate, a fake participant, for one of our other studies.

While acting as a confederate, I had to keep up appearances in front of the real participants. Though this usually involved staying silent and remaining in a sitting position, I also had to know how to act when I was talking, or what to say if a real participant asked me a question. Whenever I had to answer a question, I had to think on my feet to learn all aspects of our research in order to answer it without giving away my “secret identity.” Being placed in the shoes of a participant gave me a better perspective on what it was like to participate in the study.

It honestly surprised me to see how much I have enjoyed my experience in the lab. When I began my practicum, I thought that I was going to be performing menial tasks and, as a result, be bored for most of my time there. Soon after, I realized that I was having a great time! I had to complete tasks that were challenging yet helped me comprehend all of the details that go into research that I would have never considered before. Working in a research lab has been a constantly evolving experience that gives me new insight and knowledge into how complex and subsequently effective research can be.

By Sean Henning

Interested in applying for a practicum?

Check out the website http://psychology.gsu.edu/research-applied-practica/ to find out more information about how you can earn course credit for completing research (PSYC 4760) or working hands-on in a psychology-related agency by applying for an Applied Practicum (PSYC 4770)!

If you have any questions regarding the practicum, please contact Dr. Rachelle Cohen: rcohen@gsu.edu

How many legs does this elephant have?