



GRAY MATTERS

UNDERGRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY NEWSLETTER

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PSI CHI ELIGIBILITY

- Psychology major or minor
- > second semester sophomore standing
- 9 completed credits in Psychology at GSU
- > 3.0 GPA (general and psychology)

** Get your Psi Chi application online at <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwpsy/3055.html> or on the 11th floor of Urban Life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks again to Dylan Hunt Stephan for his assistance with formatting this issue of *Gray Matters*.

LETTER FROM OUR FACULTY ADVISOR

Greetings Psychology Majors and Minors,

Another awesome issue of Gray Matters awaits you! The articles in this issue include not only valuable information concerning your career preparation, but also inspiration to explore areas of psychology you may not have considered in the past. Think “out of the box,” take some risks, get out of your “comfort zone” and grow professionally and personally. Take advantage of the many opportunities available to you as an undergraduate student at GSU.

Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology, sponsors a wide range of programming during fall and spring semesters. If you are not a member, consider joining this active and vibrant organization (see eligibility requirements below the Table of Contents). All of our programs are open to any GSU student and we encourage you to join our Facebook page regardless of whether or not you are a member. Advantages of membership include being part of an honor organization, leadership opportunities on our executive board, ability to apply for Psi Chi stipends, grants and awards, eligibility to submit research articles for publication in Psi Chi’s Undergraduate Research Journal, and opportunities to network with other students pursuing careers in psychology. Applications are processed throughout the year and can be obtained on the 11th floor of Urban Life.

This past academic year, Psi Chi sponsored workshops in creating a professional resume/curriculum vita (with Dr. Deborah Garfin) and personal statement (with Dr. Andrea Weyermann), both important parts of a graduate school application. Movie Night included showing “A Beautiful Mind” with a presentation from Dr. Rachele Cohen about schizophrenia. Psi Chi co-sponsored with the Psychology Department our annual Practicum Fair and Psychology Undergraduate Research Conference (PURC). For the first time, Psi Chi provided an opportunity for students presenting posters at PURC to practice their presentations a few days before the conference and receive feedback. A similar Poster Practice Session will be held on Wednesday, April 9th from 12:00-1:00 for students presenting at the Georgia State Undergraduate Research Conference (GSURC). Our third annual Graduate School Event included presentations covering a wide range of topics related to preparing for and applying to graduate schools. Thanks to Dr. Lindsey Cohen, Director of Graduate Studies, who gave a very informative presentation, as well as to the psychology graduate students who shared their experiences with students preparing to apply to graduate school.

We welcomed 128 new members to Psi Chi this year! We hope you will follow the advice of our editor and staff writers and become actively “engaged” in our organization. In fact, we encourage all of our psychology majors and minors to get involved in activities beyond the classroom and make the most of your undergraduate career.

- Dr. Deborah Garfin
Psi Chi Faculty Advisor

GO AHEAD, COMMIT

Readers,

Between the covers of this issue of *Gray Matters*, I hope you find valuable, applicable information to assist you in your undergraduate career. Last semester's issue of *Gray Matters* was about getting involved and becoming active. This semester's issue shifts its focus to becoming engaged. Many of the writers in this issue have gravitated towards a specific branch of psychology, which is evident in their writing. In addition, many of the students who have specialized as undergraduates have done so by immersing themselves in the field of their interest through participation in internships, volunteer positions, and independent research projects.

I encourage you to identify your interests within psychology and seek out opportunities to build skills within that area. Your further involvement will not only increase your knowledge about the field, but will likely also increase your sense of enthusiasm regarding your studies. Often, it is that sense of enthusiasm and satisfaction that leads individuals to do their best work.

The Psychology Department at Georgia State University (GSU) offers so many areas in which to specialize, with branches of study ranging from the brainy neurosciences to the more social justice oriented community psychology. Even better than the variety of courses offered is GSU's location within Atlanta, which provides even more chances to specialize, with volunteering opportunities galore. As a volunteer, you may gain both applied and/or research experience. Many nonprofit agencies bring volunteers onto their team for assistance with data collection and entry. Experience with and skills in data collection and entry are something that all research-oriented branches of psychology highly value, and can be an excellent addition to one's curriculum vita.

Even if you have a limited amount of time, agencies and organizations around Atlanta are looking for people like you who want to learn and contribute. If you are bewildered about how to get started, visit GSU's Office of Civil Engagement (OCE) or www.gsu.edu/volunteer. They offer resources and tools so you may find a volunteering opportunity that fits your availability and interests. If you find that the OCE lacks the volunteering connections that suit you, then create your own! The OCE is always willing to meet with students who are interested in creating a collaborative partnership between new nonprofit organizations and the university. Whether your interest is correcting health disparities, counseling survivors of domestic violence, or healing those suffering from substance abuse, there are agencies in Atlanta that focus on that. Do not hesitate to reach out!

Finally, it is important to find a good fit. You will find that many nonprofit organizations have an application process much like a job application. They too want to ensure that you are a good fit for their organization, because when volunteers are passionate about the work being done, they do better work. Again, my advice is to find something you are passionate about that ties in with your studies; then, fully commit to it. You will find that when you are engaged, your work is better, easier, and more rewarding.

-Julia Mangia
Editor

If you'd like to contribute to the next issue of *Gray Matters*, email our faculty advisor, Dr. Deborah Garfin, at dgarfin@gsu.edu for more information.

IN THE COMMUNITY

Reasons to Volunteer

LaTasha Nemon Porter

There are numerous benefits to volunteering if you are pursuing a career in psychology. Below I have listed four reasons you should consider volunteering.

Volunteer to Explore New Areas of Interest

Through volunteering, you may find interests in areas you had never considered. In addition, your first-hand experiences may guide future pathways and research interests. As a volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), I advocate for children and adolescents who are in custody of the Department of Family and Child Service (DFCS). Exposure to this population has allowed me to formulate research questions and develop my independent research.

Volunteering creates opportunities to work on projects and with populations that may not be available through practicum, working, or otherwise. By volunteering, you are able to draw from a larger pool of options, allowing for specialization according to your interests or career goals.

Volunteer to Gain Research Experience

If you are applying to either a doctoral program in clinical psychology or a doctoral program in which you are being trained as an academician, research experience is essential. Graduate school is a huge commitment, therefore, having research experience will show programs of interest that you are committed and knowledgeable about your field of study. Additionally, volunteer research experience can be added to your resume and curriculum vitae (CV) making you a more competitive candidate for graduate school.

Volunteer to Broaden Your Network

Broadening your network exposes you to opportunities and ongoing projects while keeping you abreast of current events, new research, and conferences. While volunteering, you can meet professionals in the field who can mentor, give advice, and guide future directions and projects. A professional mentor might write you a strong letter of recommendation, which is often required for acceptance to a graduate program. Similarly, through volunteering you can meet peers and make friends with people pursuing similar goals or interests.

Volunteer to Make a Difference

Volunteering allows you to provide a service to others in need. Many social service programs lack proper funding to adequately meet the needs of the people they serve without the support of donations and volunteers. It is an invaluable experience that will provide you first-hand knowledge and impact the lives of those around you. I highly recommend volunteering to anyone interested in pursuing a career in psychology. Ψ



Psi Chi members volunteering their time at the Psychology Undergraduate Research Conference.

IN THE COMMUNITY

From Research to Activism

Amy Gregg

It was the first semester in my research lab when I had the idea of starting a student organization to prevent violence for our students. For weeks, I had been conducting literature searches on sexual assault and rape myths for an upcoming poster presentation at the Psychology Undergraduate research Conference (PURC). Article after article talked about the high rates of women who were sexually assaulted or experienced an attempted assault. I began talking about this issue to my roommates and friends, and many of them recounted how they had been assaulted, knew a friend who had been assaulted, or had witnessed an attempted assault. As an active student leader on campus,

I searched for existing campus resources, but to my disappointment, I only found a handful of them. Two graduate students who work within the psychology department similarly thought the lack of resources needed to be addressed, and with their assistance, we created UPROAR. We reached out to other offices and organizations to host events and raise awareness about our organization. Last semester we co-hosted an event with one of the RA's in housing to discuss sexual assault with freshman students. We spent our time debunking rape myths, facilitating discussion, and encouraging bystander intervention.

Later in the semester, we hosted an even for college women to discuss everyday experiences of violence against women, such as street harassment. What struck me

about both events was how much college women had to say on the topic. Once one woman shared, ten or so more hands would go up. Story after story women talked about being harassed on their way to classes or back to their dorm rooms. Other women talked about feeling pressure to adjust their class schedule to avoid walking through our campus late in the evening. Even after the event was over, students stayed to ask more questions about violence against women and share their own experiences.

These experiences highlighted how important it is to not leave ideas in the classroom or the research lab. Take them out of the classroom buildings into your everyday life. As psychology majors, we have the unique opportunity to delve deeper into the study of human behavior and attitudes than the average student. Start applying these concepts outside of cramming for tests and see what types of discussions arise. Starting this organization taught me that I did not have to wait until I earned my degree to discuss these issues. Organize your friends. Share stories. Start assessing what needs to be changed, and then go address it. Ψ

RELATED RESOURCES

UPROAR: The Student Coalition to Prevent Dating Violence and Sexual Assault
email: uproar.gsu@gmail.com
more at: gsu.orgsync.com - search "UPROAR"



GSU student presenting at the Atlanta Science Festival.

IN THE COMMUNITY

Grady Trauma Project: A Valuable Internship Opportunity Hadrian Mendoza

Homicide, rape, domestic violence, mutilation, brutality, natural disasters, corporal punishment, kidnapping, military combat, arson, armed robbery, sudden life-threatening illness, and child molestation - how many of your friends have witnessed or experienced any of these traumas?

If your friends were sampled from the Grady Memorial Hospital patient population, more than 20% of them would have developed posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from events like those listed above. An unfortunate reality of urban poverty in the United States is that it is associated with exposure to some of life's greatest traumas and most heinous crimes. If you want to help people who have been exposed to these traumas and are interested in an unparalleled opportunity to interact one-on-one with patients, then you may consider volunteering for the Grady Trauma Project (GTP).

GTP volunteers administer 1-2 hour, individual screening interviews to patients at Grady clinics. Conducting these interviews enhances skills in empathic listening, efficient data entry, and the administration of measures that examine emotional, physical, and sexual trauma history; past and present psychopathology; and other psychosocial constructs. Volunteers are required to work 8-10 hours per week, which include conducting two screens and sharing their patient interaction at a weekly team meeting. Leading minds in psychiatry, clinical psychology, and neuroscience are present at these meetings, allowing volunteers to interact with researchers who are doing incredible, groundbreaking work. The presence of powerful mental health professionals also creates mentorship opportunities for students pursuing a career in psychology or medicine.

My personal experience at Grady has been transformational. After 9 months and over 30 patient screens, I plan to continue working with the project for semesters to come. It is truly an extraordinary opportunity for undergraduates to speak individually with patients about some of life's greatest psychological challenges. My GTP experience reaffirmed my desire to become a psychiatrist and introduced me to the fascinating research on civilian PTSD being performed today. I highly recommend volunteering at GTP to anyone interested in a career in mental healthcare or research regarding urban, immigrant, prison, or military populations (i.e., populations with high rates of trauma).

Remember that graduate and medical schools are looking for research and clinical experience on your CV—GTP is a great way to knock out both! **Ψ**

RELATED RESOURCES

www.gradytraumaproject.com.

MORE ABOUT PRACTICA

1. Gain up to 3 hours of credit doing work related to your interests
2. Research and Applied opportunities
3. Check out this link for more information about practica at GSU: <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwpsy/3052.html>

IN THE CLASSROOM

The Undergraduate Teacher's Assistant (UTA) Program

Sonia Jamani

Have you ever wanted to be a Teacher's Assistant (TA) for a class, but were unable to because you were not a graduate student? In the past, professors only had graduate students as TAs for their classes. Fortunately, now you have the opportunity to apply for a position as an undergraduate TA (UTA). Serving as a UTA allows you to build connections with your professors and acquire a better understanding of the reciprocal nature of teaching and learning.

In order to be an UTA, you need to first be proactive and take responsibility. Your first goal is to make at least an A in the class you wish to TA in. If you know the material, you can prove to the professor that you are well qualified to answer any questions that students may come across. Next, build a connection with the professor. If your professor sees that you are a hardworking student, they will recognize your commitment towards excellence in academics. If the professor recognizes your qualifications as a potential assistant, he or she may be more willing to have you as their UTA. The ability to demonstrate a strong work ethic will help you earn more leadership positions. This applies to any position you pursue, so why wait to start? It is very important to build a professional relationship with your professor; it will take you far.

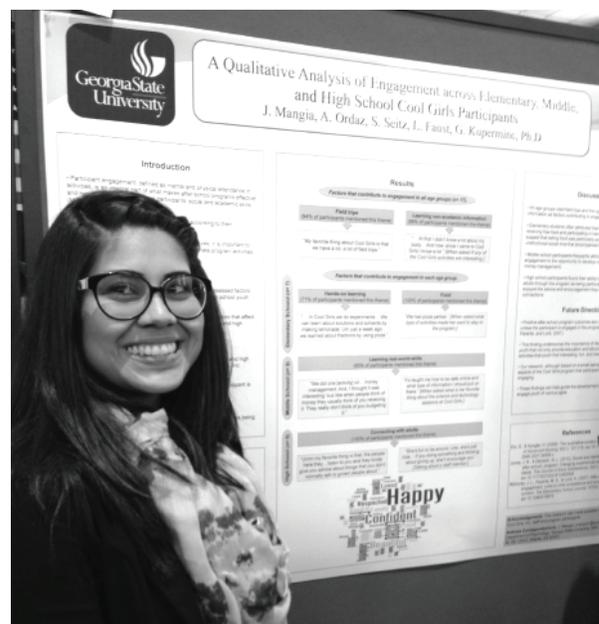
The responsibilities of an UTA include attending class lectures, meeting regularly with the professor, organizing review sessions, proctoring exams, and assisting with grading. As a UTA for the past two semesters, I have learned that the responsibilities set you apart from being a traditional student. You are not a friend of the students in this class, but an assistant to the professor. It is the UTA's role to assist the professor in decreasing their

workload and gain as much experience in academia as possible.

The advantages of becoming a UTA include gaining leadership skills, facilitating group discussions, accruing teaching experience, and strengthening your knowledge of the course or topic. In addition, you will build a strong relationship with a professor, resulting in a contact for a strong letter of recommendation. Many of these benefits will also make you an impressive candidate for graduate school. As an undergraduate TA, I can honestly say that I have gained many wonderful experiences. It has helped me grow as a person and understand my own strengths and weaknesses. This opportunity has allowed me to connect what I have learned and apply it to a real world scenario. So talk to your professors now! Ψ

RELATED RESOURCES

For more information about the UTA Program, contact Dr. Kim Darnell at kdarnell@gsu.edu



GSU student Ana Ordaz presenting at the Psychology Undergraduate Research Conference.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Why Go to One College When You Can Go to Two?

Alexandra Duncan

Think back to freshman year – you may have entered college undeclared, or perhaps you knew you were drawn to psychology, but did not know your passion yet. The truth is not many of us know our strengths and specific career interests at first; they often develop as we explore our options. Personally, I flitted from field to field, declared a concentration in community psychology, and finally, midway through junior year, found my skills and interests were best suited for industrial-organizational (I-O), or work psychology.

This moment of realization propelled me forward on my journey to find experiences and opportunities to prepare me for graduate studies in the field of I-O. Although our psychology department has excellent programs in clinical, cognitive, community, and developmental psychology, work psychology is not included its repertoire. Consequently, the courses offered to undergraduates are limited generally to topics related to the department's programs, excluding the possibility for an education in work psychology.

Initially, I was discouraged – how would I take courses and gain research experience in work psychology, if my university had no program? After scouring GSU's website and asking peers and professors, I found the solution – the cross-registration program. The cross-registration program allows undergraduates to take courses at other institutions that are not offered at their home institution. I found two courses, I-O psychology and engineering psychology, to take at Georgia Tech, and completed the cross-registration process.

Though incredibly valuable, the process is quite complicated, so here are a few tips if you plan to use it. Cross-registered students only secure a seat in a course once students at the host institution are given ample time

to register. Considering this, I advise that you register at GSU for a full course load just in case. Also, ensure that you can travel between campuses comfortably. I went to GSU and Georgia Tech on alternating weekdays, which worked well. Attending two schools simultaneously is a very different experience. Jumping from campus to campus may leave you feeling disconnected. Try to stay involved at GSU!

Ultimately, my experience strengthened my commitment to pursuing a post-secondary degree in I-O psychology. The benefits significantly outweighed any hassle associated with the process of cross-registration. In conclusion, if GSU does not address your primary interests in psychology, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the cross-registration program. Do not limit your growth and achievements by using only the conventional resources available to you. Always explore your options, ask for guidance from those around you, and make sure to make the most out of your undergraduate career! **Ψ**

RELATED RESOURCES

<http://registrar.gsu.edu/registration/cross-registration/>
Application Deadline (Fall) - July 26

COURSES AT NEARBY UNIVERSITIES

Kennesaw State

- > Psychology of Religion
- > Clinical and Counseling Psychology
- > Ethics and Professional Issues in Applied Psychology
- > Psychology of Prejudice & Privilege

Georgia Tech

- > Industrial-Organizational Psychology
- > Engineering Psychology
- > Psychological Testing
- > Psychology of Creativity and Art
- > Human Abilities

IN YOUR FIELD

Forensic Psychology: What it is, and What it is Not

James Duffy

Forensic Psychology is an emerging area of study that focuses on the interaction between psychology and the law. Many people are misled by media's portrayal of psychology within the criminal justice system (e.g. shows like *Criminal Minds*), and are under the impression that forensic psychology leads to a career in 'criminal profiling'. Popular culture depicts profilers using what they know about the psychology of criminals to predict what the criminal's next moves are, or how to better identify the perpetrator. As heartbreaking as it may be, this is a distorted portrayal of forensic psychology. In fact, there is no actual job within the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) with the title of 'criminal profiler'.

However, the media does not have it all wrong; there is indeed a Behavior Analysis Unit (BAU) within the FBI, which relates to forensic psychology. To work for the BAU, you must first work as a police officer, achieving the rank of Detective. Then, you must work as a special agent for the FBI and eventually apply to work within the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC).

Forensic psychology tends to focus on the application of psychology within the courtroom and prison system. This field is relatively new, originating in the 1970's, but has since expanded tremendously, with more opportunities arising as it develops. Many forensic psychologists are university professors who do research and serve as forensic consultants. Others work in independent practices.

One example of a realistic role for forensic psychologists includes their involvement in the courtroom as expert eyewitnesses. Many years of psychological research have uncovered the reality that

eyewitness testimonies are often unreliable, despite the witness's confidence in their assertions. Forensic psychologists are able to provide unique perspectives and insights on eyewitness testimonies and its limitations. Forensic psychologists also consider how the court system can cause additional stress and anxiety (especially in juvenile cases), potentially interfering with the judicial process.

Other forensic psychologists address the mental health of people within prison and jail systems, including patrol officers who may have experienced tremendous distress on the job. This type of work typically requires a PhD; however, some positions within forensic psychology can be obtained with a master's degree. If you are interested in going to graduate school for Forensic Psychology, I suggest checking out this comprehensive guide of graduate programs, created by the forensic psychology division of the American Psychological Association.

Ψ

RELATED RESOURCES

Forensic Psychology Division of the APA:
<http://www.apadivisions.org/division-41/education/programs/guide.pdf>

National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) website:
<https://www.fbijobs.gov/611.asp>

Information on graduate programs in Psychology: *Graduate Studies in Psychology, 13th edition*

Community Psychology at Work in Unexpected Places

Julia Mangia

This past October, I attended a reproductive justice conference hosted by Agnes Scott College. Reproductive justice is the idea that all individuals have the right to make decisions and exercise choice concerning their sexual health, regardless of economic, social, or political standing. Promoting reproductive rights is something that I have been passionate about and is the reason I found community psychology (CP) so appealing. CP provides guiding principles that form the foundational training to create change in communities. Valuing diversity, recognizing existing strengths within the community, and addressing issues through social change are just some of the guiding principles echoed throughout CP. In addition, CP teaches leaders to empower individuals in the community to advocate for themselves. I saw community psychology as a toolbox of skills that I could use during and beyond my time in college.

At the conference, I witnessed the aforementioned principles of CP at work, despite the fact that I was the only psychology student in attendance. While this may lead you to question the value of earning a degree in CP, I assure you that my education thus far has led me to become a more confident and effective participant in social justice movements. My education has equipped me with the skills to organize and advocate for what I feel is important. Many community members (including myself) lack expert training, yet possess the potential to become powerful agents of change. Similarly, many of the speakers at the conference, from agencies such as the Atlanta Racial Justice Action Center or SPARK, employed the guidelines and principles of CP in their work without the formal schooling or title. The speakers inspired others not by wowing them

with a degree, but by being knowledgeable and powerful members of their community.

The insights that I gained at the conference were invaluable and uplifting. We may not all go on to pursue a master's or doctoral degree; we simply may not all have the time or finances to do that. What most of us studying psychology do possess, however, is the aspiration to help others and promote well-being. We need a mix of both - the community psychologists and the community members - to reach great heights.

I hope to one day continue my education in community psychology, but until then, I intend to use the skills that I have developed during my time at GSU to promote social justice surrounding reproductive health. I hope that you too, will get creative in achieving your ultimate goals, whether it is fulfilling a helping role as a counselor or educator, or as an agent of change in your community. Ψ

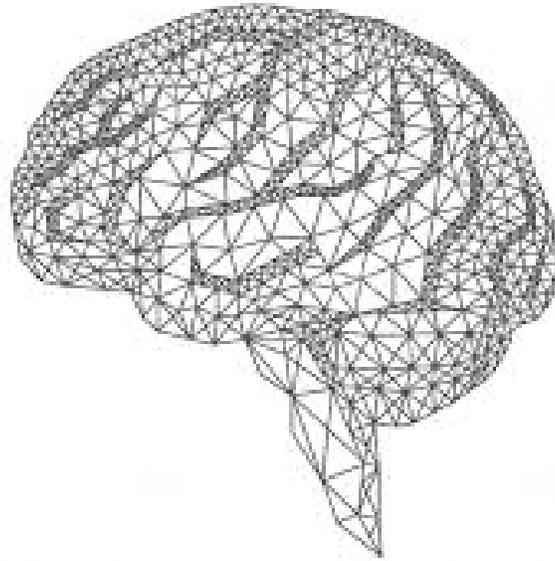
RELATED RESOURCES

Community Psychology concentration:
<http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwpsy/7686.html>

Office of Civic Engagement (OCE): service.gsu.edu



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