

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Department of Psychology

PSYC 3405 Undergraduate Practicum in Applied Psychology

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Class Meetings: (see below)

Location: Colvard 4014

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Prerequisites (*Portrait of an Effective Helper*)

Although there is no such thing as a “perfect helper,” certain attributes are essential to being effective in helping people. Ideally, a helper is capable of:

1. *self-honesty*: you are aware of your strengths and weaknesses. Who you are as a “person” is your most valuable skill in the helping professions. Realize that you will be unable to inspire others to do that which you are unable or unwilling to do in your own life.
2. *openness to learning*: you must have a basic curiosity and eagerness to learn. You must recognize that there are many things that you do not know and that learning *never* ends. You must be very receptive to feedback, including negative feedback.
3. *interpersonal skills*: your people skills will be essential for connecting with people (clients, other interns, and staff).
4. *responsibility*: As a practicum student, you represent the University to agency staff; as a “volunteer,” you represent a professional-in-training to the clients/patients. By accepting a position with an agency, you are agreeing to act in a professional manner and to serve as a role model to clients and other students. Please note that unprofessional behavior (such as being late or absent, seeming unmotivated, being critical or negative) are grounds for immediate termination and receiving a failing (“no credit”) grade.
5. *compassion and empathy*: Helping others begins with a fundamental respect for each individual, especially those who are suffering or in unfortunate circumstances. As a helper, your goal should be to try to see each person’s world through his or her eyes. Empathy is the foundation of helping. A lack of concern or appreciation for the misfortune of others is a guarantee that you will be ineffective.

6. *tolerance and flexibility*. Helping others requires a great deal of tolerance for diversity and flexibility. You will be expected to interact effectively with individuals from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Your ability and willingness to try to comprehend their unique perspective are essential. You will in fact learn the most from clients whose backgrounds and experiences are foreign to you.

By accepting to your practicum placement, you are agreeing to these principles. In the same vein, you are also agreeing to submit to a drug screen, criminal background check, and pre-placement training if required by the agency. If you have questions or concerns about any of these requirements or principles, please let me know. If for any reason you decide to change your mind about participation, please *inform me immediately*.

Required text: Corey & Corey (2015). *Becoming a helper (7th ed)*. Cengage Publishing. The bookstore has hard copies; an e-book is also available for rent. The Canvas weekly quizzes are based on the 7th edition, so don't get the older edition.



Course goals

1. To provide an opportunity of learning, discovery, understanding, intellectual challenge, and skill development via direct, practical, hands-on experience related to psychology.
2. To assume some significant, independent responsibilities with potential for growth, development, and achievement.
3. To learn about the practical application of the theory and findings of psychology, acquiring new skills and attitudes, trying new techniques, and responding to feedback with an openness to changing your behavior.
4. To make a contribution to a human service agency and its clients.

Requirements

1. Provide high quality service at least 8 contact hours per week, depending on course credits, in direct services activities at the agency (does *not* include travel time).
Maintain perfect attendance and promptness, engage in professional-type interactions with clients and staff, and make significant contributions to client progress.

Minimum on-site hours required: 2 credits - 90 hours; 3 credits – 120 hours; 4 credits – 160 hours.

2. Have regular, on-site supervision by an experienced professional. The organization supervisor:
 - should be committed to assisting with the education of the student
 - should meet with the student weekly for feedback, questions, discussion, etc..
 - must ensure a safe, effective learning environment for the student
 - will verify a record of time the student serves at the agency
 - should have regular contact with the university supervisor
 - will provide a semester-end evaluation of the student's work
3. Attend **required** seminars on the following dates from 10:30 to 11:45 in Colvard 4014 (NOT necessarily the room listed in Banner).

Scheduled class meetings:

- Friday August 24
- Friday September 14
- Friday September 28
- Friday October 12
- Friday November 9
- Friday November 30

Before each class meeting, prepare to describe your current experiences, insights, discoveries, problems, etc. For each reading assignment (see reading outline below), read the material carefully and come prepared to contribute to the discussion. Note that I may periodically collect your homework for review. **Attendance is required for every seminar.** Missed meetings must be excused and work has to be completed. If you miss a seminar meeting, you may receive an Incomplete and be required to make-up the work during the following semester.

1. Maintain a time sheet and a journal to record your activities and observations. The time sheet should provide a brief listing of days, hours, sites, and activity. The journal, which will be turned in regularly, should be *typed* and should include entries for *each day* at the agency. In about 1 typed pages for each day, describe your reflections about the following:
 - understanding people with psychological difficulties
 - working effectively with clients
 - working successfully with agencies and staff
 - discovering your own strengths, weaknesses, and interests
 - evaluating your experience in the agency and course
2. Develop a **special project** at the agency. Examples include a new series of group activities, a handbook for resources, or a new component for a client's treatment. Summarize your project in class and submit a brief written report.
3. Prepare a **final written report** of approximately 2 typed pages summarizing and evaluating your experience.

4. Take and pass the weekly quiz on Canvas.
5. Grades are on a pass/no credit basis.

Seminar Format

For each class, some of the time will be spent on reporting on progress and experiences in the agency, and some class time will be devoted to discussing the readings and participating in exercises.

Check Canvas **regularly** for reading assignments and quizzes.

Tentative Seminar Schedule

Class Meeting	Topic
1.	The helping professions and training
2.	Self-exploration
3.	The helping process
4.	Diversity and values
5.	Setting limits and boundaries; ethics
6.	Community, groups, and self-care

IMMEDIATE READING ASSIGNMENT:

As soon as you start going to the site, or sooner, you must read the section on confidentiality, privacy, and dual relationships in chapter 8 of the textbook.

RESOURCES

Online resources:

Ethical standards: http://www.apa.org/ethics/code2002.html#10_06

Careers in Psychology: <http://psyccareers.apa.org/>

<http://www.socialpsychology.org/career.htm#analyses>

Careers and opportunities in Counseling: <http://www.counseling.org/Students/>

Careers in Forensic Psychology:

1). http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/sch_cas.psy/career_paths/forensic/career08.htm

(Forensic Psychology? It's not "Silence of the Lambs," sorry).

2). <http://www.psychologyinfo.com/forensic/>

Getting into graduate school for Psychology:

1). <http://www.apa.org/students/student3.html>

2). <http://www.socialpsychology.org/clinrank.htm>

(includes a list of all possible graduate degrees and programs in Psychology)

3). <https://clas-pages.uncc.edu/richard-mcanulty/wp-content/uploads/sites/268/2013/01/TipsForApplyingToGradSchool.pdf>

Other Information About Graduate School Applications

A. The Seven Deadly Sins of Applying to Psych Grad Schools

Here are seven things you definitely don't want to do as you are preparing your graduate school applications:

- Give your professors only three weeks of notice about writing your letters of recommendation for you. That way you can make sure that they are annoyed and angry with you while they write them.
- Don't do any background research to find out what the program you are applying to really focuses on. That way you can make sure that you are completely wasting the committee's time by applying to a program that isn't even what you think it is.
- Don't even try to find out what the average GPA and GRE scores are for the program you're applying to. That way you'll be sure to either be way out of your league or way overqualified for the programs you're applying to.
- Ask your friends and family members whether a graduate program is a high-quality program instead of looking at how it is ranked by legitimate ranking systems.

- That way you can be sure that you get really useless advice about the quality of the programs that you are applying to.
- Don't read the web sites of the graduate programs you are applying to, and don't carefully read the directions on the applications that you are completing. That way you can present yourself to the admissions committee as someone who is too lazy to follow instructions.
 - Don't bother looking at the cost of the graduate program, the cost of living in the area that the program is located in, or the financial aid opportunities that will be available to you. That way you can be in debt for most of the rest of your life.
 - Don't let anyone who is smarter than you read over your statement of purpose/application essay before you send it. That way you can ensure that the faculty members on the admissions committee think that you are a terrible writer.
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- B. How to Write Application Essays (With Sample Essays Provided)

Competitive Applicants for Clinical Ph.D. Programs

Competitive applicants for Clinical Psychology Ph.D. programs will typically meet *at least* the criteria below. Note that a high percentage of applicants who meet many of the following criteria **still do not gain admission** to doctoral programs -- remember that there are few fields that offer such a high degree of competitiveness for admission into Ph.D. programs.

Typically, Counseling Psychology Ph.D. programs are slightly to somewhat less competitive than Clinical programs, and most Psy.D. programs are less competitive than Ph.D. programs.

Criteria

- *GPA*: 3.5 or higher
- *GRE Scores*: See below. Most top schools report average Verbal and Quantitative scores in range of 160-163 each.
- *Research Experience*: The more, the better. Having work published in a scientific journal is especially helpful. Presenting scientific work at professional conferences, though less impressive than publication, will also help your application.
- *Letters of Reference*: You will need at least three very solid references. At least two should be academic references in nearly all cases. It is helpful if your references can attest to the traits listed in the [linked document](#). You will also find my policy on letters of reference within the document.
- *Clinical Experience*: The great majority of programs are much more concerned with the amount of *research experience* than the amount of clinical experience you have gained to this point. However, clinical experience can

only help your application and may be somewhat helpful to your chances of admission depending on the programs to which you apply.

- *Other Experiences:* Most programs place little weight on the types of unrelated experiences you have compiled. It can be helpful to list these experiences on your resume, but do not expect them to help your application very much.

Note that these are only *rough estimates*, as programs tend to vary somewhat in their expectations. However, it is likely safe to say that if you do not meet the above credentials, you are quite unlikely to gain admittance to the great majority of clinical psychology Ph.D. programs. It would be wise to also consult the rough criteria for [masters program admissions](#).

More Tips about Graduate School Essays/Personal Statements:

Writing a graduate admissions essay is a big task. You must introduce yourself, explain why you're a good match to the program, toot your own horn, avoid tooting your horn too much, and entice faculty to invite you to attend. Before you submit your admissions essay, run down the following checklist. Don't simply check each item off, but stop and think about whether you really satisfied each criterion. Did you:

- Get feedback on the content from at least one faculty member ?
- Address the question or topic?
- Avoid negativity?
- Mention your strengths?
- Use positive language?
- Write concisely?
- Break your essay into paragraphs?
- Check your grammar?
- Spell check?
- Proofread your essay?
- Solicit proofreading and feedback from others?
- Discuss your goals and plans for the future?
- Make it clear that you're a good fit?
- Discuss how your interests match the faculty?
- Discuss how your goals fit with program training?
- Show what is in it for them, that is, what you offer the program (e.g., hard work, research skills)?
- Avoid being overly personal?
- Avoid referring to your mental health or history of personal problems?
- Avoid giving excuses for grades and experiences?
- Provide concrete relevant examples?
- Avoid rambling and too much detail?
- Discuss relevant academic, volunteer, and employment experiences?

- Avoid discussing work and extracurricular activities that are not relevant to your abilities as a graduate student?
- Write an essay that is not too long (more than 2 pages), but also not too short (e.g., less than 1 page)?
- Did you entice your reader?

Personal Statements

What is the purpose of a personal statement?

The personal statement is generally used by graduate school screening committees to supplement the information presented in the rest of your application. Because most of the information in your applications is factual and usually statistical in nature, the personal statement allows the committee to learn about you in a different manner. Personal statements can give the committee four different ways to learn more about you. First, they are used to learn why you are interested in graduate school. (What got you interested in your field of study, what are your career goals, and how motivated are you about your choice). Second, it is used to evaluate how well your interests correspond to the interests of the program to which you are applying. (Are your interests consistent with what that particular graduate school can provide to you?) Third, it is used to assess your writing ability. (Do you write in a coherent, organized, and succinct fashion?) Fourth, the personal statement is used to help differentiate those applicants who are in the middle range, with good, but not outstanding, grades and test scores.

What material should be covered in a personal statement?

First, answer all questions that are asked of you. Address all aspects of the questions and be organized and thorough. If the application gives you the ambiguous "write a personal statement", however, your essay should be an organized and well-written statement in which you integrate your various academic, research, practical, and life experiences in a manner that shows your determination to pursue your goals. Also show that the program to which you are applying will maximize your ability to pursue those goals. This material you are presenting in your personal statement should be well thought out and well presented. If you are unsure about how your personal statement presents itself, have others such as professors, advisors, and writing experts, read it.

What other specific points should I consider when writing a personal statement?

1. DO NOT make mistakes in grammar, spelling, or punctuation; (see how bad it looks!)
2. Conform to the required structural specifications (e.g., 1 page, single spaced). If there are no specifications, no more than 1 single spaced or 2 double spaced pages is a good rule.
3. Do not use cute fonts or colored paper - standard font and resume quality paper will make the best impression.
4. Show individuality without being "odd".
5. Avoid discussing personal problems.
6. Avoid using clichés such as "I want to help people" or "I want to make the world a better place".
7. Be straightforward and honest. If you have researched graduate schools thoroughly then you are honestly applying to the schools that can serve you best.

8. Write with confidence but not arrogance. Let the committee know you are enthusiastic, determined, and ready for graduate school. Do not write the statement that you know everything and the school would be lucky to have you.
9. Demonstrate that you have researched the school to which you are applying such as the type of program, general research interests of the faculty, etc., and that it would suit your goals. Be careful not to be so specific however, that you narrow your options and decrease your chances of being accepted.
10. As stated before, proofread it! Have a friend or family member read it, a faculty member read it, and take it to a writing center on campus.

The information above was based on the following references:

- Keith-Speigel, P. (1991) *The complete guide to graduate school admission: Psychology and related fields*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: Hillsdale, NJ.
- Norcross, J.C., Sayette, M.A., & Mayne, T.J. (1996) *Insider's guide to graduate programs in clinical and counseling psychology*. The Guilford Press: New York.
- Hope College Psychology Web Page.
- Mississippi State University Psychology Web Page.
- Petersons.com

C. Asking for Letters of Recommendation

Guest Author - Stephanie A. Allen

Now that you've decided to apply to graduate school, it's time to ask for letters of recommendation. As arbitrary as it may seem, your letters of recommendation may be the easiest items to obtain for your application packet, but may also be the only items over which you have very little control. For this reason, it is extremely important to start thinking about potential referees before you start your graduate school applications.

The first thing many grad school applicants worry about is who to ask for letters of recommendation. Ideally, it should be professors or instructors with whom you have a good relationship, and who know the quality of your work. If you are an undergraduate student, or someone who is currently associated with a university or college, finding someone to write letters should be fairly simple. However, if you have been out of school for a while, say, over ten years, then it may be more difficult to find a professor who remembers you. In this case, it would be wise to try to contact your old professors and gently remind them of who you are. Otherwise, you can ask your current employer, former guidance counselor, or someone who is familiar with your ability to do graduate level work. If you are unsure that your graduate program will approve of doing this, call the graduate director and ask. Make no mistake; you do not want to ask your friends, relatives, or professors who have no idea who you are to write letters for you. Your referees need to be people who can write a thoughtful, detailed letter about your ability to do graduate level work.

Just as important as whom to ask for letters, is when to ask them. As soon as you know you want to apply to graduate school, you should start looking for at least three people (and possibly a back up) to write letters for you. A good time frame is about four weeks before the letters are due. Additionally, let your referees know up front how many letters you will need, as they will need to tailor them for each school to which you are applying. Of course, some professors may send out a standard letter, but anyone who is truly advocating on your behalf will want to do more. With that in mind, be mindful of asking for too many requests in one application cycle. Professors are extremely busy, and have more to do than write you twenty letters of reference in a week's time.

Although more and more grad school applications have converted to an online application system, there are still schools that will require your referees to mail in a letter. In this case, it is standard for you to send your referee all the materials he or she will need to mail the letter for you. This includes an addressed envelope, along with any forms that need to be filled out. Some schools may require you to send all of your application materials together, and in that case you will need to still provide the information, but you will also need to get the letter, which has been signed and sealed, and send it along with your other materials.

One other aspect of the recommendation letter process, I've noticed, is a little difficult for some students. It is very important that you waive the right to view your referee's letters. Most professors will not write letters for students who do not waive their right to view it. Why is this important? Well, referees need to be able to write unhindered regarding your ability to do graduate level study. They may address your strengths and weaknesses, along with other aspects of your potential. These things may not always be favorable. Additionally, it is the way it has been done in academia for decades, and probably will not change. Just because it is your right to see the letters doesn't mean that you should.

Therefore, you should carefully consider who you ask to write your letters of recommendation. It would probably not be in your best interest to ask professors who barely know you, nor would it be wise to ask the professor whose class you blew off. The reality is that people do not forget when they have been disrespected, when you were a less than attentive student, or if you did fair to middling work. So be careful and only ask for letters from people who genuinely believe you are capable of doing graduate work, and people whom you have not alienated in some way. A former professor of mine made it clear that if he could not write a good letter of recommendation for a student, he would not write one at all. Likewise, only ask professors who you feel confident will write you a "good" letter.

D. [Preparing Yourself for the GRE](#)

<http://amby.com/GRE/>

Overview of the GRE

The Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) General Test is a multiple-choice admission test for applicants to graduate schools. The GRE is a computer-adaptive test (CAT), and consists of three scored sections:

- Two essays to be written on the computer: Analysis of an Argument and Analysis of an Issue (introduced in October 2002)
- One 45-minute, 28-question Math section: Problem Solving and Quantitative Comparison
- One 30-minute, 30-question Verbal section: Sentence Completions, Antonyms, Analogies, and Reading Comprehension
- In addition, there may be a marketing survey, or one or two experimental sections, which can be Verbal or Quantitative.

It is important to understand what a CAT is and how it works. A CAT is a computer-adaptive test, whose software calculates your score based on the number of questions you answer correctly, the difficulty of the questions you answer, and the number of questions you complete. When you take the GRE CAT, you'll begin each section with a medium-level question. If you answer the question correctly, the computer will raise your score and give you a harder question. If you answer the question incorrectly, your score will decrease and you'll be given an easier question. The process repeats for each question in the section, to arrive at your final score for that section.

Each of the multiple-choice sections is scored on a scale of 200 to 800. The average scores for the GRE are 150-152. The Analytical Writing section is scored on a scale of 0 to 6.

For getting a graduate degree in psychology:

- [UCLA recommends](#) scores in the range of 162-164 V, 161-163 Q, and 4.5-5.0 AW.
- [UC Berkeley reports](#) that average GRE scores in its psychology program are 161 V, 161 Q, and 4.5 AW.
- [The University of Minnesota says](#) that its most recent psychology class had scores averaging 160 V and 156 Q.

- See more at: <http://www.kaptest.com/blog/grad-school-insider/2014/11/24/average-gre-scores-top-grad-school-programs/#sthash.EWDr2Zj3.dpuf>

Many students want to know how important the GRE will be in determining their entrance into the school of their choice. It really depends on the school. Some schools view them as a necessary but minor part of the process while other schools place a much heavier emphasis on the scores. You can probably determine this by talking to the schools themselves and studying their admissions requirements. Either way, however, it is important to keep in mind that your scores are a major factor in determining eligibility for financial aid.

Preparing for the GRE

Prepare? Perhaps you are thinking that having gone through a barrage of standardized tests in your past and having completed a college education there should be no need to prepare. The answer is yes and no. First, it always is helpful to have practiced and know the form of a test before walking in the door so you spend less time deciphering directions and format and more time answering questions. Second, there are likely to be some questions (particularly in the math section) that look rather alien unless you are prepared. Most of us learned our basic Algebra and Geometry somewhere along the line, probably in high school. Sadly, some if not much of that information seems to have trickled out of our brains as we crammed them with other information in more recent years. As one test taker put it, "If you know Calculus but forgot fractions - you are in trouble!"

One good source to prepare for the GRE is www.gre.org. They have a variety of programs available either FREE or for a small sum that will not only allow you to practice the types of questions you will experi-

ence on the GRE, but also provide opportunities to write essays and submit them for actual scoring and feedback so that you can improve your scores.

If you are looking for some more advanced help, you can access a number of on-line test prep services. They generally offer various levels of test preparation including workbooks, online classes, and private tutoring that will help you to improve your test taking skills and prepare you for everything you will face on the GRE.

There are countless other resources available on the topic. Any bookstore you walk into should have several books (older books are fine; the GRE has not changed much) available with practice exams and tips and advice for test takers. Do not be overwhelmed, but do take the time to prepare yourself so that you know what to expect going into the test.

In all your preparations it is important to remember to leave yourself enough time before your application deadlines so that you can study and take the GRE and allow time (up to four weeks) for the scores to arrive. While it would be unreasonable to expect testing to be fun, at least if you have taken time to prepare you should feel satisfied that you have worked hard and will do well on your test. Good luck!