PSY 4950
Capstone Experience in Psychology:
Promoting Psychology Literacy

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Prerequisite/Co-requisite: A designated capstone class (see catalog)

Course Objectives: As a capstone experience, students in this class will reflect on their training and experiences as psychology majors to promote psychological literacy, defined as the adaptive capacity to apply psychological science to achieve personal, career, and social needs. There are five overall goals

> Students will explore and articulate their own vision of human nature from accounts of the history and nature of broad systems of psychology.
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> Students will integrate their research knowledge and experience to think critically about psychology as a science.
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> Students will consider how to apply the discipline in pursuing careers in the discipline or discipline-related jobs.
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> Students will examine ways to apply the discipline to their personal and civic lives.
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> Students will consider how their training and experiences can be used going forward to act in a psychologically literate manner in their particular life context.

Grading: There are four short papers for the class (worth 10% each) which address each outcome goal. These papers will help psychology majors reflect on the value and significance of their experiences in major and knowledge of the discipline in general and where capstone project in particular. These papers will *peer graded* to promote deeper discussions and understandings of student outcomes. A fourth paper (worth 15%) will update and expand the earlier papers, connecting their views of the science of psychology and the nature of human nature to their professional plans, personal life, and social responsibilities going forward. The paper is designed to help the student consolidate their identity as a psychology major whose can use all their acquired resources solve individual and social problems. Journaling will also be assigned in each of the modules and is the primary means that students will review, discuss, and reflect on the material. Finally, students must arrange to take the ETS Field Test, although the cost will be borne by the department.

Distribution of Grades:

- Short Papers (4).....40%
  - Theoretical Statement.....10%
  - Psychology as a Science.....10%
  - Career Plans.....10%
  - Personal and Civic Application..10%
- Integrative Paper.....15%

- Journaling(5).....40%
- ETS Field Test.....5%

Course Structure: The overarching question, which will be a theme running throughout the course is, *Can the beliefs attitudes skills and knowledge you learned as an undergraduate psychology major be integrated and applied to your personal, professional, and social life going forward?*

The question is central to promoting students' psychological literacy After an introduction in which we set up this question and why it is so important to answer it (Module 1, 1 week), the class will address four critical aspects to the question.

The first of these (Module 2, 3 weeks) requests that students reflect on and articulate their own perspective on nature of human nature. The history and assumptions of four views of human nature are reviewed -- biological, cognitive, humanistic, and socio-cultural-contextual. Students will journal their reaction to each account and write a short paper based on their major experiences and disciplinary knowledge articulating a view, in which they integrate these view into a coherent account.

The second critical aspect of the class (Module 3, 3 weeks) involves students critically evaluating the scientific basis of the discipline. Students will again journal their reactions to papers defending and challenging how psychology is a scientific discipline by its processes progressively and coherently integrating reliable findings over time. Students will be asked to write a second short paper applying the characterization of psychology as a coherent, progressive and reliable science to some aspects of their experience with the discipline.

The third critical aspect (Module 4, 3 weeks) reviews students' career opportunities which directly or indirectly involves psychology. The review will explore key issues in bachelors-related (e.g., what marketable skills are acquired by BA psychology students) and graduate-related (e.g., graduate degrees and programs in psychology) psychology careers. Students will journal their reactions to the review, outlining their career plans and write a short paper about their career plans and how they expect to use the discipline.

The fourth critical aspect (Model 5, 3 weeks) address personal and civic applications of students' psychology background. Students will carefully distinguish scientific from pseudoscientific applications of psychology-related ideas in everyday life and explore ways of applying psychology that can impact their personal life and their communities. Students will write a short paper about their opportunities to apply psychology in personal and civic spheres of their life.

The final Module (Module 6, 1 week) will prepare students to complete the final integrative paper, in which their view of psychology as a science of human nature will be described, and its application to their personal, professional and civic lives will be explained. The paper invites students to update and integrate the four previous papers they wrote thereby connecting the four critical sections of the course.

Class Policies: For a review of class policies, click here. For a late contract, click here.