

Experimental Research Program Handbook

Fall 2011

Experimental Psychology

- The experimental method is used to address research questions in efforts to increase our understanding of mental life
- Experimental psychology is a *methodological approach* rather than a subject, and *encompasses a variety of fields within psychology*

Goals of the program are for students to:

- 1) develop skills in research **design** and **analysis** so one has the ability both to **conduct** and **evaluate** research
- 2) develop broad knowledge of substantive areas of psychological research
- 3) to develop expertise in one research area

Experimental Research Program (ERP)

- includes both core (required) and elective courses
- culminates in the completion of a thesis
 - ❖ 2 year plan

Required (28 credits)

- PEP (0; taken 4 times)
- Univariate Statistics and Experimental Methodology (4)
- Social Psychology (4)
- Learning, Memory, and Cognition (4)
- Advanced Data Analysis with Computer Applications (4)
- Foundations of Cognitive and Behavioral Neuroscience (4)
- Research & Thesis (4; taken twice for a total of 8 credits)

Elective (12 credits)

- Mental Health & Aging (4)
 - Advanced Perception (4)
 - Group Dynamics (4)
 - History of Psychology (4)
 - Special Problems in Psychology (1-4 or 1-12)
 - Clinical Psychopharmacology (4)
 - Health Psychology (4)
 - Physiological Psychology (4)
- ... or other relevant courses (you need to get approval)

Typical program sequence

- Year 1, Fall
 - PSY 511 Univariate statistics
 - PSY 677 Foundations of cognitive and behavioral neuroscience
 - PSY 509 Proseminar in experimental psychology (PEP)
 - Elective course
 - Identify an advisor and start thinking about thesis research

Typical program sequence

- Year 1, Spring
 - PSY 611 Advanced data analysis
 - PSY 562 Learning, memory, and cognition
 - PSY 509 PEP
 - Elective course
 - Develop a thesis proposal
 - It is ideal to have it approved by the beginning of Year 2

Typical program sequence

- Year 2, Fall
 - PSY 699 Thesis (4 credits)
 - PSY 525 Social psychology
 - PSY 509 PEP
 - Elective course
 - Conduct thesis research

Typical program sequence

- Year 2, Spring
 - PSY 699 Thesis (4 credits)
 - PSY 509 PEP
 - Defend a thesis



Thesis timeline

- 1st year
 - Identify a thesis advisor
 - Form a thesis committee
 - Your advisor + two faculty members
 - Develop a thesis proposal

Thesis timeline

- Before the beginning of 2nd year
 - Present your proposal to the committee and get it approved
 - You need to write a proposal and give an oral presentation
 - Your proposal will look like a complete research paper without actual data
 - It is typical that your proposal is not accepted right away – don't plan on presenting your proposal a day before the fall semester begins!

Thesis timeline

- 2nd year
 - Register for PSY 699
 - You can do so only after your proposal has been approved
 - Conduct research and write a thesis
 - Defend your thesis (before the last day of classes in the spring semester)
 - Written thesis + oral presentation
 - Again, it is typical that you need to revise the thesis after the defense meeting. Plan accordingly!

Making the most of your experience at CSU

Faculty are here to help you achieve your goals:

- Get to know the faculty
 - You will learn many things through individual communication with the faculty, especially with your advisor
- Find a faculty advisor sooner than later
- Seek feedback on your performance
- Find out what resources and opportunities are available for you

ERP faculty

- Sherry Ball (VA Medical Center)
 - Retinal Neurophysiology
- Brian Blake
 - Consumer Behavior
- Conor McLennan
 - Language Perception

ERP faculty

- Andrew Slifkin
 - Control of Action
- Albert Smith
 - Memory and Health
- Ben Wallace
 - Perception
- Naohide Yamamoto
 - Spatial Cognition

Making the most of your experience at CSU

- outline and communicate your short- and long-term goals
 - what do you want to have accomplished
 - ❖ at the end of each semester?
 - what would you like to do after you graduate
- develop a strategy for achieving your goals
- *map out a reasonable timeline*
 - everything takes longer than you initially anticipate

Making the most of your experience at CSU

Balance your course work, research, and life:

➤ ***time flies***

❖ so be efficient and focused

❖ A little over a year from now, some of you will be applying to Ph.D. programs

➤ only undertake major tasks that will help you achieve your goals. **Don't take on too much!**

➤ Ask faculty for feedback and advice about prioritizing

Making the most of your experience at CSU

Have appropriate expectations:

- faculty will help you learn and develop professionally
 - faculty are **not** here to motivate you or to make you do your work
 - intrinsic motivation is *expected and required*
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- If you are struggling with anything, you need to approach faculty

Making the most of your experience at CSU

Start to develop a professional identity

- Familiarize yourself with a research area of interest
 - ❖ Know contemporary research
 - This will help you if you are interested in Ph.D. programs
- Gain research experience in that area
- Join professional societies and present at conferences
- **Be active**
 - ❖ Ph.D. programs will consider your grad school performance and involvement