PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR CHECKLIST.

FIRST & SECOND YEAR:

COURSEWORK:

• Complete Introduction to Psychology, which is a prerequisite for all upper-division psychology courses except Behavioral Statistics and Human Sexuality, which may be taken concurrently.

• Complete Behavioral Statistics (offered in the fall) and Research Methods (which is offered in the spring). Behavioral Statistics is a prerequisite for Research Methods, and Research Methods is a prerequisite to many upper-division psychology courses.

• Begin to take upper division (3000-level) courses in the major (e.g., Social Psychology, Human Growth & Development, and Abnormal Psychology) or electives that count toward the major. Consider taking BIOL 1107 and BIOL 1108 (for science majors) or BIOL 2148 and BIOL 2149 (Anatomy & Physiology) to fulfill your science sequence requirement, as these courses are prerequisites for several upper division biology classes that count as electives toward the psychology major. In fact, BIOL 2148 itself counts as a psychology elective.

• Consider minors that will be a good complement to your psychology major. Students interested in attending graduate school might consider minors in writing, math, or biology. Students interested in working in clinical or school settings might consider minors in Spanish, sociology, or women’s studies. In other cases, minors in areas like business, coaching, computer science, political science, or religion might be appropriate. If you begin early and plan carefully, you may even be able to complete two minors to complement your major in psychology.

• Build your background by doing some non-assigned reading. Many books and movies are referenced in psychology classes and you will get more from those references if you are familiar with the works that are being referenced. Christmas and summer breaks are a good time to read books like The Mind of a Mnemonist (cognitive psychology), Sybil (abnormal psychology), or A Clockwork Orange (abnormal psychology and learning theory), or books by authors like Oliver Sacks (neuroscience) and Malcolm Gladwell.

• Begin to keep a record of ideas and research topics that are particularly interesting to you. Such a list of ideas can be helpful when you are looking for an idea for a term paper or research project (e.g., for the Survey Research course). Having such a list may also help you identify areas that are particularly interesting to you and, ultimately, graduate programs that are likely to be a good match to your interests.

CAREER PREPARATION:

• Review career-related resources at the Career Center, in the Lewis Library, and on the websites of major professional associations like the American Psychological Association (http://www.apa.org/careers/resources/guides/careers.aspx).

• Begin to investigate possible career paths. If you think graduate school is in your future, you can gain research experience and a valuable line for your resume by volunteering as a research assistant. If you think you want to work in counseling, consider gaining relevant experience as a volunteer or at a part-time or summer job in a field related to your career goals (e.g., at a summer camp or residential treatment facility).
JUNIOR & SENIOR YEAR:

COURSEWORK:

• Plan a tentative schedule that will allow you finish your CORE requirements and to complete the major while taking the courses that are the most interesting and relevant to you. Remember that the Experimental Content courses (i.e., Behavior Analysis, Biological Psychology, and Cognitive Psychology) are only offered in the spring. Students usually complete these courses after they have completed Research Methods, although you may be able to enroll in these courses concurrently with Research Methods with the permission of the instructor.

• Plan to take PSYC 4480: Senior Capstone in Psychology (or an approved equivalent, available some years) during the Interim term of your Junior or Senior Year. Research Methods is a prerequisite for PSYC 4480, but you may be able to enroll with the permission of the instructor as long as you have successfully completed Behavioral Statistics.

• If particular courses are very relevant to your career goals, it may be best to take these during your junior year rather than your senior year so that you will have final grades for these courses when you apply for jobs or to graduate programs. It is advisable for students who are planning to go to graduate school to gain research experience by enrolling in the Survey Research class, volunteering as a research assistant, or completing an Individual Research project.

CAREER PREPARATION:

• Consider joining the Association for Psychological Science (http://www.psychologicalscience.org/), especially if you are interested in research and academic careers, and/or the American Psychological Association (http://www.apa.org/), especially if interested in careers in clinical or counseling psychology. Student discounts are available, and the publications you will receive as a student affiliate may help you develop and refine your career goals.

• Draft a resume, have it approved by the Career Center, and keep it up to date. Also identify any “gaps” in your experience and work to remedy those. Think about what you’d like your resume to look like by the time you graduate and identify things you can do now (e.g., joining student organizations, gaining volunteer experience in a related field, completing an internship, or working as a research assistant) to help you reach that goal by the time you graduate.

• Continue to gain experience at a relevant job or as a volunteer in a research lab or community setting.

SENIOR YEAR:

COURSEWORK:

• Confirm that you are on track to complete all required coursework in the CORE, in the major, and in your minor(s).

CAREER PREPARATION:

• If you are planning to attend graduate school, prepare early; some programs require application materials by the middle of November. You should plan to apply to at least half a dozen different programs, and if you are applying to competitive programs a dozen is even better. Be sure to keep a copy of your application materials for your files.

• If you are planning to apply to graduate school, you will probably need to take the GRE by mid-November of your senior year. Check with the Career Center to see when a practice administration will be held. Other practice tests are generally available from http://www.ets.org/.

• Whether you are applying for jobs or to graduate schools, you will need to identify people who are willing to act as references and to provide recommendations for you. You should, of course, also think about how you conduct yourself around these potential references… Remember, the best way to assure that your references will say you are mature, reliable, and hard-working is to BE mature, reliable, and hard-working!

• If you are applying for jobs, you will want to begin making contacts and sending out applications in the spring of your senior year. Check newspaper ads and postings in the Career Center, and attend recruitment fairs. --And be sure to let people know you are looking; networking can be an excellent source of leads.