

Undergraduate Research in Psychology
Honors Thesis & Elon College Fellows Projects
(revised Fall 2024)

Thesis and Project Goals

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the theory and related empirical evidence pertaining to a particular topic.
- Understand and develop research questions
- Articulate a cogent argument either overall (non-empirical) or in support of an empirical study.
- Enhance skills
 - Research methodology
 - Critical reading of primary and secondary source material
 - Synthesis of theory and empirical findings
 - Communication: written and oral
- Produce a high -quality product and disseminate findings.

Psychologists contribute to our understanding of human behavior through the application of various types of scholarship. Although each form of scholarship may emphasize different skills, they all accomplish the goals for thesis and projects.

- Quantitative Empirical Research (basic or applied)
- Qualitative Empirical Research (basic or applied)
- Quantitative Literature Review (meta-analysis)
- Qualitative Literature Review
- Theory Development or Integration

Just as there are many forms of scholarship, there are different approaches to mentoring. The nature of the scholarship to be done, individual faculty philosophies of how to best accomplish the goals of undergraduate research, and individual faculty strengths all contribute to a faculty person's approach.

- Some faculty may have specific projects available whereas others may mentor projects less directly related to their own research.
- You may expect to work alone, in the context of a lab group, or some combination.

Academic Credit for Honors Thesis and ECF Projects Mentored by Psychology Faculty

HNR 4998 and PSY 4999 hours earned with a Psychology faculty mentor count as Psychology elective hours by default. However, Honors Fellows and Elon College Fellows who successfully meet all the requirements of their respective programs are eligible to apply to have four hours of 4998/4999 counted toward the senior capstone requirement in the major (i.e., the hours may take the place of PSY 4970 or PSY 4971). In that case, four hours of 4998/4999 will count toward the senior capstone, and the remaining 2-4 hours will count as elective hours in psychology.

Students who wish to use this substitution must complete the **Undergraduate Research Substitution for Senior Seminar Policy form, obtained from your mentor, no later than the fall semester of the senior year.** In cases where a student has not met all of the requirements for the substitution (as determined by the program and/or the faculty mentor), the 4998 or 4999 hours completed will count towards Psychology Electives, but will NOT count toward the senior capstone.

Thesis/Projects Process Outline for Psychology

NOTE: This schedule is recommended but may not apply to all cases.

• Fall semester sophomore year

- Information session for Honors and Elon College Fellows
- Assigning Mentors:
 - The information session provides overview of faculty interests and mentor matching process
 - Students will meet with individual faculty of interest in the weeks following the information session to discuss possible thesis/project work.
 - Students submit a list of desired mentors (three faculty with possible topics) to the Psychology mentor matching coordinator.
 - Students receive notification of mentor assignments before winter break.
 - Students meet with faculty mentors and discuss plans, including projected distribution of hours over junior and senior years, study abroad plans, etc.

• Spring semester of sophomore year

- Completion of PSY 2970 and PSY 3970 preferred by end of sophomore year or fall of junior year
- Some faculty may assign preliminary readings or have students begin attending lab meetings in the spring.

• Junior Year

- Develop a thesis plan (this could occur in spring of sophomore year) – this may make a good “contract” – low level of detail but at least sets the basics.
 - Define general area of research
 - Define expected type of thesis
 - Empirical thesis
 - Quantitative
 - Qualitative
 - Qualitative literature review
 - Quantitative literature review
 - Establish general deadlines
- Thesis proposal (product for first semester of work)
 - Preliminary literature review which establishes the “problem or question”
 - Methodology (as appropriate)
 - IRB approval as needed
 - Submit Proposal to Honors Program

• Junior/Senior Year

- Data collection, coding, and analyses for empirical research projects.

• Senior Year

- Completion of written Thesis or Project
- Dissemination of findings through appropriate presentation(s)