

# Department of Psychology

Psychology is a broad field whose subject matter includes biological, cognitive, developmental, and social perspectives on normal and abnormal behavior. As a science, psychology relies on careful measurement, controlled observation and experimentation, and quantitative analysis to achieve an understanding of thought, feeling, and behavior in humans and other organisms. Discovery through psychological research is emphasized at Oberlin. Students conduct empirical investigations in laboratory courses, participate actively in faculty projects, and engage in independent studies. The Psychology Department at Oberlin is exceptional in both the variety and the depth of the research opportunities it provides.

Psychology majors acquire a thorough grounding in the various subdisciplines that make up the field. These subdisciplines approach the study of behavior from different perspectives and emphasize different levels of analysis. For example, courses in biopsychology focus on processes in the brain and nervous system, and emphasize the molecular, cellular, and biochemical foundations of behavior. Courses in cognitive psychology focus on higher-level psychological operations such as perception, memory, language, and decision-making. Courses in developmental psychology examine the influence of physical maturation and environmental experience on the psychological capacities of the person. Courses in social psychology emphasize the social and cultural forces that shape behavior. Courses in clinical psychology concern themselves with the ways in which human behavior can become disordered and what can be done to ameliorate and prevent those disorders. Together, these complementary views of psychology create a comprehensive picture of human behavior — a view that is both rich in detail and broad in scope. Courses in research methods and laboratory experiences provide students with the tools both to understand and to contribute to the scientific literature upon which the various perspectives are based. Many students also complete internships during Winter Terms or summers in such applied settings as schools, hospitals, and social service agencies or enroll in our Practica in Community Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Autism to round out their Psychology major.

The Psychology faculty considers laboratory experience essential to education in psychology. The department offers an unusually extensive range of laboratory courses in child development, cognition, measurement, psychophysiology, perception, and social and personality psychology for students to learn the "nuts and bolts" of an empirical approach to the study of human behavior. Students are encouraged to undertake research projects of their own and develop their skills in hypothesis construction, research design, data analysis, and scientific writing. Faculty and students often work together on topics in areas of faculty specialization, and faculty members are available to supervise projects developed by students. Recent research projects by students have included the following:

- Beyond Skin Deep: The Effects of Individual Features on Facial Attractiveness
- The Roles of Gender Labeling and Play Styles in Preschool Gender Segregation
- The Relation Between Children's Friendship Conception and Their Sociometric Status
- Effects of Race and Expression of Facial Stimuli on Subjective Ratings and EMG Activity of Blacks and Whites
- An Electrophysiological Investigation of the Semantic Priming of Words and Pictures
- Academic Intrinsic Motivation as a Factor in College Achievement and Student Satisfaction
- Acceptance of False Autobiographical Memories is Influenced by Amount and Type of Rehearsal
- Grouping Preferences in Short Melodies: An Examination of Lerdahl and Jackendorff's Grouping Preference Rules
- Imagining the Ideal Other: Self-Awareness and the Importance of Sharing Similar Moral Values
- Procrastination and Coping with Academic Stress
- Sex Differences in Children's Social Speech Style and Peer Status
- The Effects of Film and Music on Self-Awareness

The psychology curriculum provides excellent training for students who anticipate doing graduate work in psychology. Over the past two decades, Oberlin College has been the baccalaureate origin of more Ph.D.s in Psychology than any other liberal arts institution. At the same time, the curriculum supports other academic and career goals, and

many majors aspire to careers in the helping professions. A significant number enter professional training programs in medicine, law, education, and business, suggesting that a rigorous, scientific approach to understanding human behavior is applicable in many human service-oriented fields.

The varied interests of the faculty provide a range of opportunities for students to do individual reading and research projects. The current faculty and their interests may give you a sense of the teaching and research you would encounter at Oberlin.

### Department of Psychology Faculty

#### Sam C. Carrier

Associate Professor, Ph.D. 1973, University of California, Berkeley. Teaching interests: Psychology and the arts, sensation and perception, motivation and emotion. Research interests: viewing works of art, navigating virtual space.

#### Nancy Darling

Associate Professor, Ph.D. 1990, Cornell University. Teaching interests: Developmental Psychology, research methods, statistics. Research interests: Adolescent social relationships, contextual variation in development, marriage and family.

#### Patricia Ann Dewinstanley

Professor, Ph.D. 1990, University of California, Los Angeles. Teaching interests: Cognitive psychology, eyewitness testimony, applied cognitive psychology. Research interests: Memory and attention.

#### Cynthia A McPherson Frantz

Assistant Professor, Ph.D. 2000, University of Massachusetts. Teaching interests: Research methods, social psychology. Research interests: Social conflict, perspective taking.

#### William J. Friedman

Professor, Ph.D. 1977, University of Rochester. Teaching interest: Developmental psychology. Research interests:

Cognitive development, time concepts in children and adults.

#### Joy E. Hanna

Assistant Professor, Ph.D. 2001, University of Rochester. Teaching interests: Cognitive psychology, psychology of language. Research interests: Language comprehension and coordination in conversations, discourse and sentence processing, computational models of language comprehension and production.

#### F. Stephan Mayer

Associate Professor, Ph.D. 1982, University of Southern California. Teaching interests: Theoretical and applied social psychology, personality. Research interests: Social cognition, prejudice, helping behavior and resistance to change.

#### Albert Porterfield

Associate Professor, Ph.D. 1983, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Teaching interests: Psychopathology, psychophysiology, emotion. Research interests: Brain response to human faces, physiological correlates of emotional processes.

#### Dennison A. Smith

Professor, Ph.D. 1970, University of Massachusetts. Teaching interests: Neuroscience, human biopsychology, animal behavior. Research interests: Neuropharmacology, neuroreceptors, neurophysiology of aggression.

#### Karen Sutton

Professor, Ph.D. 1974, Syracuse University. Teaching interests: Health psychology, personality psychotherapy, research in clinical psychology. Research interests: Behavioral medicine, cognition and obsessive compulsive disorder.

Further information about the Psychology Department at Oberlin, including faculty bios, course information, information about laboratory facilities, etc. can be found online at <http://www.oberlin.edu/psych/>

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