

SU Psychology Capstone



What Is Capstone?

All Psychology majors must complete a capstone to graduate. The capstone requirement can be fulfilled by 8 credits of research (usually 2 semesters with the same professor) or 8 credits of an approved internship (240 hrs; see catalog). Capstone research is usually completed during a student's junior or senior year, and capstone internships are usually completed during the summer following the junior year. Research varies with the professor's interest and style but generally consists of researching and writing a literature review, developing an experimental method (design, measures), collecting and analyzing data, writing a final APA paper, and presenting the results on-campus or off-campus. Research courses and internships are "by permission of instructor" only, meaning that students must receive approval from the supervising professor prior to registering. Capstone options are as follows:

Research in Clinical Psychology

Professor: Dr. Bryan Neighbors, Associate Professor

Degrees: B.S. in Psychology, University of Houston–Clear Lake

M.S. and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, University of Georgia

Areas of interest: Attachment relationships and high–risk behavior, personality and personality disorders, mechanisms through which attachment relationships influence functioning (high risk behaviors and psychological disorders).

Capstone structure: team based; survey based research; correlational studies.

Recent research: emotional intelligence, relationship quality, risky behavior

Research in Behavioral Neuroscience

Professor: Dr. Fay Allison Guarraci, Associate Professor

Degrees: BA, McGill University

Ph.D. in Behavioral Neuroscience, University of Vermont

Post–doctoral fellow at Dartmouth College

Areas of interest: Psychopharmacology, sexual motivation, drug addiction, sexual selection, sexual dysfunction

Capstone structure: Team environment; possibility of individual projects; one project is chosen for capstone but students work on many projects; hands on, mostly experimental; rats as subjects; histology lab.

Recent research: drug addiction, female sexual motivation and methamphetamine, neurobiology of motivation, mate choice, kin discrimination

Research in Comparative Psychology

Professor: Dr. Jesse Purdy, Professor

Degrees: BSc in Psychology, Colorado State University

MS in General Experimental Psychology, Colorado State University

Ph.D. in Psychology, Colorado State University

Areas of interest: Animal learning and animal behavior, specifically looking at learning as adaptation to changes in the environment and how learning can play a role in reproductive success or survival.

Capstone structure: very hands on, lots of lab construction (building apparatus and animal habitats); animal husbandry; mostly experimental research; variety of aquatic and terrestrial species.

Recent research: Conditioned defensive behavior; predator prey relationships.

Recently two students did research with bottle nosed dolphins in Australia.

Research in Comparative Psychology

Professor: Dr. Steven Schapiro, Adjunct Professor of Psychology;
Associate Professor, Univ. of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.

Degrees: BA in Behavioral Biology, John Hopkins University
PhD in Comparative Psychology from University of California at Davis

Areas of interest: Primate behavior, psychoneuroimmunology, applied operant conditioning, and environmental enrichment.

Capstone structure: research with Rhesus Macaques, Squirrel Monkeys, Owl Monkeys, and Common Chimpanzees in Bastrop (1 hr drive); independent work.

Recent research: social learning, handedness, brain lateralization, vocalization, deception, conformity.

Research in Developmental/Cognitive Psychology

Professor: Dr. Jacqueline Muir–Broaddus, Professor

Degrees: Honors BA in Psychology with distinction, French minor,
University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada.
MA in Applied Child Psychology from University of Guelph.
Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology (emphasis in cognitive
development) from Florida Atlantic University.

Areas of interest: Development of memory and executive functions among typically developing children and children with special needs (e.g., ADHD, ASD).

Capstone structure: experimental, survey, and observational research; hands on experience; group projects; flexible meeting times.

Recent research: The effects of equine assisted activities and therapy on Autism Spectrum Disorder symptoms, conducted in collaboration with the Ride on Center for Kids (R.O.C.K.), a local non–profit provider of therapeutic horseback riding.

Research in Social Psychology

Professor: Dr. Traci Giuliano, Professor

Degrees: BA in Psychology, Summa Cum Laude, UT Austin
MA and PhD in Social Psychology, UCLA

Areas of interest: Social psychology, gender roles/gender differences, human sexuality, sports psychology

Capstone structure: group work/team projects; advanced statistics; 1 full–length APA manuscript required each semester with multiple logs and drafts; experimental and survey research with human participants; intense time commitment; requires independence, motivation, and organization.

Recent research: relationship breakup myths (e.g., “recovery rule”; “Bro Code”), strategies that shy individuals use to avoid negative perceptions; sexual double standard.

Academic Internships as Capstone

Students earn 8 credits through experiential work at an approved internship site approved as well as academic work. Internships usually take place in the summer to allow for total immersion and a real workplace experience. Capstone internships are 240 hours in as little as six weeks or spread out over the summer. Academic work includes daily journal entries, weekly progress reports, a capstone paper, and a presentation. In a major paper (20–40 pages) students integrate their internship experiences with theories and research from psychology coursework. Dr. Neighbors is the department's Internship Coordinator and supervises many but not all interning capstone students.

Example internship placement sites (2000–2010):

Aids Services of Austin
Austin State Hospital
Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Georgetown
CanCare Austin
Casa de Esperanza (Houston)
Children's Medical Center – Department of Psychiatry (Dallas)
DePelchin Children's Center (Houston)
Downtown Austin Community Court
Fort Bend County Women's Center (Richmond, Tx)
For the Love of Christi (Austin)
Georgetown Police Department, Victims Services
Getsemani Community Center of Georgetown
Gulf Coast Center for Human Resource Services (Houston)
Harris County Juvenile Probation Center
Hope Alliance Crisis Center (formerly Williamson County Crisis Center)
Houston Area Women's Center
IONA Senior Services (Washington, DC)
Lifesteps (Williamson County Council on Alcohol and Drugs)
Lifeworks Alliance of Youth and Family Services (Austin)
Millwood Psychiatric Hospital (Arlington, Tx)
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (Austin)
National Children's Hospital – Department of Oncology (San Jose, Costa Rica)
Office of the Texas State Attorney General, Crime Victims Compensation Unit (Austin)
Office of the Texas State Attorney General, Criminal Prosecutions Division (Austin)
Office of the Texas State Attorney General, Juvenile Crime Intervention (Austin)
Ronald McDonald House of Dallas
Salvation Army (Austin)
Sheltering Harbour (Houston)
STARRY Foster Care (Round Rock)
State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo – ADHD Treatment Program
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (Austin)
Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation – Waco Center for Youth
The Caring Place (Georgetown)
The Connections Center (Houston)
The Georgetown Project
The Monarch School (Houston)
University of Texas Institute for Technology and Learning
Williamson County Juvenile Justice – Counseling Services
Williamson County Juvenile Probation
Women Together Foundation (McAllen, Tx)

