

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

**MASTERS PROGRAM HANDBOOK
2020-2021**



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Table of Contents

Which Handbook Applies to Me.....	3
The Program	3
Requirements for All MA Students	4
General Psychology Track.....	4
Clinical Science Track.....	5
Cognition, Learning and NeuroscienceTrack.....	5
Establishing and Changing Tracks in the MA Program	6
Thesis and Nonthesis Options.....	6
Testing Out of Required Courses	8
Transferring Courses Taken Elsewhere	9
Evaluation and Dismissal Due to Poor Grades.....	9
Time Allowed to Complete Degree Requirements.....	9
Time Limits on Courses.....	9
Due Process and Grievance	9
Academic Integrity	10
Nondiscrimination Policy.....	10
Administrative Support	10
Graduate Student Participation in Committees in the Psychology Department.....	11
Faculty of the Psychology Department and Research Interests.....	11
Relevant Staff and Committee Members	11

Which Handbook Applies to Me?

All graduate students should follow the requirements in the Masters Program Handbook published in the summer prior to their first enrollment in the program.

Requirements described in this Handbook do not negate our University's rules found at Graduate Academic Regulations (<https://www.american.edu/provost/grad/current-graduate-academic-regulations.cfm>), but refine and augment them. If a more stringent requirement is provided in the Masters Program Handbook than in University regulations, the requirement in the Handbook applies. Requests for exceptions to the Program or University regulations must be made by petition from the student approved by the student's faculty advisor, to the Program Director.

It is the responsibility of each graduate student to keep current on the general Department and University regulations. Minutes of department committees and Department Council communicate changes in regulations, and describe exceptions granted and declined. Copies of these minutes are available from the departmental Administrative Assistants.

This Handbook is revised annually. Suggestions for improvements are welcome.

The Program

The MA program currently has three tracks. All tracks offer a thesis and a non-thesis option. We will first describe the requirements common to all tracks, then the distinctions between the tracks, and then the difference between the thesis and nonthesis options.

Requirements for All MA Students.

Capstone Experience.

Completion of a thesis (if thesis option) or a substantial research project (if nonthesis option).

Courses.

11 courses (33 credits) comprising

- 1 statistics course from among the following. Additional statistics courses can count as electives. Please note that if you are planning to apply to the Clinical Ph.D. program in Psychology or the Interdisciplinary BCAN Ph.D. program at American University, STAT 614 will not count for either program's statistics requirement

PSYC-640 Statistical Methods for Mediation and Moderation in Psychology (3)

STAT-516 Design of Experiments (3)

STAT-519 Nonparametric Statistics (3)

STAT-520 Applied Multivariate Analysis (3)

STAT-521 Analysis of Categorical Data (3)
 STAT-522 Time-Series Analysis (3)
 STAT-612 Statistical Programming in R (3)
 STAT-614 Statistical Methods (3)
 STAT-615 Regression (3)
 STAT-616 General Linear Models (3)
 STAT-618 Bayesian Statistics (3)
 STAT-622 Advanced Biostatistics (3)
 STAT-627 Statistical Machine Learning (3)

- PSYC-650: Psychological Research
- PSYC 685 and PSYC 797 (if thesis option), or any other research course (if nonthesis option), customarily PSYC 698: Directed Research
- Seven or eight other courses in psychology (depending on whether thesis or nonthesis option, respectively). Please note that these courses may differ depending on the track the student chooses to follow with the help of their faculty advisor.

Please note that the default faculty advisor for those who have not been assigned one upon entry is the Program Director. Students must consult with and receive authorization from their advisors each semester before registering for classes. It is, however, the responsibility of the students to verify that they are fulfilling all requirements for the degree.

General Psychology Track

The psychology courses for this track must include **at least 2 courses** from the Social Sciences cluster, and **at least 2 courses** from the Natural Sciences cluster (current courses in both groups are listed below). The remaining courses are free electives (500-level or above courses), including up to two courses that can be outside of psychology with the Program Director's preapproval. The therapy practicum courses, PSYC-652 or PSYC-654 are not open to students in the Masters Program.

Social Science Cluster (6 credit hours)

- PSYC-515 Psychology of Music (3) (counts toward either the Social Science or Natural Science requirements, not both)
- PSYC-521 Ethnic and Minority Issues in Psychology (3)
- PSYC-533 Cognitive Behavior Therapy (3)
- PSYC-545 Psychology of Sex Similarities and Differences (3)
- PSYC-596, 597, 696, 697 Topics in Psychology (3) (social science topics)
- PSYC-605 Advanced Personality Psychology (3)
- PSYC-614 Industrial/Organizational Psychology (3)
- PSYC-622 Stress, Coping, and Emotion (3)
- PSYC-630 Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice (3)
- PSYC-633 Psychological Assessment I (3)
- PSYC-641 Advanced Social Psychology (3)
- PSYC-651 Psychopathology: Theory and Research (3)

- PSYC-660 Advanced Developmental Psychology (3)
- PSYC-670 Behavioral Medicine (3)

Natural Science Cluster (6 credit hours)

- PSYC-515 Psychology of Music (3) (counts toward either the Social Science or Natural Science requirements, not both)
- PSYC-518 Advanced Human Neuropsychology (3)
- PSYC-625 Conditioning and Learning (3)
- PSYC-597, 696, 697 Topics in Psychology (3) (natural science topics)
- PSYC-600 Advanced Memory and Cognition (3)
- PSYC-601 Physiological Psychology (3)
- PSYC-613 Neuropharmacology: The Biochemistry of Behavior (3)
- PSYC 618 Principles of Neuropsychological Assessment (3)
- PSYC 684 Developmental Neuroscience (3)

Clinical Science Track

Core Courses (9 credit hours)

- PSYC-630 Psychotherapy
- PSYC-633 Psychological Assessment
- PSYC-651 Psychopathology

Electives (12 credit hours)

- PSYC-518 Advanced Human Neuropsychology (3)
- PSYC-521 Ethnic and Minority Issues in Psychology (3)
- PSYC-533 Cognitive Behavior Therapy (3)
- PSYC-597, 696, 697 Topics or Selected Topics in Psychology (3) (social science topics)
- PSYC-600 Advanced Memory and Cognition
- PSYC-613 Neuropharmacology (3)
- PSYC-622 Stress, Coping, and Emotion (3)
- PSYC-641 Advanced Social Psychology (3)
- PSYC-660 Advanced Developmental Psychology (3)

Cognition, Learning and Neuroscience (CLAN) Track

Core (9 credit hours)

- PSYC-625 Conditioning and Learning (3)
- PSYC-600 Advanced Memory and Cognition (3)
- PSYC-601 Physiological Psychology (3)

Electives (12 credit hours)

- PSYC-515 Psychology of Music
- PSYC-518 Advanced Human Neuropsychology
- PSYC-596, 597, 696, 697 Topics or Selected Topics (in a Natural Sci. topic)
- PSYC-613 Neuropharmacology
- PSYC-684 Developmental Neuroscience
- NEURO-688 Seminar in Behavior, Cognition, and Neuroscience
- PSYC-690 Independent Study (in a Natural Science topic)

Establishing and Changing Tracks in the MA Program

At the start of the degree program, the faculty advisor and student should meet to develop an individual Program of Study for fulfilling all requirements for the degree. Completion of this Program of Study plan is required by our University.

Students who wish to change tracks later should communicate their wish and their course plans in writing to the Program Director.

Thesis and Nonthesis Options

Thesis Option.

In all tracks, the thesis option is only available to students who have secured support from a faculty advisor to sponsor their thesis research. Students pursuing the thesis option must conduct, write, and successfully defend a research thesis. Students who choose the *thesis option* must take PSYC 685: Seminar in Psychological Research and PSYC 797: Masters Thesis Research. Please note that if you switch from the thesis option to nonthesis option, PSYC 797 will not count towards the degree.

The successful defense of a thesis will also satisfy the capstone requirement.

Thesis Committee. A student's thesis committee must consist of at least three members (at least 2 must be full-time faculty in our Department of Psychology). Students must have at least one core committee member who has demonstrable expertise in the area being investigated. Students are reminded that they may select the faculty members for their committees from the *entire* faculty, not just faculty from their area of specialization.

One of the three members will preferably be from outside the Department and will be chosen by the student and the chair of the thesis committee. "Outside" members of thesis committees must be approved by the chair of the committee and must have clear, proven expertise in the area of the thesis. In order to preclude any misunderstandings, it is essential that the details concerning how the committee will operate and the respective role of each member of the committee be discussed and agreed upon at the time the committee is formed. It is important that students and faculty understand that even signed thesis proposals are not contracts that in any way obligate acceptance of the product of the proposed research by the committee.

Members of thesis committees cannot include former American University graduate students who have graduated less than 5 years before the date of the oral defense.

Thesis committee membership must be approved by the director of the program (University regulation).

Oral Defense. Master's orals must be public. It is the student's responsibility to reserve a room that will accommodate at least 20 people. Students are also responsible for asking a department administrative assistant to notify all faculty and graduate students in our department of the date, time, and room of the defense at least two weeks (14 days) in advance of the defense. Graduate students are required to either upload a copy of their thesis to the departmental thesis and dissertation website at least one week before the defense, or to place a printed copy in the main office of the Department. Faculty and a departmental administrative assistant can upload the thesis to the website, which currently is on the university's Blackboard platform: LIBWEB-999-067: Theses and Dissertations.

For the masters orals, at least two of the three committee members must be physically present and the third committee member must be either physically present or participate via phone or computer connection.

- a. The chairperson will determine the examination procedure and the sequence of questioning.
- b. It is expected that final oral examinations will require approximately two hours.
- c. Questions from visitors will be taken at the discretion of the chairperson, but only after an initial round of questions by the committee members has been taken. Questions may be submitted in advance of the examination by interested faculty and students not planning on attending. Such questions should be submitted to the chairperson, at whose discretion they may be raised during the examination.
- d. Following the oral defense, the candidate and all visitors will be excused from the room. However, the committee members may request consultation from one or more visitors who have attended the examination. All noncommittee members must leave the examination room before a final decision is made concerning the candidate's performance.

Written Format and Revision Timeline. The format for the thesis must follow University guidelines. A manual titled "Requirements for Preparation of Theses and Dissertations" as well as thesis templates for formatting purposes are available from the Dean's office. Issues not discussed there should follow the APA format, as per the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the APA

After the oral defense of the thesis, students are expected to make requested revisions and to submit the revised manuscript to the thesis committee chair within two months. The final manuscript should be submitted to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies within six months from the date of the oral defense. Their deadlines for graduation purposes will be published every semester on their website.

Nonthesis option.

This option is also available in all tracks. Students are in general encouraged to opt for the nonthesis option unless they are certain they will secure the support of an advisor and complete and defend thesis research.

Students taking the nonthesis option must take PSYC 698: Directed Research (PSYC 690: Independent Study may be substituted in place of PSYC 698).

There are two options for satisfying the capstone requirement for students opting for the nonthesis option:

An In-depth Paper. Customarily, this is the culmination of your directed research project. It can be an empirical research paper, which would involve a typical journal-style “Abstract, Intro, Method & Results, Discussion” format. If you do not have data for a full-Results section, then it can be a much expanded literature review that pertains to your research topic. In both cases, there will be two faculty readers, your directed research supervisor and a reader assigned by the Psychology MA Program. In the rare case of if you elect not to write on your directed research project, you can still do a literature review on any topic you wish. However, in this case, you will not have the guidance of a specific supervisor (who can also advise you on the scope and quality needed), and both readers will be assigned by the Psychology MA Program.

The outcomes may be a) Pass b) Fail (in which case, you would need to submit another in-depth paper the following semester), or c) Revision requested (in which case, you can turn in a revised version before the end of the same semester).

Please note that you can turn this paper in at any point during your second year (to the MA director). Because the deadline is about a month before the Spring Semester ends, you are encouraged to do the directed research course before your last semester (customarily, it would be during your second or third semester). Also note that you can still graduate without having to enroll for the following Fall, if you do not meet the Spring deadline and can finish during the summer (please note that this will result in an August rather than May graduation date).

A Spoken or Poster Presentation: Please note that this option is not available for a literature-review-only capstone. Towards the end of each Spring, there will be an **MA Research Fest**. You can present your research results during that day to all the faculty and students attending. Again, customarily, this is the culmination of your directed research project (but presented in a conference venue rather than as a paper). However, it need not be. It can be the presentation of any research you have been involved in and played a major role after coming to AU. If you have presented the same research at a conference earlier as an author (or will be presenting soon), you are permitted to use the same poster/talk during the MA Research Fest. Two faculty will judge whether the presentation qualifies for a capstone. Please note that there is no “revise and resubmit” outcome in this case, but only Pass or Fail (in which case, you can, if you wish, switch to the in-depth paper option or participate in the following year’s Fest).

Testing Out of Required Courses

Students may test out of required courses by passing an exam prepared by the professor who teaches the course. Except for entering first year students, students should notify the

professor of their intent one month prior to the start of the course. Students may test out of a maximum of three courses. If a graduate student fails such an exam, they cannot retake it. Also, please note that testing out of a course means that it can now be replaced by an elective course. That is, students still need to complete 33 credits to graduate.

Transferring Courses Taken Elsewhere

Students may petition to transfer up to 6 credits into the program for courses taken prior to first enrollment at AU by filling out the transfer and waiver form that can be obtained from the departmental administrative assistant.

According to University regulations, master's degrees require a minimum of 18 semester credit hours of in-residence graduate course work, not counting PSYC 797. Students must have the permission of the advisor, the program director, and the instructor (if any) of the same course at American University prior to enrolling in a course at the outside institution.

Evaluation and Dismissal Due to Poor Grades

Graduate students are dismissed from the University if their cumulative grade-point average (GPA) remains below 3.00 for two consecutive semesters. According to university regulations, the Registrar places graduate students on probation if their cumulative GPA falls below 3.00 after 9 credits of courses, and permanently dismisses the student if the cumulative GPA does not rise to 3.00 or better the following semester.

Receiving a second C (or lower) grade can also result in probation or dismissal (departmental regulation), even if the cumulative GPA is 3.00 or higher.

Students not progressing satisfactorily will be notified at the end of each semester.

Time Allowed to Complete Degree Requirements

Full-time MA students should be able to complete their studies after the Spring semester of their second year. Part-time MA students may take longer. In some cases, up to three 1-year extensions of the statute of limitations (see University regulations) may be granted if the extenuating circumstances are sufficiently compelling and there is an advisor's letter of support.

Time Limits on Courses

According to the university graduate academic regulations, courses completed more than six years before finishing a master's degree or certificate may not fulfill degree requirements.

Due Process and Grievance

A student may come into disagreement with a faculty member or with the policies and actions of an academic unit as they affect the student's progress toward completion of their degree. In cases of complaint or disagreement over academic matters not resolved by consultation among the parties, the University provides the student the right to initiate a grievance procedure, as described in the Student Academic Grievance Policy located on the

Office of Undergraduate Studies website under Academic Policies (<https://www.american.edu/policies/upload/Academic-Grade-Grievances-Policy.pdf>).

Students should have protection through orderly procedures against prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation. At the same time, they are responsible for maintaining standards of academic performance established for each course in which they are enrolled. Evaluation of students and the awarding of credit must be based on academic performance professionally judged and not on matters irrelevant to that performance, such as personality, physical disability, age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, degree of political activism, or personal beliefs.

Judgment regarding standards of evaluation for a student's academic performance is a faculty responsibility and is not grievable. Normally, only questions relating to whether a faculty member complied with the stated requirements of the course and applied standards of evaluation fairly and equitably are potentially grievable.

Note that there is also a University grievance policy on disability-related accommodations (<https://www.american.edu/policies/upload/Reasonable-Accommodations-Grievance-Procedures-for-Students.pdf>).

Academic Integrity

The Academic Integrity Code for American University defines honorable conduct, outlines attendant rights and responsibilities, and describes procedures for handling allegations of academic misconduct. All graduate students should be sure to read the code (<https://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code.cfm>) and to conduct their studies with intellectual honesty.

Nondiscrimination Policy

American University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution that operates in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy or parenting, age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity and expression, family responsibilities, political affiliation, source of income, veteran status, an individual's genetic information or any other bases. The University expressly prohibits any form of discriminatory harassment including sexual harassment, dating and domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation and stalking. For more detailed information regarding University policy on nondiscrimination, please see this webpage: <https://www.american.edu/policies/upload/Discrimination-and-Sexual-Harassment-Policy.pdf>

Administrative Support

The department senior administrative assistant (Lefteris Hazapis) is available to assist you with navigating paperwork, registrations, filing, and other administrative tasks. Britten Rollo, senior administrative assistant, is available for budgetary support for research labs, research awards, and travel awards.

Graduate Student Participation in Committees in the Psychology Department

The Psychology Graduate Student Council elects officers, usually in the spring. The council is allotted a certain amount of money each year, to be distributed in any way the students decide. Officers include:

- a. President
- b. Vice-President
- c. Secretary/Treasurer
- d. Representative to the Graduate Student Council of the University. This council meets regularly, and the representative will have a role in University policies as a source of student input.

As detailed in the Department Constitution (see administrative assistant for a copy), there are several departmental committees on which graduate students can serve. Elections for these representatives are held by the previous year's President of the Psychology Graduate Student Council.

Faculty of the Psychology Department and Research Interests

Please note that faculty from other departments such as Health Sciences, Neuroscience, Computer Science, Education, or Business School, can also supervise MA research and theses with prior permission from the Program Director.

Contact information for full-time psychology faculty and additional information are available in the [website of the Department of Psychology](#).

ANTHONY H. AHRENS, Professor, Ph.D. from Stanford University. Depression, gratitude, mindfulness, fear of emotion.

LAURIE BAYET, Assistant Professor, Ph.D., University of Grenoble. Early visual, cognitive, and social-emotional development, with particular focus on facial emotion perception in infancy and early childhood. Her laboratory uses electro-encephalography, behavioral methods, and statistical or computational tools such as multivariate analysis to investigate the early development of representations involved in the processing of facial emotions and other high-level visual stimuli, and their relation to broader mechanisms of perceptual, social-emotional, or cognitive development

NICOLE E. CAPORINO, Associate Professor, Ph.D. from University of South Florida. Anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, cognitive-behavioral therapy with children and adolescents.

MICHELE CARTER, Professor, Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University. Assessment and treatment of adult anxiety disorders; psychotherapy outcome; interpersonal relationships; African-American issues.

LAURA DUVAL, Senior Professorial Lecturer, Ph.D. in Social Psychology from Tulane University. Her research interests include stereotyping and prejudice, media violence and other applications of social cognitive constructs.

NOEMI ENCHAUTEGUI-DE-JESUS, Professorial Lecturer, Ph.D. from New York University. Job stressors, work-family balance, and coping resources in low-income families and communities; African-American and Latino issues; women and child/youth well-being.

BRYAN D. FANTIE, Associate Professor, Ph.D. from Dalhousie University. Human neuropsychology, neural mechanisms and correlates of behavior and cognition (emotion, language, memory, attention, etc), brain dysfunction, closed head injury, autism, schizophrenia, dementia, behavioral neurology, diagnosis.

MARIA GOMEZ-SERRANO, Hurst Senior Professorial Lecturer, Ph.D. from American University. Neuroscience, basic physiology, epigenetic factors in drug abuse, maternal behavior in drug use and abuse, adolescent depression.

KATHLEEN C. GUNTHERT, Associate Professor, Ph.D. from University of Delaware. Stress and emotion regulation, depression, anxiety, neuroticism, experience sampling methodology .

DAVID A. F. HAAGA, Professor, Ph.D. from University of Southern California. Cognitive assessment, cognitive therapy, rational emotive behavior therapy, cigarette smoking, depression.

ERICA HART, Professorial Lecturer, Ph.D. from American University. Implicit bias, cross-cultural psychology, health disparities, body image.

NATHANIEL HERR, Associate Professor, Ph.D. from University of California, Los Angeles. Interpersonal functioning, emotion regulation, and identity disturbance among individuals with borderline personality disorder and related affective problems.

LAURA M. JULIANO, Professor, Ph.D. from State University of New York at Binghamton. Tobacco, caffeine, drug expectancies, placebo effects.

DAVID KEARNS, Professor, Ph.D. from American University. Learning, conditioned inhibition, stimulus control, drug self-administration.

ZEHRA PEYNİRCİOĞLU, Professor, Ph.D. from Rice University. Cognitive Psychology, human memory and metamemory, inhibition in memory, nonverbal cognition, especially music memory and perception, face and voice recognition, bilingual cognition, and any interesting cognitive phenomena.

ARTHUR SHAPIRO, Professor, Ph.D. from Columbia University. Visual perception and cognitive neuroscience, color, motion, visual camouflage, and low-light-level vision.

ALAN M. SILBERBERG, Professor. Ph.D. from University of Pennsylvania. Experimental analysis of behavior; autoshaping; choice behavior; microstructural analysis of rate.

JONATHAN TUBMAN, Professor, Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State University. Health risk behaviors among adolescents in treatment for substance abuse problems; brief motivational interventions for reducing sexual risk behavior and related risk behaviors.

BRIAN T. YATES, Professor. Ph.D. from Stanford University. Program evaluation; cost effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis; development and training of self-management; drug abuse treatment; health psychology and behavioral medicine.

Relevant Staff and Committee Representatives

Department Chair	Anthony Ahrens	ahrens@american.edu
Senior Administrative Assistants	Britten Rollo	brolo@american.edu
	Eleftherios Hazapis	ehazapis@american.edu
Graduate Degree Program Directors	Clinical Ph.D.: Kate Gunthert	gunthert@american.edu
	Masters Program: Zehra Peynircioğlu	peynir@american.edu
Masters Degree Advisory Committee	TBD	TBD
Director of Animal Research Facility	TBD	TBD
Human Participants Committee Chair	TBD	TBD