Psychology 494
Research Internship in Psychology
Fall 2012

Faculty: Jeffrey D. Green, Ph.D. (jdgreen@vcu.edu)

Graduate Students: Anthony Coy, M.S. (coyae@vcu.edu)
Chelsea Reid, M.S. (reidca@vcu.edu)
Jackie Moloney (moloneyjm@vcu.edu)

Overview: Psychology 494 serves to provide undergraduate students with valuable experience in all aspects of psychological research as they work closely with Dr. Jeff Green and his graduate student colleagues on various projects throughout the semester. This internship will familiarize students with social psychological research by giving them first-hand experience in conducting testing sessions, working with participant data, conducting literature reviews, reading journal articles germane to the current semester's projects, and writing up (part of) an experiment in APA format. This semester, we anticipate conducting research on projects concerning attachment to pets, balance theory of attitudes, close relationships, meaninglessness and existential concerns, self-protective memory, morality, and other social psychology topics.

Responsibilities: While the duties for this internship may vary somewhat throughout the semester, the core responsibilities remain constant. Primarily, you will be responsible for conducting experimental sessions (i.e., running participants), entering data into SPSS, and conducting literature reviews. You should expect to devote 3 hours per credit hour each week (e.g., 9 hours each week for 3 credits) to these research duties. We will train to complete these tasks – and by the end of the semester, you should have an assortment of research skills (which would nicely complement graduate applications).

Course Requirements:

1. Conduct research sessions (i.e., run participants), enter data, code data (after being trained), or   complete literature reviews for nine (9) hours per week (or less if enrolled in fewer credits)

2. Attend three (3) meetings from the Positive Psychology Research Team, Social Psychology Under Discussion (SPUD), or other announced colloquia

3. Write two (2) Idea/Reaction papers (about 2 pages each) on readings that have been assigned

4. Write a final paper, in APA format, based on results from a study you helped to run

Your final grade will be determined by: (a) the completion of the required activities for the course; (b) the overall quality of your work, both in written assignments, and lab duties (including proficiency, responsibility, and conscientiousness).

Course Structure: We will provide you with hands-on experience of experimentation and the training to run experiments, enter data, and conduct literature reviews. Also, we will provide guidance on how to develop your skills and interests in research, as well as how to think like a researcher by discussing journal articles and the theories behind our projects.

RA Expectations: You are a very important part of the research process; essentially, you are our eyes and ears and the primary contact with participants. It is important that you represent yourself professionally, act responsibly, and think proactively. Don't be afraid to ask us questions – it is a crucial part of learning. We take our research very seriously and we ask that you do the same.

Therefore, we expect that as an RA, you will:

1. Check your email regularly (i.e., at least once a day)
2. Demonstrate professionalism and responsibility by taking an active role in the research process and by dressing and acting professionally when interacting with participants
3. Maintain flexibility for the wide range of tasks required, including keeping your schedule as flexible as possible
4. Be early (**at least 10 minutes**) to every scheduled experiment session, and on time to all other 494-related events (e.g., meetings, data entry sessions)

How to run an experiment

Running an experiment is the most important task you will do with us. Therefore, it's vital that you are fully prepared. Always come early to the session and make sure the materials/computers/etc. are all ready. Dress professionally, because then the participants will be more likely to obey you, treat you with respect, and take the experiment seriously. Always tell people to turn off and put away all electronic devices, and to give their full attention to the study. Do not hesitate to order people around. Tell them to wait outside, tell them exactly where to sit, etc. If two friends come in, ask them one to sit on one side of the room, and the other to sit on the other side. No need to ever explain yourself. Always be friendly and smile at everyone, but also make it clear that you are in charge and they are supposed to follow directions. Encourage the asking of questions by telling people at the beginning to raise a hand if they have any question, such as what to do, the meaning of a word or instructions, etc.

Speak loudly, slowly, and authoritatively at all times. I always assume that some people are not paying attention, so I try to repeat—simply and clearly—the most important directions twice. (Try to avoid extra words as well as "ums" and "uhs.")

Constantly monitor what people are doing. Circulate around the room so that they know that you are watching them, and that you are available to answer questions. Try to make sure the room is as quiet as possible. If something strange is going on, such as a person ignoring the directions and working on homework, try to get them on track as soon as possible. If it goes on, then please write a note in the log and/or on the paper data. For example, "this person talked with his neighbor constantly during the session" or "this person finished the survey really quickly—it looks like she just circled a "1" for every answer." This kind of attention is very valuable to us! We are able to remove this bad data. So please always pay attention to what's going on.

We look forward to a fruitful and productive semester of research!