DOCTORAL PROGRAM
IN
SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Virginia Commonwealth University
Fall 2017

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Division Director
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Social Psychology Faculty

Kirk Warren Brown (Ph.D., McGill University) conducts research that examines the role of attention and awareness, and especially mindfulness in the enhancement of psychological and physical well-being. His research program addresses both theoretical and applied issues, and is conducted in laboratory, naturalistic, and clinical settings.

David Chester (Ph.D., University of Kentucky) is a social psychologist and neuroscientist who is interested in understanding why people hurt each other. His research focuses on the psychological and neural forces that promote aggressive behavior and attempts to find ways to restrain such violent tendencies.

Jody Davis (Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) has three research interests: close relationships, conservation psychology, and educational psychology. Her first research interest is examining processes related to relationship maintenance, such as interpersonal respect, forgiveness, and attitude alignment. Her second research interest is examining antecedents and consequences of felt commitment to the natural environment. Her third research interest is examining the psychology of teaching and learning.

Jeff Green (Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) has three primary research areas that all revolve around the self. These include affective states and the self (e.g., how we use negative states such as anger or sadness or guilt for self-enhancement purposes; nostalgia); memory processes and self-protection (e.g., comparing self-evaluation to other-evaluation); and the link between the self and close relationships (e.g., forgiveness, attachment). He also does research on how people obtain and protect felt meaning in life.

Jennifer Joy-Gaba’s (Ph.D., University of Virginia) research interests span both cognitive and social psychology by examining how automatic processes influence thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Her main line of research focuses on the consequences of implicit cognition on social and perceptual judgments, as well as the factors that influence implicit cognition malleability and change.

Linda Zyzniewski (Ph.D., Virginia Commonwealth University) studies evolutionary approaches to social psychological processes, including allocation of responsibility in groups, attachment, and intergroup processes (such as the linguistic intergroup bias).
Affiliated Faculty

Scott Allison is a faculty member at the University of Richmond. He studies heroes and how they inspire us, social decision making processes, social interdependence, social cognition, and intergroup relations.

Faye Belgrave (Ph.D., University of Maryland) research and programmatic efforts involve community interventions which attend to aspects of culture (gender, ethnicity, age, and place, etc.) to promote well-being among African American and other ethnic minority youth and young adults. Most of her work has focused on substance abuse and HIV prevention. Dr. Belgrave has also conducted research on gender issues, African American psychology, and psychosocial aspects of chronic illness and disabilities.

Jeni Burnette is a faculty member at North Carolina State University. She is interested in the psychological mechanisms underlying self-regulation. Her research focuses on how individuals overcome challenges to their personal and interpersonal goals with a focus on weight-management and forgiveness.

Donelson Forsyth has primary interests in interpersonal processes and the psychological mechanisms that influence those processes. His particular specialties include moral judgment, attribution, and group dynamics. Dr. Forsyth is a professor at the University of Richmond.

Wendy Kliewer is Departmental Chair and a faculty member in the Developmental Program. Her research is on individual, situational, and environmental influences on coping and adjustment during childhood and adolescence.

Mary Loos is a clinical psychologist whose primary research interest has been the relationship between early attachment experiences and the development of different forms of emotional and behavioral problems. Clinically, her focus has been on working with adult survivors of early childhood trauma.

Jessica E. Salvatore (Ph.D., University of Minnesota) is interested in close relationships and alcohol misuse. Her work focuses on how close relationship processes and alcohol misuse interface across development, particularly in the high-risk emerging adulthood period. She takes a genetically informed perspective in order to understand how genetic predispositions for alcohol use disorder influence relationship outcomes (i.e., gene-environment correlation), and the circumstances under which relationship factors moderate alcohol use disorder genetic predispositions (i.e., gene-environment interaction).

Vicky Shivy (Ph.D., University of Albany) is a member of the Counseling Program. She studies the role that work plays in peoples' lives: how people decide on which career and educational paths they’ll pursue, and how individuals respond to a range of career-related events and experiences, with a particular focus on the socioemotional aspects of work. She designs ways to help traditionally underserved populations enter, adjust to, and thrive in workplace settings.

Scott R. Vrana, a member of the Clinical Program is interested in the psychophysiology of emotion, imagery, and information processing and diagnosis and treatment of anxiety disorders. His work deals with social context, ethnicity, gender, and emotional expression.

Everett Worthington is a member of the Counseling Program. His work involves basic and intervention research in forgiveness and reconciliation, marriage and marital enrichment, and religious values in the family and in therapy.
Introduction

The field of social psychology, as defined by Gordon W. Allport, is "an attempt to understand and explain how the thought, feeling, and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presences of others" (1985, p. 3). The field lies at the intersection of psychology and such social sciences as sociology and anthropology. Social psychologists, qua psychologists, study cognitive, emotional, motivational, and behavioral processes. Social psychologists, however, study the influence of interpersonal factors on such processes rather than focusing exclusively on intra-psychic factors. Social psychologists, as social scientists, also address societal influences on psychological processes and behavior, and have interests in social issues recognized as important to individual, interpersonal, and societal functioning.

The Social Psychology Division of the Psychology Program of Virginia Commonwealth University provides training in the theoretical background and research skills needed to study the social bases of behavior. As part of the Department of Psychology, students must study and appreciate all areas of theory and research in the field, but their specialized focus is on social processes. Graduates of this program are awarded the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Psychology. Students earn a Master of Science degree as part of their training, but social psychology is not offered as a terminal master’s degree.

Graduates who complete the program of study in social psychology are knowledgeable in the major areas of social psychology, including social cognition and attribution, attitudes and attitude measurement, social identity, social influence, interpersonal relations, stereotyping and prejudice, and individual differences. Graduates are also trained in social psychological research methods. Training is provided in both experimental and applied research methods.
Training Philosophy

The program's training philosophy is an integrative one. First, just as social psychology is both a theoretical and empirical discipline, students are expected to develop as both theoreticians and researchers. Second, social psychology is concerned with fundamental questions of human behavior as well as the application of this knowledge to solving social problems, so students study basic theoretical questions as well as applied social issues. Third, just as social psychology is a rapidly changing field as well as a discipline with a long history, students must keep abreast of current developments and understand how they fit with past findings. Last, social psychologists generate knowledge and disseminate knowledge, so our students are scientists and teachers. Graduates from this program are employed primarily as professors in colleges and universities. Some, too, work in related fields in state and federal government, community organizations, and in business and industry.

We utilize both direct and indirect methods of training to realize this philosophy. They include:

- Classroom instruction and study: Considerable learning occurs in the classroom environment. The curriculum is designed to give students exposure to most of the basic areas of social psychology.
- Mentorship: Classroom learning experiences are complemented by the student mentor relationship. Students are expected to work closely with a faculty member of the program, and thereby use that individual as a mentor for developing instructional, research, and theoretical skills. As advanced scholars, students are given considerable responsibility for developing their own areas of expertise, and are guided in the developmental process by their advisor and thesis/dissertation chair. In any given semester students should be immersed in a program of independent research.
- Research: The social program stresses research training above all other goals. From entry into the program until exit, students should be working with faculty and more advanced students on research projects. Moreover, as full members of the research community, students are expected to attend departmental and university research presentations, publish research, and make presentations at regional and national conventions.
- Collaborative Inquiry: Students are encouraged to work collaboratively with their advisors/mentors and other faculty and graduate students within the social program, the department, and in other departments at the university.
Goals

The program faculty strives to assist students in reaching a number of important educational goals. Students, during their training, develop strengths in a number of areas, including:

- **Knowledge of psychological science.** Students are trained in all of the basic areas of psychology, including biological bases of behavior, sensation and perception, personality processes, and learning. In addition to mastering this subject matter, students develop a professional identity as psychologists. All students should join a professional association of psychologists, such as the Association for Psychological Science or the American Psychological Association.

- **Knowledge of social psychology.** Students are also experts in the social bases of behavior, including such topics as attitudes, attitude change, social perception and social cognition, attribution, attraction, long-term relationships, decision making, identity and the self, stereotyping and prejudice, and the social environment. Beyond this subject matter, students also develop a professional identity as social psychologists. All students should join a professional association of social psychologists, such as the Society for Personality and Social Psychology or an interdisciplinary association that includes social psychology such as the Society for Prevention Research.

- **Research skills.** The program emphasizes the development of laboratory and field research skills. In addition to the thesis and dissertation, students are expected to collaborate with faculty on research projects throughout their training, and the results of these research projects are to be published in journals and presented at regional and national conferences.

- **Theoretical and conceptual skills.** Social psychology, as science, progresses through both research and theory. In addition to the mechanics of design, students develop the ability to conceptualize a problem and develop testable explanations of social phenomena.

- **Instructional skills.** Many students choose to enter academia when their graduate work is completed, so their training includes opportunities to develop instructional skills. In addition to presentations of research at departmental functions, students are encouraged to enroll in teaching practicum and to develop the skills needed to teach social psychology to others. All students are urged to teach or co-teach a section of social psychology once they have earned their Master’s degree.

- **Applied skills.** Many students choose to enter organizations when their graduate work is completed, so a final goal of the program is the development of research and managerial skills needed to contribute in such settings.
Master’s Degree Requirements

Students are admitted into the Social Psychology Program only for full-time study towards the doctoral degree. However, all students must complete the master’s degree requirements prior to formal entry into the doctoral program. All requirements are found in the VCU Graduate Bulletin. All students must complete a thesis that meets the standards set forth by the student's advisor and thesis committee.

Thesis Advisor

Students must select a faculty advisor during their first year of graduate study. In most cases, the faculty advisor will be the chair of the student's master’s thesis committee, and will also work with the student on other research that is intended for eventual publication. The advisor also assists the student in selecting courses, planning research activities, and developing his or her vita.

Students may also select an individual from another area of psychology within the department (clinical, counseling, developmental, health, or biopsychology) to chair their thesis committee. In such cases, students should maintain an academic advisor who is a member of the social psychology faculty.

Semester Hour and Course Requirements

Coursework at the master's level includes the departmental core, at least 6 hours of MS thesis credits (PSYC 798), and at least 3 credits of Research Practicum (PSYC 690) and/or Readings and Research (PSYC 671). These requirements are described more fully in the Graduate Bulletin, but the specific courses include:

- PSYC 680 - Statistics in Psychological Research I
- PSYC 681 - Statistics in Psychological Research II
- PSYC 619 - Learning and Cognition
- PSYC 617 – Sensation and Perception, or PSYC 629 - Biological Basis of Behavior
- PSYC 675 - Ethical Principles of Psychology or equivalent (e.g., OVPR 601, 602, or 603). OVPR 603 is part of the “Preparing Future Faculty” program.

Suggested Schedule for Students in the Social Program

The entering student's schedule will depend upon his or her interests and the scheduling of courses for that year. Full-time graduate students must be enrolled in a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 15 credits per semester. The following, however, will serve as a general guideline for students in selecting their courses during their first two years of study.

Year 1*

Fall
- PSYC 680 Stats in Psych Research I/Research II
- PSYC 629 Bio Basis or PSYC 617 Sensation/Perception
- PSYC 630 Social Psychology (required in Year 1 fall)
- * PSYC 795 Teaching Practicum

* All students who are GTAs with lab or course responsibilities (except PSYC 101) MUST enroll in PSYC 795 in the first year they hold the position.
- PSYC 671 Readings and Research or PSYC 690 Research Practicum

**Spring**
- PSYC 681 Stats in Psych
- PSYC 619 Learning and Cognition
- PSYC 634 Attribution/Soc Cog or other social course
- PSYC 671 Readings and Research or PSYC 690 Research Practicum

**Year 2**

**Fall**
- PSYC 688 Self and Identity
- PSYC 601 Ethics
- PSYC 610 Attitude Theory and Research or PSYC 798 Thesis

**Spring**
- PSYC 632 Research Methods
- PSYC 675 Ethics (if did not take OVPR 601)
- PSYC 691 Social Special Topic or other social course
- PSYC 798 Thesis

**Thesis**

It is expected that students will submit their thesis proposal to their committee during the Fall Semester of their second year. The committee should have at least 3 members, with one member from a department outside of psychology. At least one member should be a member of the social psychology faculty. After submitting the written proposal, a proposal defense will be scheduled. Approval of the thesis proposal by the committee must be unanimous. Finally, students are expected to complete their thesis defense no later than the last day of formal classes for the Spring Semester of their second year.

**See the Graduate Student Handbook for more details and guidelines about the master’s thesis**

**Completion Expectations and Enrollment Restrictions**

The program recognizes that scholarly research is time-consuming, and that different topics and phenomena require differing amounts of research. However, students are expected to defend their master’s thesis by the end of the Spring Semester of their second year. Students who have not completed their thesis prior to the fifth semester of graduate study must reduce their enrollment, as described by the department's Graduate Student Handbook.

Thesis progress is an important criterion in evaluating students' progress in the program and is also considered in assigning departmental assistantships and financial support. Extension of the thesis project beyond the third year of graduate study will be considered indicative of a serious lack of progress in the program. Students must complete their master’s thesis within a four year period of their date of admission to the graduate program.
Requirements for the Ph.D.

During their master's level training, students should have developed a sound general grounding in basic and applied psychology, including the acquisition of research skills and participation in faculty guided research activities. At the doctoral level, students are expected to further develop their knowledge of social psychology, refine their research skills, and carry out original research. Training at the doctoral level involves specialized classroom work in one's chosen area of training, deeper involvement in research, and finally the independent creation and execution of an original piece of research for the doctoral dissertation.

Request for Continuation

After completion of all MS degree requirements, and prior to commencing any work on the Ph.D., students must submit a doctoral plan of study and formally request continuation into the doctoral program. The Program should not be considered an unchangeable contract, but a statement of accomplishments and plans to help the student, his or her advisor, and Program faculty shape the student's graduate career in a competent and marketable direction. However, students will not be admitted to doctoral level courses until the Program of Study has been filed. Acceptance of a student's application for continuation is not automatic. Program faculty will evaluate each student's promise of professional competence in their chosen area of specialization, with special emphasis on promise as a researcher.

Preliminary Examination

Purpose and Overview

The purpose of the Preliminary Examination is to evaluate students’ depth and breadth of knowledge in social psychology. Specifically, the exam will assess (1) an understanding of social psychological theory and research; (2) the student’s ability to integrate and apply social psychological theory and research findings; (3) the student’s ability to critique and evaluate research and theories; and (4) the extent to which the student can propose new lines of research.

The preliminary exam will be taken after the student has completed his/her master’s thesis, generally at the beginning of the third year. The exam must be passed for a student to become a doctoral candidate.

A non-exhaustive reading list will be provided to students prior to taking the exam. This reading list will consist of literature sources that faculty considers to be particularly valuable and comprehensive. Although most questions on the exam will come from these sources and social psychology courses, exam material will not necessarily be covered in explicit detail in any of these sources nor be covered in explicit detail in a particular course. Students are expected to keep up with major developments in the field and are advised to consult recent issues of journals such as Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Journal of Applied Social Psychology, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, Psychological Science, and Personality and Social Psychology Review. Depending on students’ research interests, other journals may be recommended in preparation for the preliminary exams.

The exam will cover the major areas of social psychology and will most likely include:

1. Social cognition and attitudes (e.g., cognition, affect, persuasion, etc.)
2. Interpersonal relations and group processes (e.g., intimate relationships, intergroup relations)
3. Individual differences (e.g., self and identity, personality processes)
4. Social psychological research methods

**Scheduling the Exam**

The preliminary exam is offered once a year, during the beginning of the Fall semester. The specific dates will be announced at the end of the Spring semester by June 30th.

Students are expected to take their exam after completing their Master’s degree and before the dissertation proposal meeting. Thus, most students will take their exam between the second and third year of the program (this timeframe may be adjusted to accommodate individual cases).

Students planning to take the exam must notify the Social Program Director and their research advisor at least eight weeks before the scheduled exam.

Facilities with computers will be provided for students to use for the in-house portion of the exam.

**Procedure**

**In-house:** The first part of the preliminary exam is in-house and closed-book. The purpose of this in-house exam is to assess students’ breadth of knowledge of social psychology. The in-house exam will be administered over two consecutive days. Each day will consist of a four-hour session beginning at 9:00 am and ending at 1:00 pm. The exam will be common for all students taking the exam that year and will consist of essay and short answer questions from a pool of questions developed by the Social faculty.

**Take-home:** The second part of the preliminary exam is take-home, open-book. The purpose of the take-home exam is to assess students’ ability to integrate, apply, and evaluate major areas of social psychological theories and research and their ability to generate new areas of research. Students will have six days to complete the exam. The exam will be distributed at 1:00 pm on the second day of the in-house exam. Students are responsible for getting their completed exam to the Prelim Coordinator no later than 1:00 pm six days later (i.e., in general the take-home exam will be distributed on Tuesday and returned the following Monday). Students are permitted to use all sources in answering questions, except for seeking advice from faculty or experts in the field. All work must be done independently.

Answers to each question must be double-spaced on standard paper with one inch margins and type no smaller than 12 point. Page limits will be specified for each question. Students are expected to include a reference section in APA style.

**Grading**

Each question will be graded by 2 to 3 social area faculty members, with the intent of matching question content to faculty expertise. A grade of pass or fail will be given based on the student’s overall performance on the in-house and take-home questions. In general, a grade of pass will denote successful performance of at least 75% of the in-class exam AND 75% of the take-home questions). Under some circumstances and with approval of social faculty, it might be possible to remediate a failing grade on the prelim within the semester in which it is taken. The student will be assigned a specific activity with a specific deadline for remedying the deficits demonstrated in his/her answers. This may involve any project, including a retesting, that the Social faculty deem appropriate. When the project is completed it will be evaluated, and the student's grade will be changed to Pass or to Fail (without possibility of a retake). In the event that a student fails the preliminary exam, he or she is entitled to take the preliminary
exam offered the following academic year. A second failure will result in dismissal from the Social Program.

**Quality of Work**

Besides academic excellence, students are expected to demonstrate continuous progress in their professional development. This requirement involves (1) sustained contact with the faculty of this department through taking courses which form an integrated program of studies; (2) working with at least one member of the faculty on research projects designed to culminate in publications; (3) sustained progress toward completion of the thesis and dissertation; and (4) attendance and participation in professional activities, including departmental colloquia, association meetings, etc.

In addition to these requirements, students must continually show acceptable behavior to be retained in a program of graduate studies. This means that students must abide by the ethical standards of professional conduct described by the American Psychological Association and with the rules and regulations of Virginia Commonwealth University. Inadequate progress in the pursuit of a degree is grounds for dismissal from the program.

**Evaluation of Progress**

The responsibility for defining and assigning student grades resides solely with the individual faculty instructor, with the provision that a grade of "C" is to be interpreted uniformly as substandard performance, or performance clearly not up to criterion.

Toward the end of the Spring semester, using Program of Study and Vita, students will be asked to submit a progress report to their advisors to be reported to the Program faculty. Students will meet with their advisor who will convey the feedback of all program faculty regarding their progress in research, teaching, service, and professional development.

Graduate students’ progress will also be evaluated on the following criteria: (1) Research performance, including the thesis, dissertation, and research done for course credit (PSY 671, 690), as well as other work performed with a faculty person but not for course credit; (2) academic performance; and (3) contribution to the program including attendance at colloquia and other activities. These activities are considered by the faculty to be an important part of graduate training and adequate progress in research performance is necessary for continuance in the program.
# Curriculum for Ph.D. Study in Psychology

The social program examines key areas of social psychology including social cognition, interpersonal processes, social influence, self and identity, attitudes and attitude change, and applied social psychology. As noted above, students must develop, in consultation with their advisor, a program of study of the Doctoral degree. The VCU Graduate Bulletin is the best resource for degree requirements.

Students should already have completed the following courses for their master’s degree: PSYC 630, 617 or 629, 619, 680, 681, 675 (or equivalent), 671 or 690, and 798. Ph.D. requirements include:

## Required Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 610</td>
<td>Attitude Theory and Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 632</td>
<td>Research Methods in Social Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 634</td>
<td>Attribution and Social Cognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 671</td>
<td>Readings and Research (3 credits minimum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 690</td>
<td>Research Practicum (3 credits minimum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 898</td>
<td>Dissertation Research (12 credits minimum)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Social Seminars

Students must take at least 3 additional social seminars, some of which are listed below (all are worth 3 credits):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 631</td>
<td>Evaluation Research: Psychological Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 688</td>
<td>Self and Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 691*</td>
<td>Interpersonal Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 691*</td>
<td>Social Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 691*</td>
<td>Social and Developmental Practicum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYC 691</td>
<td>Positive Psychology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: These courses are rarely offered, but this list is not exhaustive. Courses in other areas (e.g., a course in the health program that covers stereotypes/prejudice) may be considered to fulfill the requirement. If fewer than three of these courses are offered during your years enrolled, it will not prevent you from graduating.

## Non-Social Content Courses

Students are required to take at least two non-social psychology content courses. These courses should be chosen to meet the training needs and goals of the student. They should be selected after consulting with the student’s advisor and/or program director and will vary from student to student. These courses should be listed in the student’s doctoral plan of study when the continuation plan is submitted (see page 8). Some courses students might wish to consider are listed under electives but courses are not limited to these electives. Student may need to obtain instructor’s permission prior to enrolling in course.

## Electives

Other courses that students may wish to take, depending upon their program of studies, include:
• MGMT 702  Causal Analyses for Organizational Studies
• PSYC 638  Evolution of Psychological Systems
• PSYC 602  Psychology of Aging
• PSYC 603  Developmental Processes
• PSYC 605  Social Development
• PSYC 613  Cognitive Development
• PSYC 659  Seminar in Consultation Psychology
• PSYC 660  Health Psychology
• PSYC 668  Interpersonal Psychotherapy: Social Psychological Analysis
• PSYC 700  Grant Writing
• PSYC 795  Practicum in the Teaching of Psychology
• HGEN 620  Principles of Human Behavioral Genetics
• STAT 744  Regression II
• STAT 643  Applied Linear Regression
• SBHD 610  Behavioral Measurement

**Concentration**

The program does not require that students undertake a concentrated study in any area of study within social psychology. However, those who wish to carry out an extended study of a sub-specialty may do so. At the present time, the Program offers a concentration in Applied Social Psychology and Social Health/Clinical Interface. For both of these concentrations, the student's specific program of study must be developed by the student in consultation with his or her advisor, and the program of study must be approved by the program faculty. Any changes in the program of study must also be approved by the program faculty. Students with a concentration in one of these two areas must present a colloquium to the faculty on the area of their intensive study.

**Concentration in Applied Social**

This concentration focuses on the application of social psychology in field settings and conducting research within urban and local communities. Social psychological theory is used to address contemporary social issues and problems such as substance abuse, educational achievement, health disparities, HIV, violence, etc. This concentration also provides opportunities for students to participate in intervention and prevention research and to complete a practicum in a community based agency.

**Concentration in the Social/Clinical Interface**

Focuses on the application of social psychology theory and method in dealing with health problems and adjustment, and well-being.

Some of the typical courses completed by students with a focus on applied social and the social/clinical interface include:

- PSYC 631: Evaluation Research: Psychological Perspectives
- PSYC 655: Community Interventions
- PSYC 691: Developmental and Social Practicum
- PSYC 691: Positive Psychology
- XXXXXX: Qualitative Research Methods Course
**Dissertation**

A dissertation requiring the planning, completion, and defense of an original empirical research project is an integral part of the Ph.D. program. The dissertation shall be of such quality as to warrant publication. Students must form a dissertation committee of at least 5 members, with one member from a department outside of psychology. The committee must be approved by the student’s advisor, program director, the director of graduate training.

**See the Graduate Student Handbook for more details and guidelines about the dissertation**