Psychology is both a behavioral and a social science, based on theory and validated by empirical studies of human and animal behavior. Psychology examines contemporary perspectives on principles of human behavior in areas ranging from cognition, language, development, and physiological psychology to interpersonal relations and psychopathology.

Bowdoin offered its first psychology course as part of the Department of Philosophy in 1904. In the decades since then, the field has grown dramatically and has evolved close ties to both natural sciences and humanities, making it a central part of Bowdoin’s overall liberal arts curriculum. The Department of Psychology currently offers courses in areas ranging from animal neurophysiology to human language, from basic perceptual processes to developmental and clinical psychology. Its approach emphasizes scientific methods of inquiry and analysis. The Neuroscience Program, sponsored jointly by the departments of psychology and biology, examines the relationships between biological processes and behaviors, including both human and animal studies.

Courses in the department cover the central areas of modern psychology, supplemented by several interdisciplinary areas. Introductory courses include a general survey course, research design, and data analysis. Intermediate courses examine human development, social behavior, personality, abnormal psychology, cognition, neuroscience, and other areas. Advanced courses focus on topics such as organizational behavior, cognitive development, social development, language, and clinical psychology. Class sizes in the department vary from the introductory course, which enrolls up to fifty students in five sections per year, to advanced courses that generally have fewer than sixteen students.

The Major Program

Between thirty and forty students major in psychology each year. Students in the department can choose a major within the program itself or elect an interdisciplinary major in neuroscience. Ten courses are required for the psychology major, including Introduction to Psychology, Research Design in Psychology, Data Analysis, two laboratory courses, two advanced courses, and three other electives at the intermediate level or above. The three electives are intended to allow students to pursue topics of interest and sample the breadth of the field after consulting with their advisors. It is recommended that the laboratory courses be completed before the senior year. Psychology majors are encouraged to consider an independent study course on a library-, laboratory-, or field-research project during the senior year.

Those who plan to study away from campus for one or both semesters of their junior year should complete at least one laboratory course before leaving for their off-campus experience and plan to enroll in two 300-level courses after returning to campus.

The neuroscience major consists of twelve courses, including ten core courses in psychology, biology, and chemistry, and two elective courses from among several choices in psychology, biology, and computer science. An introductory physics course is also recommended.
ors projects involving original research. At the end of the year, honors projects are submitted as both a written report and an oral presentation to the department. Honors are awarded solely on the basis of the student's performance on this project; other courses and grades are not considered for honors.

Independent study and honors work are also available to neuroscience majors. Independent study may be used to fulfill one of the two elective credits.

Faculty

Barbara S. Held, Barry N. Wish Professor of Psychology and Social Studies, A.B. (Douglas), Ph.D. (Nebraska), specializes in clinical psychology and philosophical psychology. She teaches courses in introductory psychology, personality, abnormal psychology, and philosophy of psychology and psychotherapy. Her research interests include the philosophies of being and knowing that inform systems of psychotherapy and approaches to psychological inquiry. She also studies the impact of our culture of "positivity" on psychological functioning and disciplinary psychology.

Suzanne B. Lovett, associate professor of psychology, A.B. (Bowdoin), Ph.D. (Stanford), specializes in cognitive development. She teaches courses in cognitive development, infant and child development, introductory psychology, and statistics. Her research interests include children's ability to distinguish between the mental processes of comprehension and memory and their folk theories of psychology and biology. She is chair of the department.

Samuel Putnam, associate professor of psychology, B.S. (Iowa), Ph.D. (Penn State), specializes in social and emotional development. He teaches courses in introductory psychology, infant development, and group decision-making.

Richmond R. Thompson, associate professor of psychology and neuroscience, B.S. (Furman), Ph.D. (Cornell), specializes in behavioral neuroscience, endocrinology, and neuroanatomy. He teaches introductory psychology, physiological psychology, comparative neuroanatomy, hormones and behavior, and behavioral neuroscience. His research interests are in the neuroendocrine mechanisms that regulate social behavior in vertebrate animals.

After Bowdoin

Each year, several graduates from the department go on to advanced study in psychology. Recent graduates have pursued doctoral degrees at Boston University, Columbia, Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Michigan State, Penn State, Purdue, Stanford, and the universities of Alabama, Chicago, Denver, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, and Pittsburgh.

Many of Bowdoin's psychology majors undertake graduate training in related fields, such as medicine, law, business, public administration, or social work. Often, students will work for a year or two before entering graduate programs. Such interim activities take them into the Peace Corps, Teach for America, residential treatment centers for emotionally disturbed children, schools, university or medical center research programs, and private business, providing valuable experiences for future careers.

Honors Projects

Recent honors theses completed by majors in the department include:

- Young Children's Understanding of the Distinction between Biological and Nonbiological Growth
- Should a Spider Take an Aspirin? The Development of a Folk Biopsychology in Children
- Development of the Ability to Distinguish between Comprehension, Memory, and Attention
- The Role of Metrical Stress in Spoken Word Recognition: Segmentation or Activation?
- The Problem between Endogenous Testosterone and Responses to Aggressive Stimuli in Humans
- Understanding Failure Experiences: Does Concreteness Matter?
- Moral Motivations as a Factor in Children's Rating of Lies
- Can Scientific Psychology Incorporate Human Agency?
- Using Failure to Gain Success: Achieving Long-Term Strategy Selection

Bowdoin

For more information about Bowdoin, please write or call the Dean of Admissions.

Bowdoin College
5000 College Station
Brunswick, ME 04011-8441
207-725-3100
www.bowdoin.edu
admissions@bowdoin.edu

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