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**Advising information**

<https://psychology.yale.edu/undergraduate/advising-information>

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## Senior Reqs:

### The Big Picture

Two key things:

- Two credits from 4000-level courses
- The completion of a “senior essay”, i.e. the substantial writing project, in one of those courses

Finer print

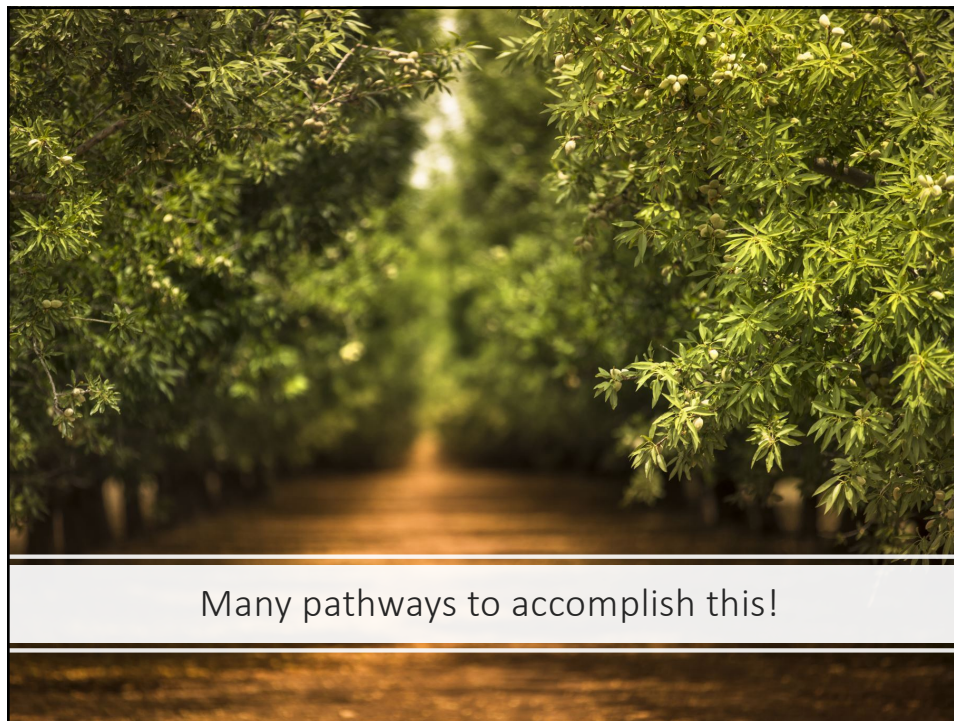
- The senior essay and the course in which it is completed must be taken during your senior year for a letter grade
- The other credit can be taken any year
- BS students must take and complete their senior essay in PSYC 4990
- BA students can take and complete their essay in either PSYC 4990 or a senior seminar

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## Senior Essay (senior thesis)

- Psychology majors must complete a “substantial final paper” of > 5000 words during their senior year
- This can be an **empirical** (i.e., involving data; required for BS students) or **non-empirical** (e.g. a theoretical or conceptual paper, a substantial literature review, etc.)
- The essay can be written in a senior seminar (for BA students) or in PSYC 4990 (for BS and BA students)
- The goal is to have you do a deep dive in a topic of interest to you and experience long-form writing in the discipline

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Option	Course that can be taken any year	Course that must be taken senior year and result in the senior essay
1	Senior seminar	Senior seminar
2	PSYC 4925	Senior seminar
3	PSYC 4950 x 2	Senior seminar
4	Senior Seminar	PSYC 4990
5	PSYC 4925	PSYC 4990
6	PSYC 4950 x 2	PSYC 4990
7		PSYC 4990 x 2

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## Can I take any of these courses multiple times?

- PSYC 4925, 4950, and 4990 can be repeated
  - 4925: up to 3x
  - 4950: up to 4x
  - 4990: up to 2x
- But **only 3 credits from 490-level courses can count towards the psych degree!**
- Taking PSYC 4950 twice is very common (.5 credit each)

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## Taking PSYC 4990 twice

- Yes, and this option (option 7) is often recommended for those who want to go to graduate school in Psychology or a related field
- But comes with some costs: the student must write **two** substantial papers (at least 5000 words each), one from each term.
- Example: introduction and methods section in the fall semester (at least 5000 words) + results and discussion section in the spring semester (at least 5000 **new** words)

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Are there different requirements for the BA and BS degree?

- Students seeking a **BA degree** can choose from options 1-7, but most choose from options 1-3.
- Students seeking a **BS degree** must conduct empirical research through PSYC 4990. Thus, those students can only choose from options 4-7.

Option	Course that can be taken any year	Course that must be taken senior year and result in the senior essay
1	Senior seminar	Senior seminar
2	PSYC 4925	Senior seminar
3	PSYC 4950 x 2	Senior seminar
4	Senior Seminar	PSYC 4990
5	PSYC 4925	PSYC 4990
6	PSYC 4950 x 2	PSYC 4990
7		PSYC 4990 x 2

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Do the requirements differ for students on the neuroscience track?

- Students in the **neuroscience track** have the same requirements, **however both 4000-level courses and the senior essay must have neuroscience content.**
- Hopefully you already know that **your research methods course (2000-level) also needed to have neuroscience content!**

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## Distinction in the Major

- Students seeking **distinction** in the major must submit senior essay one week earlier (one week before last day of classes)
  - The senior essay will be graded by the student's advisor and a second reader
  - You must receive an A- or A to obtain distinction
- You will also need 75% A / A- grades in psychology courses to qualify
  - Cr/D/F classes **do** count in the denominator unless that was the only grading option for that course

For reference, this Year's Deadlines:

April 17<sup>th</sup>, 530 pm for distinction  
April 24<sup>th</sup>, 530pm for non-distinction

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## Enrolling in research courses (PSYC 4925, 4950, 4990)

- This is a multi-step process:
  - **First**, identify the faculty member who will advise you and confirm that you have their approval. Develop an understanding of what you will do and how you will be evaluated. The information you will need is summarized [here](#).
  - **Second**, add the course as normal, being sure to request instructor permission
  - **Third**, complete the Qualtrics survey ([link](#)).
  - **Fourth**, accept the spot in the course once your request has been approved by the DUS

This entire process must be completed no later than one week before add/drop ends!

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## Preregistration for Rising Seniors

We guarantee all rising seniors a spot in one senior seminar during their senior year.

- For BA students this course can be used to complete the senior essay
- For BA and BS students this course can fulfill one of the two necessary credits of the senior requirement (BS students still must take 4990!)

Where possible we also assist rising seniors getting a research methods course if they haven't taken one by senior year

However, **it is your responsibility to respond to the preregistration survey in a timely manner!** Failure to respond to the survey may mean we are not able to place you in a course!

This process is will happen in March,  
keep an eye on your inbox!

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## Choosing a senior essay topic

Choose a topic that...

- you are interested in and enjoy—it's a lot of work!
- may be useful for your career or graduate school applications
- Fits with your advisors existing research topics and/or the topic of the senior seminar you are completing the senior essay in

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## Choosing a senior essay advisor

Learn about potential advisors by...

- Taking their courses (especially senior seminars)
- Getting involved in their labs/research, ideally prior to senior year
- Reading their publications on their website
- Asking current seniors about their senior essay experiences

Important considerations

- Contact your potential advisor substantially before the semester you plan to start your senior essay.
- Be polite and courteous when asking a professor to advise your essay.
- Be familiar with the relevant background needed to successfully carry out a project in their lab
- If you are really interested in a particular lab you may need to get involved as an RA *before* starting a senior essay

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## Unsuccessful strategies look like...

Inbox
Empty Trash
Compose
Folders
Search
Accounts
Options
Problem
Help
Log out

Inbox: senior essay advisor (1 of 17)

Mark as: Move | Copy | This message to:

Delete | Reply | Reply to All | Forward | Redirect | View Thread | Message Source | Save as | Print

**Subject:** senior essay advisor

**Headers:** [Show All Headers](#)

Hello Professors,

I still need to find a senior essay advisor. Will one of you just agree to be my advisor because I can't find anybody else and the form is due tomorrow.

Thanks,

Delete | Reply | Reply to All | Forward | Redirect | View Thread | Message Source | Save as | Print

Mark as: Move | Copy | This message to:

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## Laurie Santos



Professor of Psychology

Ph.D. 2003, Harvard University

Our research explores an age-old question: what makes the human mind unique? We test this question by studying the cognitive capacities of non-human animals. By comparing the cognitive abilities of non-human animals to those of humans, we can determine which domains of knowledge are unique to the human mind. At the Canine and Primate Laboratory (aka CapLab), we study the origins of human cognition by focusing on two different groups of non-human animals. First, we test the phylogenetic origins of human cognition by studying our closest living evolutionary relatives, the non-human primates. By testing field-living non-human

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## Successful strategies look more like...

The screenshot shows an email client interface with a blue header bar containing icons for Inbox, Empty Trash, Compose, Folders, Search, Accounts, Options, Problem, Help, and Log out. Below the header, the email title is "Inbox: senior essay advisor? (1 of 18)". The email content is as follows:

**To:** laurie.santos@yale.edu  
**Subject:** senior essay advisor?  
**Headers:** Show All Headers

Hi Professor Santos,

Would you agree to be my senior essay advisor?

I am really interested in the evolutionary origins of the human mind by comparing the cognitive abilities of human and non-human primates. I have always wanted to work with non-human primates (in captivity and in the field) incorporating methodologies from cognitive development, animal learning psychology, and cognitive neuroscience.

Let me know if you have senior essay slots available.

Thanks!

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## Choosing a senior essay advisor

But even that may not work if you wait until your senior year!

- Lab may be full
- Some professors are on leave each term
- Many professors only supervise empirical senior essays for students who have previously done research in their lab

What if I still don't have an advisor?

- Be sure to enroll in a senior seminar so you have a second option in which to complete your senior essay for the BA
- Be in touch with labs/professors NOW!
- Propose being a research assistant in the Fall in order to do a senior essay in the Spring

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**Reach out to advising  
staff for more help and information!**

[psychology.yale.edu/undergraduate/advising-information](https://psychology.yale.edu/undergraduate/advising-information)

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