Senior Thesis Paper in Psychology

Psychology majors complete their senior thesis as

a) For most students, the senior thesis paper is completed as part of the 400-level topical seminar, enabling more direct connections between course work and developing an argument, as well as providing direct supervision from a faculty member with topical expertise. Note that these courses may or may not count towards the University’s Writing Centered requirement, although PSYC 498 does count as Writing Centered.

OR

b) Research interns write an empirical report of their research under the direction of their faculty supervisor as part of the 168 hours internship experience requirement for PSYC 498. With permission from their faculty research supervisor, research interns have the option of revising and further developing their written research report from PSYC 498 according to the criteria for a thesis, and using this revised paper (rather than a seminar paper) to meet the senior paper requirement. To do this additional work, upon completion of PSYC 498 these students may enroll in a .5 credit course, “Senior Level Independent Study” in the spring of their senior year (optional).

c) Honors students (determined by invitation in the Fall of senior year) are required to write an original argumentative or empirical honors thesis, under the direction of their honors committee. These students will receive .5 credit upon successful completion of PSYC 499W, Senior Honors in Psychology.

Once you have successfully completed one of these options for senior thesis and receive a grade from your supervising instructor, you need to let your PSYC 498 instructor know (your PSYC 498 grade will be recorded as a “Q” – in process – until your thesis is completed). Your thesis does NOT affect your actual letter grade in PSYC 498; it is only required to receive the (full) credit for the class.
Frequently Asked Questions concerning the Senior Thesis Paper in Psychology

1. If I take more than one 400-level seminar, do I write more than one senior thesis?

Each 400-level seminar includes two paper options. The first paper option is the senior thesis paper option, which is described elsewhere on the Psychology Department’s webpage. The second paper option is a shorter paper which will not count as a senior thesis. This second option will most commonly be selected by juniors, research interns who plan to revise their research report to meet the senior thesis requirements, and those who have previously written a senior thesis in another seminar.

2. What if I am a research intern in PSYC 498 and I want to write my senior thesis based on my empirical research instead of as part of a 400-level seminar?

Research interns write an empirical report of their research as part of the internship requirements for PSYC 498. However, upon approval from their research mentor, they may enroll in an independent study course (PSYC 493, Spring, .5 cr, optional) in order to revise and extend their empirical report into a paper that meets the requirements for the senior thesis. This paper will be graded by the research supervisor.

3. What if I write my senior thesis during my 400-level seminar, but it doesn’t receive a passing grade, or it doesn’t meet the posted requirements for a senior thesis. Can I still pass the seminar?

You may still be able to pass the seminar, depending on how final grades are being calculated. However, you will still need to complete the requirements for a seniors thesis (e.g., by taking another 400-level seminar), and receive at least a “D” on your final thesis paper.

4. If I am taking a 400-level seminar as a junior, can I select the option to write my senior thesis as part of that seminar?

Yes! However, if you decide NOT to write your thesis as part of the seminar, you will need to re-take a seminar as a senior.

5. If I am invited to participate in the Honors program, what do I write my thesis on?

If you’ve been invited and are interested in standing for honors in Psychology, you are required to write an original argumentative paper or empirical report, determined in consultation with your faculty advisor. More details will be provided at the Honors only meeting of PSYC 498 in October.