
Response to a Request from the Registrar Pertaining to the Cognitive Science Program

The Request

Recently, the Psychology dept changed how their Depth courses show in Degree Works. Instead of showing as an attribute (take a PSY course with a specific attribute), they changed it to a listing of courses. This was partly because not all courses got the specific attributes put on them in a timely manner.

We are trying to make things consistent across majors, and are asking to do the same for the Cognitive Science BS depth course requirement. It would be the listing of all Depth courses as approved by the PSY dept. Please let me know if this is OK to change. It will not only be more complete, but also save the trouble of maintaining any transfer equivalents that may or may not have the appropriate attribute.

The Response

The most important thing to emphasize in our response is that we don't believe that it would be a good idea, as a rule, to simply equate the two lists:

1. courses that satisfy the cognitive science program depth requirement in psychology
2. psychology department depth courses

The reason for this belief is grounded in the fact that the values of the cognitive science program differ from the values of the psychology department and its programs. (Neither the cognitive science major nor the psychology department would want to adopt "trying to make things consistent across majors" as a value when so doing would be inconsistent with their own curricular values.)

Both lists have great courses, and, as currently constituted, both are largely the same. But one should certainly not be tied to the other. Psychology might change theirs, and we would not want to be bound to their change. We might change ours, and psychology would not want to be bound to our change. If the names of the two lists appear to be too similar, we would be open to changing the name of the "cognitive science psychology depth requirement" to something like the "cognitive science advanced psychology enrichment course requirement". After all, the requirement was not conceived to be solely about depth in psychology, as the name might suggest if you were to forget about the cognitive science qualifier. It is also about appropriateness to our cognitive science program.

In short, the cognitive science program is comfortable with the rather inclusive (from a cognitive perspective) list of courses as it stands on the Cognitive Science BS Catalog page:

Psychology Depth Courses

Biological

- [PSY 403 - Biopsychology](#) Credit: 4
- [PSY 470 - Evolutionary Psychology](#) Credit: 3

Clinical / Social

- [PSY 424 - Social Cognition](#) Credit: 3
- [PSY 452 - Introduction to Trauma Studies](#) Credit: 3
- [PSY 461 - Brain Injury and Psychopathology](#) Credit: 3
- [PSY 465 - Neurobehavioral Toxicology](#) Credit: 3

Cognitive

- [PSY 401 - Perception](#) Credit: 4
- [PSY 402 - Learning](#) Credit: 4
- [PSY 411 - Introduction into Neural Networks](#) Credit: 3
- [PSY 433 - Primate Cognition](#) Credit: 3
- [PSY 435 - Cognitive Systems](#) Credit: 3
- [PSY 444 - Emotion](#) Credit: 3
- [PSY 463 - Cognitive Neuroscience Seminar](#) Credit: 3

Developmental

- [PSY 423 - Psychology Adulthood & Aging](#) Credit: 3
- [PSY 426 - Development and Interpersonal Relationships](#) Credit: 3
- [PSY 428 - Cognitive Development](#) Credit: 3

As a practical matter, the current list of “Psychology Depth Courses” courses contains a small number courses that fail to assure students the “cognitive dimension” that we would like to see in a course that satisfies the “psychology depth course for the cognitive science major” requirement. For example, the really great “Advanced Statistics in Psychological Science” course and the really great Advanced Research Methods in Psychological Science course typically emphasize methodological expertise far more than cognitive concerns. In the future, other courses that might find their way onto the list of psychology depth courses that may be inappropriate for the cognitive science program requirement in other ways.

As a historical note, this requirement came into being as a replacement, in essence, for one specific psychology course requirement, a course in perception. That was when the course, which had been taught each year for a very long time, was dropped as a regular offering in psychology. When we introduced the “psychology depth requirement for cognitive science” to replace the perception course requirement, the list of acceptable courses was quite small. Just a handful of courses. The current, much more inclusive, version of the list does appear to be mindful of the values of our cognitive science program. That said, it seems more likely that in times to come the advisory board would be more likely to recommend pruning the list of sanctioned courses than expanding it, simply to assure the integrity of integrative interdisciplinary cognitive science in the curriculum, one of the premier values of our program.