

Undergraduate Research Assistantships and Thesis Opportunities

Department of Psychology – East Carolina University

Spring 2026

Calling all Pirate Scholars!

The Department of Psychology at East Carolina University offers hands-on research experience opportunities for all undergraduate students.

Our faculty members are engaged in a variety of active research programs that span a number of specializations, methodologies, populations, and designs. Undergraduate students are encouraged to become a part of this research by assisting faculty with new and ongoing projects—an experience valuable for students who are interesting in learning more about one or more areas of psychology in greater depth, becoming an informed consumer of research, and developing skills and abilities valued by employers and graduate schools.

Undergraduate research assistants typically register for supervised course credit as an elective in psychology (e.g., PSYC 4501) in the semester or session that they are involved.

Below is a list of psychology department faculty who have demonstrated a commitment to mentoring undergraduate students in scientific research practices.

After studying this document, please complete the online application by using the following web address:

https://ecu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_aXL8QQuhTggQQWa

The deadline is Friday, October 31st.

The link to the application will become inactive after the deadline, so please complete the process as soon as possible if you are interested.

For more information, please visit <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/psyc/StudentResearch.cfm>

List of Faculty Mentors

Dr. Courtney Baker

Field of Specialization: Industrial/Organizational Psychology

Research Description: My research examines how social identities and features shape the way we perceive others, how others perceive us, and how these perceptions influence treatment, discrimination, and workplace experiences. My primary focus is on aging, gender, and disability, and I also study related topics such as leadership perceptions, humor use, multitasking, and workplace mistreatment.

Currently, my lab is particularly focused on understanding what it means to age healthily in the workplace and designing projects that explore how workers' experiences differ across age groups.

In the lab, research assistants gain hands-on experience across the research process. Tasks vary depending on the stage of active projects but may include pretesting surveys, coding data, conducting literature searches, checking APA references, and collecting participant data. To help structure these efforts, we hold a weekly lab meeting where members coordinate tasks and work on a shared lab project. Each semester, students in the lab collaborate to design and carry out a project aligned with the lab's research themes, providing experience in the full research cycle.

First-time lab students are required to register for course credit. After the first semester, students may choose to continue for credit or volunteer. Undergraduates who contribute for at least one semester are eligible to be considered for a senior thesis project within the lab.

Available to Freshmen/Sophomores? Yes

Senior Thesis option? Considered after one semester

Dr. Shahnaz Aziz

Field of Specialization: Clinical Health Psychology

My area of interest lies in the domain of employee well-being and health, specifically, workaholism. Student researchers would typically be involved in subject recruitment, data collection/entry, and discuss relevant literature.

Available to Freshmen/Sophomores? No

Senior Thesis option? No

Dr. Matt Whited

Field of Specialization: Clinical Health Psychology

Research Description: The Cardiovascular Psychophysiology lab is broadly interested in understanding and modifying behavioral factors that influence cardiovascular disease. You can learn more about the lab from Dr. Whited's website (<https://psychology.ecu.edu/people/whited/>). We are currently conducting a study investigating college student self-knowledge of blood pressure and BMI. We are interested in understanding how their self-knowledge relates to various health behaviors that are associated with cardiovascular disease. Undergraduate lab members will gain experience with both psychological and physiological assessment and learn about the history and background of this research project.

Available to Freshmen/Sophomores? Yes

Senior Thesis option? No

Dr. Karly (Murphy) Ingram

Field of Specialization: Clinical Health Psychology

The Psycho-Oncology Research Team (PORT) led by Dr. Ingram seeks to develop, evaluate, and disseminate psychosocial interventions that improve quality of life among cancer patients and survivors. We utilize systematic procedures for intervention development that involve patients in the process to ensure that our work is grounded in sound theory, empirical evidence, and patient experiences. We are particularly interested in developing interventions for underserved cancer patients and survivors, such as adolescents and young adults (AYAs) and individuals living in rural areas. PORT also serves as a research training lab for graduate and undergraduate students. By participating in the lab, students will strengthen their research and professional skills while also making meaningful contributions to psycho-oncology research.

Spring 2026 Experience: Students will be involved in several ongoing projects in the lab, including (1) reviewing medical records to identify patients that are potentially eligible for a clinical trial of a digital intervention; (2) reviewing information submitted by participants through an online survey to verify information provided; and (3) coding qualitative data. Students will also be expected to assist with conference abstract and manuscript preparation related to the projects they contribute to.

Course Requirements & Applicant Preferences:

-Completion of PSYC 2210 with a grade of B or higher

-Willing to commit to at least 2 consecutive semesters of at least 2 credits/semester of independent study in the PORT lab

Available to Freshmen/Sophomores? No

Senior Thesis option? No

Dr. Tuan Tran

Field of Specialization: Neuroscience / Biological Psychology

Research Description:

Area of Specialization: Neuroanatomy, Neurobiology of Learning and Memory

Current Research: Animal models of Alzheimer's disease

Eligibility: Students must demonstrate a desire for science as a career by future enrollment in Graduate School towards an advanced degree such as MA, MS, or PhD. Students wishing to enter medical school will not be considered.

Available to Freshmen/Sophomores? Yes

Senior Thesis option? Yes

Dr. Christyn Dolbier (Grad Student: Alia Simon)

Field of Specialization: Clinical Health Psychology

Research Description:

Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Anxiety Symptom Management among People With Epilepsy

- We are currently seeking undergraduate research assistants to join a study investigating the effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) for individuals with epilepsy for anxiety symptom management.
- Student researchers will gain hands-on experience with study advertisement (e.g., designing and distributing flyers), distribution of participant materials, participant communication, learning the theoretical basis of MBCT and related practice, understanding clinical applications of mindfulness, considerations for tailoring interventions to specific patient populations, with all necessary training provided.
- This is a valuable opportunity for skill development, professional networking, learning to apply for mini grants, such as applying for the Undergraduate Research and Creative Achievement Award, and authorship/engagement in potential conference presentations. No prior research experience is required—just curiosity, professionalism, and a willingness to learn.
- For students applying to graduate school, I am also happy to help you with your applications/providing any recommendations or advice!
- The expected commitment is for the Spring Semester of 2026.
- To express interest, please apply.

Available to Freshmen/Sophomores? Yes

Senior Thesis option? Yes

Dr. Christyn Dolbier (Grad Student: Maeve Schumacher)

Field of Specialization: Clinical Health Psychology

Research Description:

Study Description: This study will examine psychological care needs, utilization, and preferences among women who have experienced miscarriage within the past year. In lay terms, this study aims to understand the mental health needs of women post-miscarriage: What psychological services are currently utilized or offered to this group and what psychological services and interventions are desired by this group. My hope is that this exploratory, mixed-methods research will lay the groundwork for development of a psychological care intervention for women who experience miscarriage.

Undergraduate Research Assistant Role: Students who join the project will assist with: Literature reviews, data cleaning, qualitative coding, supporting presentations and publications involving study data.

Qualifications & Traits Ideal Candidates Will Have: A career interest in women's health and/or mental health care. A GPA of 3.0 or higher and an A in Introductory Psychology (if applicable). Empathy, genuineness, and strong attention to detail. A willingness to learn new research tools (e.g., R, SPSS, Qualtrics, Excel). No prior research experience required—just curiosity and commitment!

Time Commitment & Flexibility: Estimated 5–7 hours per week, corresponding to registering for PSYC 4501: Supervised Research. Flexible scheduling around classes. Most tasks can be completed remotely, with in-person meetings as needed (typically 1x per week).

Why This Research Matters: This project addresses a deeply under-researched and underserved area in clinical care and psychology research. Your contributions could help shape future interventions and make a meaningful impact on the lives of women navigating miscarriage.

I'm also happy to provide mentorship on graduate school applications and career paths in clinical psychology and women's health.

Available to Freshmen/Sophomores? Yes

Senior Thesis option? Yes

Dr. Michael Baker

Fields of Specialization: Social Psychology, Personality, Evolutionary Theory

Research Description: This spring I will need assistants to help with data collection for a project examining how people spend money depending on whether the money was earned or received as a gift. Student research assistants get hands-on experience running participants through a psychological experiment in a laboratory. Assistants are expected to attend weekly lab meetings to discuss progress on the lab project as well as assigned readings from psychological journals.

Available to Freshmen/Sophomores? No

Senior thesis option available? No