

Guidance for Students Considering Graduate School in Clinical or Counseling Psychology

Clinical psychology and its close relative, counseling psychology, are *graduate*-level programs. Clinical and counseling psychology are the areas within psychology that, among other things, train a student to do psychotherapy/ counseling. As an *undergraduate* you can't major in these areas, but you can prepare yourself for graduate work in clinical or counseling psychology.

Clinical psychology focuses on the study, assessment, and treatment of psychological disorders and the individuals who suffer from them. If you like courses like *Psychopathology* or *Personality Psychology*, you may find clinical and counseling psychology of interest. Education in clinical psychology prepares an individual for careers in academia (e.g., teaching and research at a college/university) or in more applied settings (e.g., conducting psychotherapy, doing psychological testing, and managing mental health programs). Disciplines related to clinical psychology include psychiatry (a medical school path), counseling psychology, school psychology, marriage and family therapy, and social work.

The suggestions below are oriented toward those students who are considering attending graduate school in clinical psychology or related programs. Many of these recommendations are taken from Sayette & Norcross's *Insider's Guide to Graduate Programs in Clinical and Counseling Psychology*. This book is a good resource for students; we have copies in the St. Olaf Psychology Department office that you can check out, or you might want to buy a copy for yourself (cost is around \$26). This book comes out in a new edition about every two years, and it includes brief chapters describing clinical psychology, counseling psychology, and related fields; how to prepare for graduate school; and how to select and apply to schools. In addition, it lists graduate programs in clinical and counseling psychology, giving basic facts about each program including entering students' average GPA & GRE scores, etc.

Another very informative resource is a 52-page online document, "Mitch's Uncensored Grad School Advice" by Mitch Prinstein, Ph.D., a clinical psychology professor at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. You can scan through it to see what you might find helpful at: <https://mitch.web.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4922/2017/02/MitchGradSchoolAdvice.pdf>

Required courses: Most clinical psychology graduate programs require you to have taken:

- Psych 125: Principles of Psychology
- Stats 110, 212, or 214: Statistics
- Psych 230: Research Methods
- Psych 247: Psychopathology (also known as Abnormal Psychology)

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Recommended additional courses: Courses that are highly recommended and/or required by some graduate schools:

- Psych 244: Psychology of Personality
- Psych 238: Biopsychology
- Psych 241: Developmental Psychology

Other particularly relevant courses: Other St. Olaf psychology courses that may be of special interest/relevance to you include (of course, no one is able to take all of these!):

- Psych 375: Introduction to Clinical and Counseling Psychology
- Psych 342: Positive Psychology: The Science of Optimal Human Experience
- Psych 390: Forensic Psychology
- Psych 338: Neurobiology of Psychopathology
- Other 300-level Psychology courses in areas related to clinical & counseling psych
- Internship

Research experience: Experience doing research is quite valuable, many would say essential. Therefore, you should consider one (or more) of:

- Psych 396: Directed Undergraduate Research
- Psych 298/398: Independent Study/ Independent Research
- Summer Research at St. Olaf or elsewhere
- Research in St. Olaf's Statistics program (e.g., the CIR).

And if you want to check out even more resources:

After St. Olaf, what graduate school and career paths do St. Olaf Psychology majors take?

See the Piper Center's webpage on: [What can I do with a major in...?](https://wp.stolaf.edu/pipercenter/find-your-path/what-can-i-do-with-a-major-in/) at <https://wp.stolaf.edu/pipercenter/find-your-path/what-can-i-do-with-a-major-in/> and the Piper Center's [First Destination Employment Database](https://wp.stolaf.edu/pipercenter/firstdestinationemployment/) at <https://wp.stolaf.edu/pipercenter/firstdestinationemployment/>.

There you can just plug in the Psychology major and see what our students do and where they go immediately after graduation. For approximately 20% of our majors, their "first destination" is graduate school. When you click on "Grad school" you can see a sampling of the programs in which they are enrolled, including Clinical and Counseling Psychology programs. The majority of our Psychology graduates are employed, and clicking on "Employment" will give you a list of top employers.

For more information from the national organization, the American Psychological Association:

If you're still looking for additional clinical & counseling psychology resources, you could explore the American Psychological Association's websites for:

APA's Division 12: The Society of Clinical Psychology: <https://div12.org/students/> and
APA's Division 17: Society of Counseling Psychology <https://www.div17.org/counseling-psychology-training>, both of which have information about graduate programs and resources for students/applicants.