

**Undergraduate Research Assistantships and Theses  
Department of Psychology – East Carolina University  
Spring 2019 Assistantships**

- Interested in gaining hands-on research experience with a faculty member in the Department of Psychology at East Carolina University?
- 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.
- Please review the following list of faculty who are accepting research assistants for spring 2019.
- Afterwards, complete the online application by using the following web address:  
[https://ecu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bjXfuWOgOtCFedj](https://ecu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bjXfuWOgOtCFedj)
- The deadline for completing the application process is October 7, 2018. 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**

*Please review the following list of faculty mentors and note your preferences.*

**DR. MICHAEL BAKER**

Field of Specialization: Social Psychology

Research Description: Dr. Baker's research applies an evolutionary perspective to social and health psychology. His work examines the effects of fundamental social motives such as mate seeking, mate retention, self-preservation, affiliation, disease avoidance, and status motives on health-related behavioral outcomes. Behaviors of interest include exercise, food selection, smoking cessation, and risk-taking. Research assistants in Dr. Baker's laboratory typically contribute to this research by collecting relevant peer-reviewed articles and running participants through experimental protocols that are designed to measure or manipulate the aforementioned motives in order to increase the frequency with which healthy behaviors are performed.

Students who wish to conduct an undergraduate thesis under Dr. Baker's supervision must have at least a 3.0 GPA, have completed Research Methods in Psychology, and be willing to pursue a topic that is directly relevant to Dr. Baker's program of research.

Dr. Baker will consider students for research assistant positions (PSYC 4501). PSYC 4501 is a semester-length option, in which the student can gain research skills and work in a lab without a formal expectation of a final product. Dr. Baker is also open to considering providing early mentorship experiences for freshmen and/or sophomore students.

## **DR. LORI CURTINDALE**

Field of Specialization: Developmental Psychology

Research Description: The Infant and Child Cognition Lab focuses on the development of infant and child attention and learning. Our research examines how infants and children pay attention to and learn about their physical and social world. We are currently working on two projects investigating: 1) the relationship between children's heart rate and their perceptions of mental workload during a sustained attention task 2) the influence of maternal physical activity on infant and preschool cognition. Students in the lab will assist with literature searches, family recruitment and data collection, and data coding, management, and analysis. Highly motivated, responsible students with an interest in learning about research and working with infants and children are encouraged to apply. Note that although senior thesis is not a course our lab is offering now, undergraduates who have worked in our lab for one year or more are eligible to be considered for senior thesis.

Dr. Curtindale will consider students for research assistant positions (PSYC 4501). PSYC 4501 is a semester-length option, in which the student can gain research skills and work in a lab without a formal expectation of a final product. Dr. Curtindale is also open to considering providing early mentorship experiences for freshmen and/or sophomore students.

## **DR. CHRISTYN DOLBIER**

Field of Specialization: Health Psychology

Research Description: I am looking for ambitious students interested in my area of research to join my research team in the Stress & Health Lab during the Spring 2019 semester. Description of lab: In the Stress and Health Lab, we attempt to address three questions. 1) How does stress affect well-being? To answer this question, we study emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological pathways by which exposure to stressors leads to mental and physical health outcomes. 2) Why do some people experience detrimental effects from stress and others do not? To answer this question, we investigate prior stressor exposure, protective factors and coping strategies that enable resilient (homeostatic) stress responses, as well as stress-related growth as a thriving (transcendent) stress response. 3) How can we help people reduce detrimental and enhance beneficial stress responses? To answer this question, we develop stress management interventions for vulnerable populations, and examine their efficacy to prevent/reduce detrimental effects of stress and enhance beneficial functioning, as well as their mechanisms of action.

Description of projects: Currently, I am recruiting undergraduate research assistants to help with the following projects: 1) A survey study examining stress, protective factors, and coping in relation to well-being in college students. 2) An efficacy study of a mindfulness-based stress management program with pregnant women.

Description of research assistantship: Research assistants (RAs) read research articles related to the project they are involved with, participate in weekly lab meetings, and assist with a variety of research tasks depending on the project and phase of the project (e.g., participant recruitment and retention; data collection, coding, entry and analysis; library research and literature reviews). Mentorship and training are provided by me and graduate students in our health psychology doctoral program.

Especially motivated and skilled RAs may have the opportunity to do independent research, assist with conference submissions and manuscript preparation. RAs who have worked in the lab for one semester or more are eligible to be considered for a senior thesis. RAs typically register for

supervised course credit in psychology in the semesters they are involved. Preferred qualifications: I will consider applicants at all levels (freshmen – senior) who have a solid academic record (GPA 3.0 or higher), and are detail-oriented, responsible and motivated to learn about research. I prefer that students be willing to commit at least two semesters to working in the lab, and enroll in 2-3 credits of supervised research in psychology (which corresponds to 6-9 hours of RA work per week).

Dr. Dolbier will consider students for research assistant positions (PSYC 4501). PSYC 4501 is a semester-length option, in which the student can gain research skills and work in a lab without a formal expectation of a final product. Dr. Dolbier is also open to considering providing early mentorship experiences for freshmen and/or sophomore students.

### **DR. MARION EPPLER**

Field of Specialization: Developmental Psychology

Research Description: We are looking for students to assist with a project on academic motivation and attitudes toward mathematics in elementary school children (1st through 5th graders). Research assistants for Spring 2019 will register for PSYC 4501 (Directed Research) for 2 credits (6 hours per week—1 to 2 hours for a weekly lab meeting, 3 hours per week working at an after-school program helping children with homework and conducting structured interviews, and 2 hours per week coding data and other research duties). The only requirements are that you are a declared psychology major, you enjoy working with children (and can pass a background check), and you are a highly motivated and responsible individual interested in learning about research.

Dr. Eppler will consider students for research assistant positions (PSYC 4501). PSYC 4501 is a semester-length option, in which the student can gain research skills and work in a lab without a formal expectation of a final product.

### **DR. AIMEE SMITH**

Field of Specialization: Pediatric Psychology (Child Clinical Health)

Research Description: I work to significantly transform healthcare's approach to pediatric chronic illness, medication adherence, and healthcare transition using principles of health behavior change. My research focuses on adolescents and young adults who are at greatest risk for poor adherence (the primary cause of treatment failure in chronic illnesses) due to developmental and neurobiological processes. I specialize in healthcare transition – the move from pediatric to adult providers – which further impairs adherence. My research provides answers regarding barriers to and facilitators of transition and adherence (e.g., youth unprepared to take over managing their illness). I examine longitudinal trajectories of adherence to understand how barriers change over time, particularly during transition. My ultimate goal is to improve healthcare practices and quality of life for youth with chronic illness during their most vulnerable and underserved stage.

In Spring 2019, the lab will be recruiting adolescents and young adults with epilepsy (seizure disorder) from healthcare clinics to participate in focus groups so that we can learn more about adherence and transition in Eastern North Carolina. Student researchers will assist in preparing packets of data for recruitment, assisting with focus group set up and preparation, completing data entry, and assisting two graduate students in other tasks as required.

Requirements/Preferences: GPA of 3.5 strongly preferred; other situations considered on a case by case basis. Undergraduates who have worked in the lab for one semester or more may be considered for senior thesis.

Dr. Smith will consider students for research assistant positions (PSYC 4501) and will also consider mentoring undergraduate senior theses. PSYC 4501 is a semester-length option, in which the student can gain research skills and work in a lab without a formal expectation of a final product. PSYC 4401/02 (Senior Thesis Research parts 1 & 2) and PSYC 4601/02 (Senior Honors Thesis parts 1 & 2) are two-semester sequences that involve completing a literature review, designing and implementing a research project, data analysis, and completion of an APA-style research report. The Honors Thesis also involves a public presentation of the project results.

Dr. Smith is also open to considering providing early mentorship experiences for freshmen and/or sophomore students.

### **DR. CHRISTY WALCOTT**

Field of Specialization: School Psychologist

Research Description: My research focus is on attention problems/ADHD as they lead to academic and behavioral concerns. Current projects include 1) how screen time influences sleep and attention problems, and how these, in turn, effect learning and behavior of school-age children; 2) how attention problems impact educational functioning, particularly literacy development. We also have some student led side projects examining the impact of health-related conditions on the daily lives of children, such as social/emotional outcomes for children with severe food allergies. **TYPICAL TASKS:** Assist with literature reviews, data entry/analysis, some data collection; assist graduate students in preparing posters/presentations for conferences; discussion of critiquing research papers and strategies for graduate school applications.

REQUIREMENTS: Completion of Psych Research Methods course is preferred, but not required. Dr. Walcott will consider students for research assistant positions (PSYC 4501), and will consider mentoring undergraduate senior theses (PSYC 4401 or 4601) for students who already have at least two semesters of lab experience under her supervision.

Dr. Walcott is also open to considering providing early mentorship experiences for freshmen and/or sophomore students.