

Why Study Psychology at The University of Western Ontario?

The Psychology Department at Western has over 50 faculty members representing seven Areas of Research Excellence. They work with talented graduate and post-graduate students on cutting-edge questions about human and animal behavior. Undergraduate students in Psychology often participate in these exciting research programs.

Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience

Experts in Behavioral and Cognitive Neuroscience at Western seek out genetic, neurological, and hormonal causes of behavior. Some of the questions they ask are-

1. How does the brain control what we see and how we move, orient ourselves in physical space, remember, and learn? How do we use our eyes to guide our actions?
2. How does our brain learn and remember how to throw a baseball differently from a football?
3. How do hormones influence cognitive processes such as memory?
4. What are the neurological roots of problems such as Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia, and autism?
5. How do birds learn their songs and communicate? How do animals remember routes and spatial locations?
6. How do animal social systems work in nature?
7. How does the immune system activate sickness behavior?

Clinical

Experts in Clinical Psychology at Western study causes of and treatments for abnormal behavior and health-related behavior. Some of the questions they ask are—

1. What types of thoughts are associated with depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia?
2. Can we predict who will become depressed by knowing about how they express emotion in early childhood?
3. What factors lead to aggression, violent crime, and drug and alcohol abuse?
4. How is humor used to cope with stress?
5. What factors explain differences in how people experience physical symptoms and use health services?

Cognition and Perception

Experts in Cognition and Perception at Western study how information is perceived, stored, and processed. They also study the how language is used and understood. Some of the questions they ask are—

1. How do we comprehend and learn language, concepts, and categories?
2. How do we learn to read in one or two languages?
3. What brain processes are involved in language impairments such as dyslexia?
4. How do we use non-literal language such as irony, metaphor, and sarcasm?
5. How do we construct autobiographical memories?
6. Why do we remember our favorite television program from when we were children but not what we're supposed to bring home from the store?
7. How do we perceive and represent objects?

Developmental

Experts in Developmental Psychology at Western study processes that explain changes in children's thinking and behavior from infancy through adolescence. Some of the questions they ask are—

1. What brain structures account for the development of normal and abnormal mathematical skills?
2. How do changes in brain maturation account for improvements in children's flexible use of decision-making rules?
3. What are the implications of healthy and maladaptive parent-child relationships for adjustment in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood?
4. How do friends and peer groups contribute to children's emotional, social and academic adjustment?
5. What role does culture play in affecting children's attitudes and behavior?
6. What personal and environmental factors contribute to changes in self esteem across the lifespan?

Industrial-Organizational

Experts in Industrial and Organizational Psychology at Western study characteristics that contribute to adjustment in the workplace. Some of the questions they ask are—

1. How should we best select and evaluate employees?
2. What factors influence employees' commitment to their work organizations and engagement in their jobs?
3. Does working in teams improve employee performance?
4. What factors influence ethical decision-making in the workplace?

5. What factors contribute to the well-being of organizations and their employees?
6. What does it take to be an effective organizational leader or manager?

Personality and Measurement

Experts in Personality and Measurement at Western study genetic and environmental explanations for individual differences in personality and intelligence, as well as the analysis of psychological data with the help of mathematical concepts and statistics. Some of the questions they ask are—

1. What is the best way to measure personality?
2. How do we use our judgments about personality to predict someone's behavior?
3. What do twin studies tell us about how genes and the environment contribute to personality and intelligence?
4. What are causes of group differences in social behavior and intelligence?
5. How can we best design psychological experiments that answer our questions about human behavior, and how can we successfully analyze psychological data?
6. How can we use concepts from mathematics and statistics to better understand human decision-making, well-being, or the development of personality traits over time?

Social

Experts in Social Psychology at Western study how people think about, influence, and relate to one another. Some of the questions they ask are—

1. What characteristics do people seek in romantic partners, and what helps or hurts romantic relationships?
2. What factors influence sexual and reproductive health behavior?

3. What social and cognitive processes contribute to ethical decision-making?
4. How do attitudes affect perception, memory, and behavior?
5. How do stereotyping and discrimination lead to adjustment problems of refugees, immigrants, and other minority groups?
6. How do spontaneous gut-reactions and deliberate, thoughtful processes jointly influence social judgments and social behavior?
7. How do motivations and cognitions differ across cultures?