

May, 2011

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

Department of Psychology
London Ontario

PSYCH 4850E Honors Thesis & PSYCH 4851E Honors Thesis (Science)

Information Sheet for 2011-2012

Please Note: Precise details of the course have not yet been completely finalized for 2011-12, and may be subject to some change.

COURSE COORDINATOR: Dr. Nick Kuiper, Dept. of Psychology
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Who is eligible and required to take the honors thesis course? All honors psychology students registered in the 4th year of the Honors Specialization programs in Psychology and Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience are required to take Psychology 4850E - Honors Thesis or Psychology 4851E – Honors Thesis (Science). Note that Psychology 4851E is reserved for students in the Honors BSc Psychology program who wish to count their thesis toward the science requirement of the BSc degree. Students enrolled in Psych 4851E must be conducting psychology research in cognition, sensation and perception, behavioral and cognitive neuroscience, or developmental cognitive neuroscience, and be supervised by psychology faculty members conducting research that would fall under the NSERC mandate. All other students must register for Psychology 4850E (including HSc students supervised by psychology faculty members who are conducting research that does not fall under the NSERC mandate, e.g., SSHRC research areas).

Course Prerequisites: Psychology 3800 is a prerequisite for Psychology 4850E and 4851E. In addition, Psychology 4850E students must have taken one of 3184F/G, 3185F/G, 3285F/G, 3480F/G, 3485F/G, 3580F/G, or 3780F/G, and Psychology 4851E students must have taken one of 3184F/G, 3185F/G, 3285F/G, or 3485F/G.

COURSE INFORMATION

The major focus of Psychology 4850E/4851E is on the completion of an honors thesis research project. To assist those of you enrolling in the course for 2011-12, some preliminary information relating to the thesis and potential supervisors is presented below. If you have any further questions about the course, please feel free to come by and see Dr. Kuiper.

1. What is a thesis? A thesis is a major research project carried out by a 4th year honors psychology student under the direction of a qualified advisor. The thesis is an empirical project that involves collecting and analyzing data. It is not a purely theoretical paper, nor just an in-depth review of the literature. The student is expected to play a role in the various phases of the thesis research project, including conceptualization, preparing materials and procedures, data analysis, and write-up. **Please note that if a proposed project is not suitable for an honors thesis, the honors thesis course coordinator may require modifications or the development of an alternate project.**

At the end of the academic year a written thesis is to be handed in and marked by the student's thesis advisor and a second reader. In addition, students also present their completed thesis work at a poster session (typically in early April). Final details about all presentations and assignments will be included in the 2011-12 course outline, available in the late Summer of 2011.

2. Who can serve as a supervisor? All full-time faculty members of the UWO Department of Psychology may serve as supervisors for 4th year psychology honors theses. In addition, our department has a number of cross-appointed and research adjunct faculty members with full-time appointments in other areas of this university, including the Business School, Communicative Disorders, Kinesiology, BMOS, Psychiatry, Education, Brescia and Huron. These cross-appointed

and research adjunct faculty members may also be available to serve as 4th year thesis supervisors (but please check first with the Psych 4850/4851 co-ordinator). To help you in your search for a supervisor, you can learn about faculty research interests on the Psychology Department website: <http://psychology.uwo.ca/faculty.htm>. This list will provide you with information concerning the full-time faculty members in our department, as well as the cross-appointed and research adjunct faculty members. Also feel free to come by and see Dr. Kuiper if you have any questions about potential supervisors.

Sometimes it may also be possible for some senior Ph.D. level psychology graduate students or postdoctoral fellows in the psychology department to supervise a thesis (under the supervision and direction of a full-time faculty member in the psychology department). In addition, some Ph.D. level psychology faculty members in the affiliated colleges may also be available to supervise a 4th year thesis. Finally, it may sometimes be possible to make arrangements for Ph.D. level psychologists working in various applied settings in London to supervise an honors psychology thesis. It should be stressed, however, that any potential supervisor must have the appropriate qualifications and experience to conduct and supervise psychological research that would be suitable for the needs and requirements of an honors thesis course. Thus, *in all instances*, you should first check with the Psychology 4850/4851 Course Co-ordinator regarding a potential supervisor.

3. How do you obtain a supervisor? It is your responsibility to locate a supervisor and persuade that individual to supervise your thesis. Please prepare carefully before you meet with a potential supervisor to discuss the possibility of supervision. You should be able to provide this person with an idea of what you might wish to do for a thesis topic. In this regard, familiarity with the potential advisor's research interests is highly recommended. Specifically, when talking to this person you should be able to indicate how your proposed project relates to his/her areas of research interest and expertise.

You should begin your search for a supervisor by canvassing the full-time faculty members in the Psychology Department. Please note that if the person you are interested in as a potential supervisor does not hold a full-time appointment in the Department of Psychology you must see Dr. Kuiper first to discuss the viability of this supervision arrangement. *In all cases*, final approval for your selection of a thesis supervisor **must** be obtained from the course co-ordinator for Psychology 4850E/4851E. This approval by Dr. Kuiper is particularly important if you are considering a supervisor who is not a full-time faculty member in our Psychology Department. Here, it is your responsibility to check with Dr. Kuiper as soon as possible, since some individuals you may be interested in may not be suitable as psychology undergraduate thesis supervisors.

Information about potential supervisors will be discussed in class at the start of the fall term. It would certainly be to your advantage, however, to secure an advisor before this. This is particularly important if you would like to do a thesis project in an area of psychology that is in high demand. If you have not already done so, start thinking about a supervisor now, and, if possible, make your thesis supervision arrangements for 2011-2012 as soon as you can (i.e., you can begin this process **now**).

4. What else is involved in this course besides the thesis? An ethics review protocol for your thesis project will be required by the mid-portion of the fall term. Students also give oral presentations of their introduction and method to small groups of other students in the class. Throughout the year, written portions of your thesis will be handed in and marked by the course coordinator and teaching assistants (i.e., Introduction and Method sections). All of this work will contribute to your final grade in the course. Final details regarding the precise nature of these presentations and assignments will be included in the course outline (available late summer 2011) and in handouts provided during the course. More detailed information about Psychology 4850E/Psychology 4851E will also be available on the Psychology Department website late summer 2011.

5. When does Psych 4850E/Psych 4851E Meet? In 2010-11, the following times were reserved for this course:

Friday 9:30 to 12:30 Friday 12:30 to 2:30

The expectation is that these will also be the times for 2011-12 (but this has not yet been completely finalized)

Students also meet in small groups to present talks. These talks will be in the same time periods the course is scheduled for, but in smaller seminar rooms in the Social Science Centre and Westminster Hall. Details of scheduling of lectures and talks will be provided in the course outline and throughout the academic year.

6. Are There Any Textbooks for Psych 4850E/Psych 4851E? Since each student conducts an individualized thesis research project, there are no textbooks for this course. Each student, however, should have access to the most current version of the APA Publication Manual.