

Social and Personality Psychology Course Requirements

Core Courses

- Psych 512 (3): Attitudes and Social Cognition
- Psych 513 (3): Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes
- Psych 516 (3): Research Methods in Social Psychology
- Psych 519 (1): Social Psychology Brown Bag Seminar
- Psych 570 (3): Personality

Elective courses that can be taken to fulfill Major and Minor requirements

- Psych 411 (3): Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Racism
- Psych 415 (3): Health and Social Behavior
- Psych 417 (3): Psychology and Law
- Psych 515 (3): Perspectives on Women and Gender
- Psych 518 (3): Seminar In Social Psychology (May be Repeated) *

* Examples of Recent Seminar Topics (Psych 518)

- Research on Psychological Defense
- Psychological Perspectives on Morality
- Children and the Law
- Issues in Eyewitness Testimony
- The Psychology of Social Justice
- Psychology and the Holocaust
- Political Psychology

Other related courses

- Psych 539 (1): Psychology-Law Brown Bag
- Psych 595 (1): Social Psychology Journal Club

Course Requirements for the Major

All five core courses, including four semesters of 519, plus two electives

Social and Personality Psychology Division Preliminary Exam

The Preliminary Examination (prelim) is the last major program requirement that students must compete before beginning work on the doctoral dissertation.

Purpose

The purpose of the prelim is to determine the student's readiness to undertake dissertation research. In the Social and Personality Psychology (S&PP) Division, this is accomplished by (1) evaluating the student's performance in writing a scholarly review or theoretical paper on a topic in social and/or personality psychology that is chosen by the student and approved by the Division, and (2) assessing the student's overall progress in the program to date. The intent of the paper is to give the student an opportunity to demonstrate an essential professional writing skill, along with broad conceptual competencies in social and/or personality psychology, while at the same time creating a potentially useful (i.e., publishable) professional product (although actual publication is not a requirement). In many cases, the prelim paper also lays important conceptual groundwork for the dissertation research (but again, there is no requirement that it do so).

Prerequisites and Timing

Before beginning the S&PP Division prelim, a student must first have completed at least 3 of the Division's 4 named core courses (p512, p513, p516, p570), as well as four semesters of p519, have an average grade of B in all Division courses taken so far, and must have successfully defended his/her MA thesis. [Note that these prerequisites enable the student to begin the prelim before completing all of the S&PP Division courses requirements. However, students will not be advanced to candidacy until all such requirements have in fact been completed.]

Normally these prerequisites are completed during the first two years in the program, with the prelim taken during the third year. Students are encouraged to consider writing the prelim paper as early as the summer between their second and third years in the program. The Departmental deadline for completing the prelim is the end of the third year (i.e., the 6th semester). Should one become necessary, students may petition COGS for a 1-semester extension (until the end of the 7th semester) if they have the support of their Advisor and the Division. However, students are strongly discouraged from delaying the prelim until the 7th semester, as doing so leaves little or no additional time for making revisions should they be required at either the proposal or paper-writing stages (see below).

Also, please note that the S&PP Division requires all graduate students who wish to teach an undergraduate course at UIC to have first passed the prelim. Students will not be permitted even to enroll in the first semester of the two-semester teaching practicum (p587) until the prelim has been successfully completed (the teaching practicum is a prerequisite for teaching an undergraduate course).

A prelim proposal may be submitted at any time during the first 12 weeks of class of the Fall or Spring semesters, or during the first 5 weeks of class of the Summer session. In planning when to submit a proposal, students should keep in mind the following points. First, the prelim paper will, without exception, be due 14 weeks from the date the proposal is approved -- no additional time beyond 14 weeks will be given to write the paper, even if those 14 weeks run into a traditional holiday period (e.g., no extra time will be given to account for the December holidays, spring break, etc.). Second, should it become necessary to revise the proposal, the proposal approval date will be delayed.

This in turn will delay the date on which the prelim paper is due. Finally, if the proposal is submitted during the Summer session, there may be a brief delay in getting feedback on the proposal from the reading subcommittee, as faculty are often out of town during portions of the Summer. It will be the responsibility of the Division Chair to ensure that such delays are kept to a minimum, and avoided altogether whenever possible. Sometimes, however, delays due to faculty travel are not possible to avoid.

Any student who wishes to take the S&PP Division prelim in a given semester should make his/her intentions known to the Division Chair at least two weeks prior to submitting the proposal. Three copies of the proposal should be submitted to the Division Chair.

Proposal

The prelim proposal will consist of a document that addresses the following three points in no more than 10 pages of double-spaced text.

1. **Topic of the Paper.** Write a concise thesis statement that describes the goals and objectives the paper is intended to achieve.
2. **Relevant Literature.** Describe the literature(s) that you will review in order to address your question. Your goal here is to communicate a sense of the scope of the literature to be covered -- its range and boundaries -- not to provide an exhaustive reference list or annotated bibliography.
3. **Your Contribution.** Describe the unique contribution that you expect to make with this paper. That is, explain how the paper will help advance the domain within which you are working, and so contribute to the extant literature in that domain

The S&PP Division Chair will appoint a two-person reading subcommittee from among the Division's faculty (excluding the student's advisor). The task of the subcommittee is to oversee the prelim process for the student in question. The subcommittee will read the student's proposal, and will, within one week of its submission, inform the student about whether or not the proposal has been approved. If approved, the student will then have 14 weeks to write the paper. The student may not consult with anyone (other than his/her subcommittee) about the paper in the 14 weeks during which it is being written. (Students are free, however, to consult with whomever they wish -- including their advisor -- up until they receive word that the proposal has been accepted.)

If the reading subcommittee does not approve the proposal, the student may, at the subcommittee's discretion, be given an opportunity to revise the proposal. In consultation with the student, the subcommittee will set a specific due date for the revision. It is expected that most proposal revisions can be accomplished within 2 weeks. If the revised proposal is approved, the student will then have 14 weeks to write the paper (i.e., the paper will always be due 14 weeks from the date of approval, no matter when that approval is given). If the revised proposal is not approved, the student may be given a second opportunity to revise the proposal, again at the subcommittee's discretion. If the

second revision is not approved, no further opportunities to revise the proposal will be given, and the student will be considered to have failed the prelim.

The Paper

There are two main types of prelim papers. Both are problem-oriented, critical, and integrative, rather than simply descriptive. The first is a critical analysis of the empirical literature in a carefully circumscribed area of social or personality psychology that is written in the style of a *Psychological Bulletin* article. This analysis may take either a narrative form or be a quantitative meta-analysis. In either case, the topic area should be defined narrowly enough that a truly comprehensive, and fully up-to-date, critical review of the current empirical literature in the student's topic area can be prepared. The second type of prelim is a theoretical paper written in the style of either a *Psychological Review* or *Personality and Social Psychology Review* article. A student may be at a stage where he/she can propose a novel theoretical idea in a particular area of social or personality psychology. In doing this, the student would draw upon empirical findings that bear upon the new theory, and compare and contrast the new theory with other relevant theoretical notions currently found in the literature.

It is expected that the prelim paper will be of sufficient quality that it reasonably could be submitted for publication to a professional, peer reviewed journal (though it need not actually be submitted to pass the prelim). An appropriate target length for the paper is 25-30 pages, although students may go beyond 30 pages if there is a need to do so.

Three copies of the completed paper must be submitted to the reading subcommittee no more than 14 weeks from the date of approval (the third copy is for the Division Chair). If the subcommittee judges that the paper satisfactorily meets the goals and objectives set forth in the proposal, then they will recommend to the Division faculty that the student receive a grade of "pass" on the paper. In the case of an exceptionally meritorious paper, the subcommittee may recommend that the paper receive a grade of "high pass."

If, on the other hand, the reading subcommittee judges that the paper does not satisfactorily meet the goals and objectives set forth in the proposal, the student may, at the subcommittee's discretion, be given an opportunity to revise the paper. This opportunity will be provided only if the paper, although not completely acceptable in its current form, nevertheless shows substantial promise, and in the estimation of the subcommittee, can be improved to a passing status with relatively little additional work. If the student is given an opportunity to revise the paper, the subcommittee, in consultation with the student, will set a specific due date for the revision. It is expected that most revisions to the prelim paper can be accomplished within 4 weeks. Note that although a subcommittee request for a revision is an encouraging sign, it is not a guarantee that the revision will be judged satisfactory. The revision will be evaluated independently, and must stand on its own merits. If the subcommittee in fact does judge the revised paper to be satisfactory, then they will recommend to the Division faculty that the student receive a grade of "pass" on the paper. However, should the revised paper still be judged unsatisfactory, the student may be given a second chance to revise it, again

at the subcommittee's discretion. If the second revision is also judged unsatisfactory, no further opportunities to revise the paper will be given, and the student will be considered to have failed the prelim.

A student who fails the prelim, either because the proposal was not approved or because the paper was judged unsatisfactory, may petition the Division faculty to re-take the prelim. In considering such a petition, the Division faculty will meet to review the student's overall progress through the program. A petition to re-take the prelim will not be approved unless the student has satisfactorily met all other program requirements (i.e., not just the prerequisites specified above for taking the prelim the first time) and is making good progress in developing an independent program of research. If the petition is approved, the "re-take" prelim must entail a new topic. In no case may the prelim be re-taken more than once. A student who fails the prelim a second time, or who is not permitted to re-take the prelim after failing it once, will be dropped from the program.

Advancement to Candidacy

It is the S&PP Division faculty as a whole, not the reading subcommittee, who decide whether or not the student passes the prelim. Their decision will be based not only on the recommended grade for the paper, but also on a review of the student's entire record. A student will be declared to have passed the prelim, and so will be advanced to Candidacy for the Ph.D., only if he/she has (a) satisfactorily met all other program requirements except the dissertation, (b) is judged to be making good progress in developing an independent program of research, and (c) has received a recommended grade of "pass" (or "high pass") on the prelim paper. Note that the implication of (a) above is that although the student may initially begin the prelim after having completed all but 1 of the required core courses, and without having completed any electives, students will not be advanced to candidacy until the missing courses are in fact taken and passed with an average grade of B or better.