

Revised March 2018

SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY MINOR

For students interested in applying psychology to athletics, the Psychology Department offers a Sports Psychology minor in collaboration with the Physical Education Department.

What Is Sports Psychology?

Wiggins (1984) has described sports psychology as studying "the effect of psychological factors on behavior in sports, or the psychological effect that participation in sports or physical activity has on the performer." Over the last two decades psychology has become increasingly involved in athletics and sports, both as an area of scientific study and as an applied field.

Applications of psychology to sports and athletics are numerous. They focus both on the individual athlete and on the team. Psychology is increasingly involved with athletes, coaches, and trainers to enhance athletic performance through improved physical and mental training. Examples of psychological techniques applied to helping athletes acquire motor skills and improve performance range from visual motor behavior research where athletes mentally practice movements, to anxiety reduction techniques like thought stopping and relaxation training. A knowledge of psychology is essential for understanding each individual's motivation and developing that motivation to an optimal level for athletic performance. In addition to facilitating athletic performance psychology is important in rehabilitating athletes from physical injuries and psychological trauma, as well as in providing more routine counseling services.

Sports psychologists work not only with the individual athlete but also with the team. How best to meld a group of individual athletes into a cohesive team performing at its best is an ongoing question and challenge for coaches and team leaders. A knowledge of group dynamics, social perception--how people perceive, think about, and respond to each other, and individual differences in personality are all essential to motivating and leading a collection of athletes into a smoothly functioning team that makes the best use of each individual player's strengths.

In addition to the interventions that are part of applied sports psychology, sports psychologists also study topics like fan behavior, including aggression and mob violence, developmental antecedents of interests in sports and athletics, factors influencing the adoption and maintenance of regular exercise programs, comparative sports, sports as art, etc.

What Are the Career Opportunities in Sports Psychology?

The diverse field of sports psychology presently provides the researcher and practitioner alike with an extensive array of interesting and challenging career opportunities.

Three major career paths await aspiring sports psychologists:

- 1) **Educational:** Primarily teaching activities in both traditional (college university) settings and in non-traditional venues such as at workshops, clinics and seminars.
- 2) **Research :** Sports psychologists are engaged in searching for new knowledge in the "field." Application of psychology to physical performance requires multi-variate models that incorporate the simultaneous evaluation of several variables. These research efforts seek to predict performance outcomes in the actual competitive environment.
- 3) **Clinical:** A degree in either clinical or counseling psychology allows the practitioner to focus on personality disorders and behavioral problems affecting the quality of life for athletes. These include anxiety, depression, alcohol and drug abuse; eating disorders; concentration or attention problems; motivation; and burn out.

Professional Activities of Sports Psychologists

<u>Coach-Education</u>	Leadership and interpersonal skills; communication; management of human resources
<u>Athlete Preparation</u>	Performance enhancement: relaxation, biofeedback, mental imagery
<u>Research/Teaching</u>	Produce evidence of scholarly contributions to the field; conference and journal contributions
<u>Clinical/Counseling</u>	Guidance and psychological support services; private practice

Career-Related Activities

In addition to the areas described above, there are growing opportunities in sports administration. Canisius College offers a Masters Degree in Sports Administration for those interested in athletics and/or sports psychology but who are oriented more to a career in administration.

Professional Organizations Associated with Sports Psychology

As psychology has become more closely involved in the activities described above there has been increasing interest by professional organizations in providing training and career planning for students interested in sports psychology.

The American Psychological Association (APA's) division 47, Exercise and Sports Psychology Division, publishes "*Graduate Training and Career Possibilities in Exercise and Sports Psychology*." **The Association for the Advancement of Applied Sports Psychology** (AAASP) defines the criteria for certification as a sports psychologist.

The Sports Psychologist presently finds a large number of accrediting bodies who seek specialists in this field. These include providing consulting services to the **NCAA**; **USOC** (Sports Medicine Committee, Registry of Approved Sports Psychologists, Psychological Advisory Committee); **NCCP**; **CAC** (National Coaching Certification Programs); **APA** (Committee for the Ethical Standards of Sports Psychology); **PGA**; **Major League Baseball**; and the **NFL**.

Note: Two bodies govern research in the field of Sports Psychology: **NASPSPA** (North American Society for the Psychology of Sports and Physical Activity) and **CSPLSP** (Canadian Society for Psycho-Motor Learning).

What Are the Requirements of the Sports Psychology Minor?

Student majoring in either Physical Education or Psychology may pursue the program in Sports Psychology. For more information on this program see Dr. Susan Putnam, Psychology or Dr. Gregory Reeds, Physical Education.

For Psychology Majors

#1. *Psychology* courses required for the major (See College Catalog) 10 courses

#2. *Psychology* courses required for the minor:

PSY 318	Social Psychology	3.0
PSY 329	Leadership and Motivation	3.0
PSY 373	Behavior Modification	3.0
PSY 391	Biopsychology of Stress	3.0

#3. *Kinesiology* courses required for the minor:

HED 361	Sports Psychology	3.0
PED 351	Coaching Theory and Techniques	3.0
PED 380	Concepts in Teaching Sports Skills	3.0

For Physical Education Majors

#1. *Kinesiology* courses required for the minor:

HED 461	Sports Psychology	3.0
PED 351	Coaching Theory and Techniques	3.0
PED 380	Concepts in Teaching Sports Skills	3.0

#2. *Psychology* courses required for the minor:

PSY 101	Introduction to Psychology I	3.0
PSY 102	Introduction to Psychology II	3.0
PSY 201	Statistics	3.0
PSY 318	Social Psychology	3.0
PSY 329	Leadership and Motivation	3.0
PSY 373	Behavior Modification	3.0
PSY 391	Biopsychology of Stress	3.0

*Students from both majors are also encouraged to take a Practicum at a placement related to sports psychology.

Notes: