

What is Senior Capstone?

Merriam-Webster defines *capstone* as “the high point” or “crowning achievement.” As the culmination of a bachelor’s degree, all Saint Martin’s students complete a senior capstone in their respective major.



In Psychology, we offer two pathways to capstone:

- PSY 499 as a standalone course (Fall or Spring); OR
- PSY 498-499 as a year-long series (Fall and Spring)

What is the standalone PSY 499?

It is a single semester focused on APA writing and a deep dive on a topic of personal interest. You will work closely with faculty and peers to write an APA Style lit review paper with weekly editorial support. PSY 499 may be a good option for students who are interested in going directly into the workforce after graduation. For many students, PSY 499 may well be the right fit, and is the most common pathway in the major.

But if you are interested in graduate study in the future or are interested in data, research, or project management or are unsure what to do with your degree and want to try something new, you may want to consider PSY 498-499 –

In this two semester series, you conduct your very own research project in psychology. You learn additional skills in research design and statistical analysis, as well as in project management and communication. There is an emphasis both on developing skills necessary for future graduate work and an explicit emphasis on translating those skills to workplace applications. In recent years, nearly all students were accepted to present their work at a professional psychological conference, and all students were accepted to present their work to the SMU community at Scholars Day. These are huge resume-building opportunities!

How do you fit a year-long thesis into your degree plan?

Logistically... PSY 498 can count as an upper-division elective in the major. Additionally, the PSY 498-499 series meets the *optional research concentration* in the major, which is a line on your degree certifying your training and accomplishments in empirical research (don’t forget to declare your concentration with the Registrar!). You are eligible for PSY 498 if you have completed PSY 240 already with a C- or better. You also need senior standing, but this can be waived if you are a junior graduating in December the following year.

When should interested students take 499 or 498-499?

PSY 499 as a standalone option is available every regular (Fall and Spring) semester. You are eligible to take the course once you have senior standing. Plan to take it Fall or Spring of your senior year.

PSY 498-499 requires a little more planning:

- *If you anticipate a spring or summer graduation*, you should take PSY 498 in Fall of your final year and PSY 499 the term immediately following. For example, if you plan to graduate in May or August 2024, you would register for PSY 498 in Fall 2023 and PSY 499 in Spring 2024
- *If you anticipate a December graduation*, you should take PSY 498 in Fall one year earlier – so you would complete this series as a junior (that’s ok!). For example, if you plan to graduate in December 2024, you would register for PSY 498 in Fall 2023 and PSY 499 in Spring 2024.

What if I am a double major? PSY majors need to take PSY 499 (or PSY 498-499). Consult with your other major about the possibility of a hybrid thesis in PSY 499, in place of a second senior thesis class.

How do I register?

To register for either version of senior thesis, you first need to “request instructor permission” in self-service (you’ll see the button if you go to add PSY 498 or PSY 499 to your cart). Explain your interest in the class, and the instructor will review your request. After permission is granted in self-service, you have to finish checking out with your cart to secure your space in the class. Space is limited!