



INSTITUTE FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT

BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY

# Psychology Major Track in Autism Spectrum Disorder

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The Psychology major track in Autism Spectrum Disorder is designed to prepare students who have strong interest in child disorders for advanced studies, with emphasis in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It prepares students who wish to pursue graduate school and/or careers in human services and research, such as clinical psychology, applied behavior analysis, special education, speech language pathology, occupational therapy, public policy, advocacy, etc. The Track focuses on ASD, ethics, research methodologies, evidence based assessment and intervention approaches, State and Federal Regulation, judicial precedents, and systems of service delivery.

The Track in ASD is supported by a generous grant from the Brian and Gale Paul Fund.

ASD is a complex neuro-developmental disorder that affects individuals throughout their life span in varying ways and degrees. ASD encompasses a very heterogeneous expression of factors and severity. Thus, issues of assessment, diagnosis, education, treatment, social services and support, family systems, employment, and independence require rigorous analysis and application of evidence-based principles within an individualized, person centered needs context.

One of the evidence-based methodologies covered is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), as a specific conceptual and procedural approach for educational and treatment intervention, that historically derives primarily from research in psychology on basic learning processes. Applied Behavior Analysis is discussed within the context of the particular characteristics of the individual receiving services, as well as family, social, and political contexts. The choice of setting, structure, and goals is highly dependent upon the diagnostic issues surrounding the individual. Other approaches include the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM), Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), and Verbal Behavior Analysis (VBA). All approaches are within the context of developmental assessment and the process of individualized goal selection for specific intervention.

Strong emphasis is placed upon knowledge of basic and applied research and professional ethics. The philosophy of the Psychology Major Track in Autism Spectrum Disorder is that service delivery in ASD must be performed in a systematic and comprehensive manner that directly addresses client choice and the evidence base of appropriate services, taking into consideration issues that are inherent in all systems for the delivery of educational and clinical services.

The sequence of courses that are required include the Psychology Major requirements and the inclusion the following four courses. A grade of B or better is required in these 4 courses.

Psyc 355 – Lab in Applied Behavior Analysis  
Psyc 493 – Advanced ABA & Research Design  
Psyc 494 – ASD and Behavioral Assessment  
Psyc 476 – Society, Science, and ASD

Practicum components of the Track are conducted at the Institute for Child Development on the BU campus.

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## Course Descriptions

### **355 – Lab in Applied Behavior Analysis**

This laboratory course introduces students to applied behavior analysis in the context of child behavior and development with an emphasis on developmental disabilities and autism spectrum disorder. The course includes lectures, demonstrations of the application of concepts and procedures of applied behavior analysis, oral presentations, quizzes on fundamental concepts in behavior analysis, written lab reports and a scientific paper. Students must earn a grade of C- or higher for this course to apply to the major. Typically offered in the Fall and Spring semesters, 4 credits. Prerequisites: PSYC 243 and PSYC 344; PSYC 220 is strongly recommended. PSYC 356 is a prerequisite OR co-requisite. PSYC 355 is a pre-requisite to PSYC 493 and PSYC 494. Therefore, students need to apply to register for this class and receive permission from the instructor (conducted in the semester prior to enrollment). Attendance on the first day of class is required.

### **493 – Advanced ABA & Research Design**

For Fall 2021: This course covers advanced topics in applied behavior analysis research, evidence-based interventions for Autism Spectrum Disorder, and evaluation methods for interventions in applied (clinical and educational) settings. This is a discussion-based course and requires small group projects and written assignments. Typically offered in the Fall semester, 4 credits. Prerequisites: PSYC 355, PSYC 356, and consent of instructor. Attendance on the first day of class is required.

### **494 – ASD and Behavioral Assessment**

Examination and application of assessment research in Autism Spectrum Disorder. Focus on functional behavioral assessment and precise, objective, behavior observation as part of the assessment process in the context of applied behavior analytic practice. Students conduct numerous behavior observation and assessment activities. Emphasis on ethics and professional issues in applied behavior analysis.

Prerequisites: PSYC 355 with grade of B or better. Consent of instructor required. Typically offered in the Spring semester, 4 credits. Attendance on the first day of class is required.

### **476 – Society, Science, and ASD**

The purpose of the course is to understand the complex area of Autism Spectrum Disorder with perspective provided by related disorders and the broad range of child disorders. Societal barriers and supports are evaluated in the context of personal choice. Education and intervention are presented from an etiological and assessment perspective, rather than simple treatment technique survey. Emphasis is on empirically validated diagnosis, assessment, and treatment procedures, with focus within the evidence based methodology of applied behavior analysis and related behavioral approaches. Topics include professional ethics, the history of bias for atypicality, judicial and legislative context, child vulnerability, and inequity. Prerequisites: PSYC 356, PSYC 220, PSYC 355 and PSYC 493 or PSYC 494. Consent of instructor required. Typically offered in Fall and Spring semesters, 4 credits. Attendance on the first day of class is required.

Students who wish to participate in this program and who have previously been convicted of a felony are advised that they will be asked about their prior criminal history. This may impede your ability to participate in certain courses. Students who have concerns about such matters, or are looking for additional information, are advised to contact the dean's office of their intended academic program.