COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The graduate program in Community Psychology emphasizes planned social change, and is based on both sociology and psychology. The program equips students with skills useful in coping with the multifaceted problems facing communities. Students learn:

- to assess problems at the level of communities or organizations,
- to plan and implement possible solutions to these problems, and
- to evaluate the effectiveness of the solutions.

Learning takes place both in courses and in a master's project that entails fieldwork and the writing of a master's paper.

To act as a change agent, the student must be aware of contemporary community needs, along with the impact of the community structure upon its individual members and the techniques best suited to initiate productive changes. After completing this interdisciplinary program, the graduate should be able to approach problems with a more integrated point of view and work cooperatively with community individuals and agencies toward practical solutions. Problems related to crime, education, child and family development, employment, the lack of effective social power, and other factors affecting psychological well being are approached from bases in community service agencies or informal community groups. The majority of students work full-time in agencies or governmental units. To accommodate these working students, 500-level graduate courses are scheduled in the evening.

Admission Requirements

Applicants apply for admission to the program via the Graduate School application for admission (http://gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply). Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-300 Admissions Policies (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies).

For admission to the program, a student must have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited academic institution, earned under residence and credit conditions equivalent to those required by Penn State. The minimum grade-point average (GPA) in the junior and senior years must be 3.00 or higher (on a 4.00 scale). Students with experience in carrying out planned social change are particularly encouraged to apply. Most applicants hold degrees in psychology, sociology, or related disciplines. Ideally, applicants will have taken courses in developmental, personality, and social psychology, along with work in social change, social problems, and social conflict. Students from diverse other backgrounds are welcome to apply, particularly if they have had work or other experience effecting change in community settings. Applicants will be asked to take additional course work without graduate credit, chosen after consultation with an adviser, if they have had no psychology or sociology courses beyond the introductory level. Applicants must have received a C or better in an introductory statistics course covering parametric and non-parametric inferential statistics; they will be requested to make up any deficiency without graduate credit.

Off-campus and transfer credits from accredited institutions will be evaluated by the Professor in Charge for recentness and appropriateness to the student's course of study, subject to restrictions outlined in GCAC-309 Transfer Credit (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-309/transfer-credit). Documented applications for credit for work experience will be evaluated by students' masters committees, made up of members of the graduate faculty. Approval for up to 6 credits may be given. If granted, approval for this credit can take the place of the fieldwork usually undertaken in CMPSY 522, Practicum. The student must register for the number of credits approved, either in CMPSY 522, or, if the student prefers, after having asked for a waiver of the CMPSY 522 requirement, in additional elective course work, chosen with help from an adviser.

Courses in the program are sequenced on the assumption that students will be entering in the fall semester. Students may apply for admission for the spring (but not the summer) semester, but they may not start taking 500-level required courses until the following fall.

Admission to the Community Psychology program is based on clear suitability for the program as evidenced by the application as a whole; it is limited to the number of spaces available for master's project supervision.

Applicants must submit the following:

1. A completed Graduate School application for admission (http://gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply) and nonrefundable application fee.
2. Official transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended (http://www.gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply/new-applicants/requirements-for-graduate-admission)

Degree Requirements

Master of Arts (M.A.)

Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies. (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies)

An important part of this degree is a master's project, made up a total of 9 credits, comprising from 3 to 6 credits of Practicum CMPSY 522, and from 3 to 6 credits of Research CMPSY 594. The project is planned in the context of the course CMPSY 521; it is supervised by a master's committee of Graduate Faculty. The particular mix of practicum and research is worked out by the student in consultation with the faculty. The variable mix of practicum and of research credits results in the student's being able to choose course work that emphasizes study in the area in which she or he needs most skill-development. In the usual case, a student with a strong background in fieldwork would be asked to emphasize research in her or his master's project, and a student with a strong research background, but with limited fieldwork, would be asked to emphasize the practicum. The output of CMPSY 522 is a practicum; the output of the research course CMPSY 594 is a required master's paper of at least 3 credits. The master's paper may be based on the field experience. Students often choose to structure their master's paper around a specific community research problem.
Part-time students who are able to take two courses at a time can complete the degree in seven to eight semesters. Since the processes of designing a master’s project and of writing a master’s paper are labor-intensive and frequently take more time than the student expects, even full-time students will often take six or more semesters to complete the degree.

To qualify for the degree, 36 credits are needed, 24 of which must be at the 500 level. There is a sequence of substantive courses, starting with CMPSY 500.

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tr>
<td>CMPSY 500</td>
<td>Theories and Issues in Community Psychology</td>
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<td>CMPSY 510</td>
<td>Change Processes</td>
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<td>CMPSY 511</td>
<td>Social Impacts on Psychological Functioning</td>
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<td>CMPSY 519</td>
<td>Research Methods I</td>
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<td>CMPSY 520</td>
<td>Research Methods II</td>
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<td>CMPSY 521</td>
<td>Roles and Methods in Community Psychology</td>
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<td>CMPSY 594</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Credits</td>
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Student Aid

Graduate assistantships available to students in this program and other forms of student aid are described in the Tuition & Funding (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-funding) section of The Graduate School’s website. Students on graduate assistantships must adhere to the course load limits (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gsad/gsad-900/gsad-901-graduate-assistants) set by The Graduate School.

Courses

Graduate courses carry numbers from 500 to 699 and 800 to 899. Advanced undergraduate courses numbered between 400 and 499 may be used to meet some graduate degree requirements when taken by graduate students. Courses below the 400 level may not. A graduate student may register for or audit these courses in order to make up deficiencies or to fill in gaps in previous education but not to meet requirements for an advanced degree.

Community Psychology (CMPSY) Course List (https://bulletins.psu.edu/university-course-descriptions/graduate/cmpsy)

Learning Outcomes

1. KNOW: Graduates will be able to demonstrate conceptual understanding and proficiency in community psychology and social change at the level required to contribute to the discipline.
2. APPLY/CREATE: Graduates will be able to use disciplinary methods and techniques to apply knowledge or create new knowledge in order to answer significant questions having real-world applications to community psychology and social change.
3. COMMUNICATE: Graduates will be able to effectively communicate research and practice applicable to the field in formal presentations and in written works to scholars in the field.
4. CRITICAL THINKING: Graduates will be able to critically conceptualize and define the ecological aspects of a social problem.
5. PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: Graduates will demonstrate a commitment to active citizenship including engagement in professional service and society at large.

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