

Psyc E-Newsletter

News from the Winthrop Psychology Department

March 2012



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Tips for Getting into Graduate School

Graduate student Jessica Hatchell offers advice on getting to the next step

With graduation around the corner, many of you will be planning what step to take next. For those who are considering graduate school, here are a few tips that will help you get into the school of your dreams:

- ⇒ Be involved in activities inside and outside of school. Graduate schools want to know that you are capable of getting good grades while also being actively involved.
- ⇒ Know what you want to do! Shadow someone in the particular field that you are interested in. Experience is essential when applying to graduate school.
- ⇒ Once you have decided on a field, research schools that offer the best programs. *The Graduate Study in Psychology* is a good source of in depth information of each program offered in the U.S., including required GRE scores and GPA and whether or not they offer financial assistance.
- ⇒ Narrow down your choices to your top five schools. Call the school to let them know you are interested, and that you will be sending in an application. Be aware of the deadlines for each school.
- ⇒ Begin gathering the required materials for your applications, such as letters of recommendation and transcripts. Decide who you wish to ask for your recommendations, and give them ample time to write good letters!
- ⇒ Begin studying for the GRE early! Know if your school requires the Psychology GRE in addition to the regular GRE. It's also a good idea to take the GRE ahead of time, in case you need to retake it to get a better score (it happens).
- ⇒ Set early deadlines for having all parts of your applications completed. That way, you won't be scrambling around at the last minute trying to tie up loose ends.

Student Spotlight—Michael Widrich

A Veteran of the U.S. Military offers different insight into being a psychology major. — By Kathryn Scott

Michael Widrich seems like your average psychology college student — he loves the Winthrop rock climbing wall, is a dedicated Barney Stinson fan with the show “How I Met Your Mother,” and relates everyday experiences to a psych class’s ever growing list of personal relation stories.

The difference between Mike and some of the rest of us average joes walking around Winthrop is that Mike has a history with the U.S. Military. Mike says he joined the military because he wasn’t quite ready for college. “I wanted to see the world; have an adventure. I knew that I wanted to be a part of something bigger than myself.” Fortunately, Mike did get to see the world visiting 6+ countries including: Japan, South Korea,

Ireland, Kuwait, and Jamaica. Mike’s most interesting country? “South Korea — there is so much to do and see. The culture was so much different that it was a one of a kind experience for the entire year I lived there.”

As a psychology major, Mike finds that his military experience can always be related somehow and with that, he has a unique perspective to offer his classmates and his professors. He says that the cultures and parts of the world he has seen give students a different take on how they may perceive an aspect of psychology from their own American culture. “It’s all about making the material relatable” says Mike.

Mike plans to work for the Department of Defense or go into working for the Veterans Affairs Council with his psychology degree. He understands just how important it is to understand himself using his psychology degree so that he may in turn help other veterans with needs they have. He also has some advice for his fellow psychology classmates: “Spend all the time you can asking questions. If I have one, I am sure someone else has one too and it is probably similar to yours.”

With his vast military experience, Mike offers his fellow classmates a view into a different realm of psychology and the

“My best moments were the moments when we stepped off the plane after our deployments and watching families reuniting. It is priceless to see most of my friends come home. Everyone

One on One

With Michael Widrich

Any pets?

1 Jack Russell/Mini Pincher, 1 Bearded Dragon Dessert lizard, and 2 Betta Fish

Siblings?

4 siblings: 2 brothers, 2 sisters. I am the youngest at 26

Originally from?

New Port Beach, CA — Orange County

Favorite color?

Blue

Favorite TV Show/Movie?

How I Met Your Mother, Anything on History Channel, Food Network, or Discovery Channel

If you could have one superpower what would it be?

It would be to have the ability to heal people. Like Paul in the alien movie.

military. On behalf of the Psych E-Newsletter staff, we would like to extend a huge thank you to Mike for serving our country.



The Gospel According To Josh

In February, Psi Chi and the Psychology Club held a cultural event entitled, “The Gospel According to Josh.” Reporter Jessica Hatchell weighs in on this cultural event

“The Gospel According to Josh” was a one-man theatrical performance about suicide. Josh was raised by a family that was extremely religious. As a family, they attended church every time the doors were open. Josh’s father was an active member of the church, but not necessarily an active father. He was never encouraging, and he constantly put Josh down as a kid. Josh’s father would act one way in front of people from the church but differently at home. Josh’s parents constantly argued with each other and had an unstable marriage.

Beginning in middle childhood, Josh longed to be an actor. He wanted to go to Hollywood and become a star. As a young boy, Josh would participate in school and church plays every time he had the opportunity. After high school Josh decided he would attend college. After realizing that college was not for him, he decided to go chase the dream he had always imagined. He started taking gigs in different states around the world. Josh lived every day hoping it would be the day he was discovered by a big producer.

Not long after Josh moved out of his parent’s house, his parent’s divorced. His dad became extremely depressed, abusing alcohol and drugs. His dad still attended church, but that free spirit that he once had while at church was lost. His depressed mood was noticed by anyone who came in contact with him. One day while on the road, Josh received a phone call from his mother telling Josh that his father had committed suicide, and that Josh needed to come home immediately.

After his father’s death, Josh continued on with his life. He met a girl who changed his life completely. After dating for over three years, she broke up with Josh, leaving him in a state of depression. Like his father, he contemplated suicide on many occasions. Josh knew he needed to get help. He began by talking with his mother about what was happening in his life, and he later went to see a counselor. Josh received the help that he needed, and saved himself his father’s fate.

Josh now travels all over the world, living the dream of being an actor. He created this one man theatrical performance to share what happened with his family, in hopes to stop it from happening to someone else.





Book Review

Devil in The Details: Scenes from an Obsessive Girlhood by Jennifer Traig

Book Review by Sarah Barton

Jennifer Traig's childhood consisted of scrutinizing every single detail in her life. She had a form of obsessive-compulsive disorder called scrupulosity. She mentions that for her particular case this meant always questioning and doubting herself.

She had a Catholic mother and a Jewish father but began to teach herself Judaism. Because of her scrupulosity, Traig liked to focus on the cleanliness laws of Judaism. Occasionally in the book, she would describe a few of the interstitials, which could include hand washing instructions or cooking recipes.

Once she began to learn the Kosher laws, Jennifer's life was changed. She believed that all of her sister's belongings were unclean because her sister had cooked bacon. She also believed that there should be separate toilets and should be used depending upon what you had just eaten.

Traig also had a very hard time with beginning to drive. She describes an experience of having to drive around the block three times to make sure she didn't actually hit anyone.

She went through a year of heavy therapy before moving to Berkeley. This and a family vacation in France helped alleviate some of her OCD tendencies. This all begins around age 17.

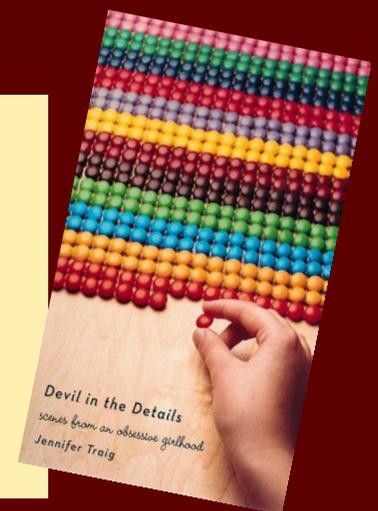
I had a great time reading this book because Traig really turns her rough childhood into a funny memoir. It is also great to see inside a rare form of obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Jennifer gives us a way to see this disorder first hand, which is the best way to learn about a disorder. I had not even heard of scrupulosity before reading this book and I now feel like I know a lot about it.

I recommend reading "Devil in the Details" if you are wanting to learn about obsessive-compulsive disorder and how it can affect people in different ways.

"Sometimes I had to drop to my knees and pray in the middle of student council meetings and sometimes I had to hide under the bleachers and chant psalms. Sometimes I couldn't touch anything and sometimes I had to pat something repeatedly. Sometimes I had to wash my hands and sometimes I had to wash someone else's. Sometimes I had to purify my binders. Sometimes I had to put all my things in the washing machine."

Excerpt from "Devil in the Details: Scenes from an Obsessive Girlhood



Senior Capstones

Kathryn Scott

Before leaving the psychology department at Winthrop with your psych degree, everyone has to take a Senior Capstone course. There are three options to fulfill this: History and Systems of Psychology (PSYC 400), Academic Internships in Psychology (PSYC 463), and Senior Seminar in Psychology (PSYC 498).

History and Systems of Psychology

Dr. Ritzer teaches History and Systems and describes the course as a traditional, lecture-format class on, you guessed it, the history of psychology. Tests consist of a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay. There is also a final exam and an integrative paper. “The focus of the class is how the discipline of psychology has developed within a historical context” says Dr. Ritzer. Within that approach, students get an in-depth look into where psychology evolved from and where psychology stands currently within aspects like the political, economic, entertainment, etc. spectrums.

Academic Internships in Psychology

Dr. Nelson will be teaching the internship course for the first time next semester, taking over from Dr. Modaresi who is retiring. Dr. Nelson says the “internship class involves an educational strategy that integrates classroom learning with work-based learning related to the student’s academic curriculum and career goals.” This class would be a good fit for the psychology student interested in getting “real-world” experience in psychology. The practical experience is supplemented with in-class learning activities. As a bonus to those who do not like taking tests, this course will have no exams as grades will be based on performance on weekly writing assignments, a final project, class participation during seminar meetings and on site supervisor reviews. With this class, students will be expected to work 8 hours a week in settings such as “human service agencies, schools, or businesses” says Dr. Nelson.

Senior Seminar in Psychology

Senior Seminar in Psychology has been taught by Dr. Lyon as well as co-taught by Dr. Lyon and Dr. Prus. This course is taught in an interesting “geared towards grad school” setting. The type of student who would be interested in this class, according to Dr. Lyon, would be a student who is interested in an interactive format and reading original psychology works. This class uses a “facilitative format” to create discussions on a wide array of psychology topics. According to Dr. Lyon, “Each student is required to discuss an article from a text of edited selections from original sources by authors such as Freud, Watson, James, Ainsworth, Loftus and Skinner to name a few.” Students are also required to complete a career project paper and oral presentation, an intervention project paper and oral presentation, two exams and a final exam with a comprehensive component. For the test taker in you, the exams consist of definition, multiple choice, short answer and longer essay questions. Editor’s sidenote: this course would be great for the student interested in going to graduate school. The course offers a discussion/seminar setting that is conducive to getting that feel for grad school.



SEPA

One way to get involved in the world of psychology would be to become a member of SEPA. Don't know what SEPA is? Well, here is some information to get you started.

SEPA is the abbreviation for the Southeastern Psychological Association, a division of the American Psychological Association representing the southeastern region of the United States. It was created to advance psychology via their mission to “stimulate the exchange of scientific and professional ideas across the diverse areas of psychological inquiry and application.”

Although unable to vote or hold office, undergraduate students can become affiliate members who are able to attend meetings and serve on ad hoc committees. Even without membership, many Winthrop students have presented their research at annual SEPA conventions. Jordan McElroy says “It [SEPA] provided a huge amount of networking experience.” Jordan collaborated with Dr. Sleigh on some research that resulted in a research paper and an oral presentation, which was nominated for an award at the convention. Jordan also says “I think everyone should be a part of SEPA as it opens a lot of doors!”

Senior Nichole Shelley presented her honors thesis, with Dr. Sleigh, at SEPA in February. Her research studied hooking up among college students and examined correlations with students' proneness toward feeling guilt and shame. According to Shelley, “guilt is a focus on the action (What I DID was bad) and shame is a focus on self (I am a bad person because of what I did).” They found students who were shame prone had fewer sexual partners and were likely to NOT go as far during a hook up.



Additional information about SEPA can be found at their website: <http://sepaonline.com/index.htm>.

A Sister's Call

In March, Psi Chi and the Psychology Club held a cultural event entitled, "A Sister's Call." Reporter Trisha Honeycutt weighs in on this cultural event

"It was like I was staring at a ghost, this faint lifeless resemblance of someone I knew a long time ago...but, that ghost was my brother 'Call' and right then and there I knew in my heart, that I would do everything I possibly could to bring him back to life." That was how Rebecca Schaper described how she felt when seeing her missing brother with paranoid schizophrenia, after his disappearance of 20 years, in the documentary "A Sister's Call."

The film covered a 13-year span of the continuing trials that come with schizophrenia. It displayed a powerful, heart-wrenching glimpse into the persistence and resilience required of family members surrounding a loved one with the illness. The film was presented March 21 by the psychology department at Dina's Place in the DiGorgio Center. Immediately following the film, Rebecca and her husband, who were featured throughout most of the documentary, were available for questions and answers with the students, but more revealing was the film.

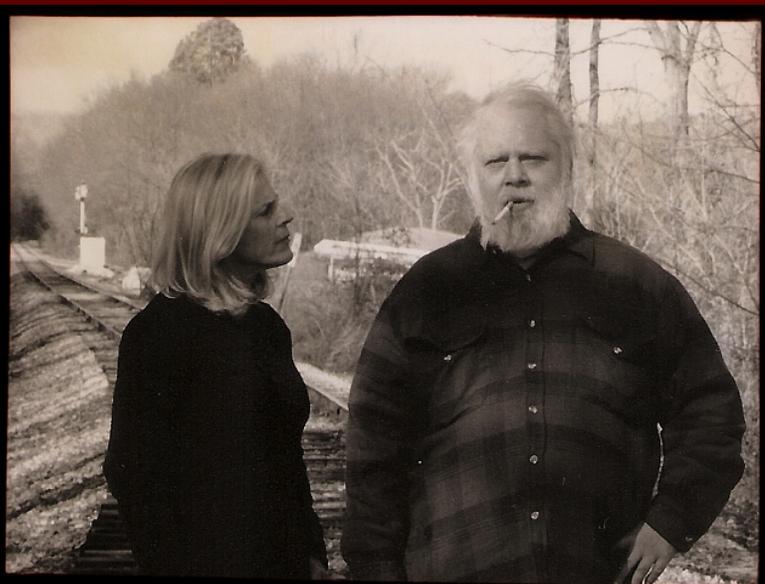
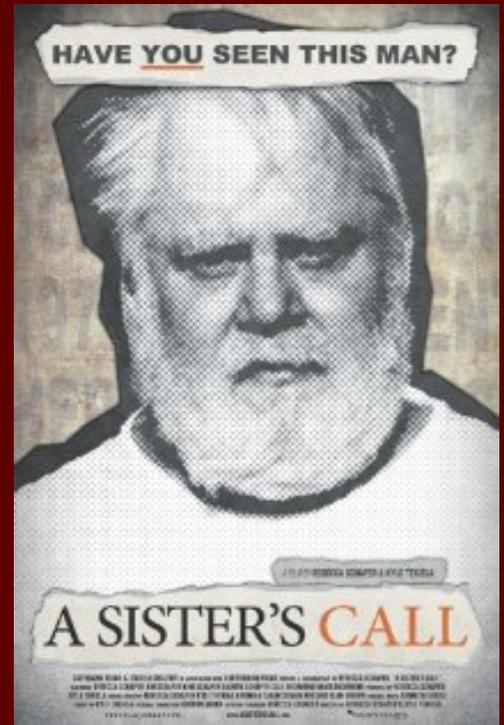
Rebecca and Call were raised in a family of Southern debutants who looked the part, but behind closed doors their mother was battling with schizophrenia and their father was abusive (the film didn't specify the type of abuse Call endured; however, Rebecca endured sexual abuse from the ages 11 -16). Their mother was admitted many times to the psychiatric hospital in the 1970s, receiving no less than 94 electroshock treatments. In a letter to her psychiatrist she wrote about seeing and hearing things that seemed real, but were not. In 1977, she took her own life. A year later Call disappeared.

A few years before he disappeared in his early 20s, Call started showing more signs of his mental illness. His family and friends speak in the film of him having poor hygiene, depression and reclusive behaviors. Call also spoke to them about being afraid of the voices, and he reported seeing visions. He left for the road with \$5 in his pocket, later becoming homeless, drifting in and out of sanity for 20 years.

When Call came home he wasn't speaking and was mostly in a catatonic state. Rebecca made it her mission to do whatever she needed to have Call live as normal a life as possible, and she succeeded in finding him the right psychiatrist, medication, and social worker.

"I see in Call now a light that is turned on -- he is just starting to live life again," Rebecca said in the film. Call now lives in his own apartment and with the help of his family is able to manage his illness.

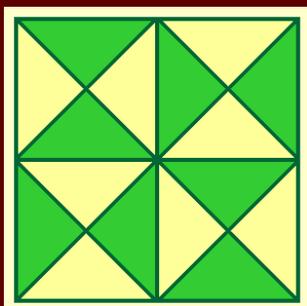
During the brief question-and-answer period with the students after the film, Rebecca emphasized her goal for the documentary was to help eliminate the stigma of mental illness.



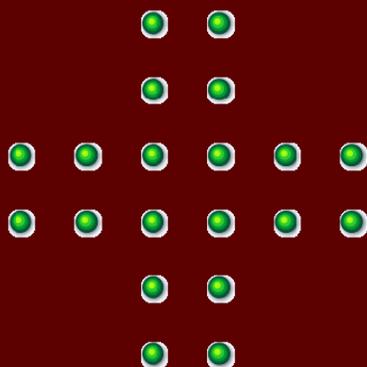


Break Time

What would psychology students be without a little fun in their lives? Try your hand at the following puzzles. Answers in the April newsletter.



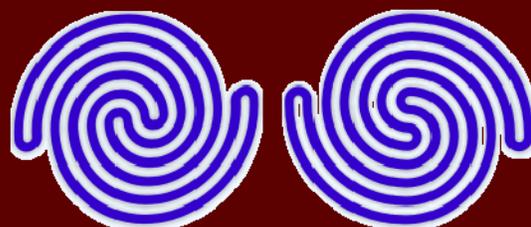
How many triangles are in this picture?



How many squares are in this picture?



What symbol comes next?



One figure is one continuous line, while the other is two lines. Which one is one continuous line?



Editor: Kathryn Scott



Ass't. Editor: Sarah Barton



Reporter: Trisha Honeycutt



Reporter: Jessica Hatchell



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