

# **PREPARING FOR THE**

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES COMPREHENSIVE EXAM**

*In an effort to help you prepare for the Psychological Sciences Comprehensive Exam, Loyola's psychology professors have compiled the following recommendations, suggestions and advice. If you have questions about any aspect of the exam or require additional information, please speak with your advisor.*

### **Dr. Mary Brazier**

Obtain a GRE Subject Test Review (Psychology) and also study all of your notes from the courses you have taken.

### **Dr. Lawrence Lewis**

The Comprehensive Exam is two hours long and consists of two sections with 70 multiple-choice questions each. Students are expected to bring several sharpened #2 pencils to the exam. According to the oral instructions provided to the examinees just prior to testing, there is no penalty for guessing.

### **Dr. Kim Ernst**

Students are strongly encouraged to study all the major subfields of psychology, allowing enough time to avoid cramming the night before the exam. Borrow an Introduction to Psychology textbook to aid your exam preparation. Students also may find it useful to take practice tests provided in psychology textbook study guides. Also, the GRE Subject Test materials are usually available from most local bookstores and on-line.

If you have not completed a course in a given area or subfield, this is probably not the time to try to learn everything about that area. Be aware, however, that preparing for the exam can easily complicate your semester because you have regular course demands competing for your time.

Psychology Professor Emeritus, Dr. Jerry Clack, always recommended that students use Boneau's article (1990) to help prepare for the exam. If you would like additional information about Dr. Clack's method of preparation, please let me know. The citation for the Boneau article is as follows: Boneau, C.A. (1990). Psychological literacy: A first approximation. *American Psychologist*, 45(7), 891-900. You can obtain this article via PsycINFO accessible from the Monroe Library website.

You can also find sample exam questions from the Educational Testing Service, the administrators of the Psychology Comprehensive Exam at [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org).

Please know that the department requires all psychology seniors to take the Comprehensive Exam two semesters before graduation. A primary reason for this requirement is that students who do not pass the Psychology Comprehensive Exam must enroll in a “remedial-type” course during the following semester (i.e., last semester). Thus, if students wait until their last semester to take the Comprehensive Exam and earn an unsatisfactory score, they may likely jeopardize their graduation plans.

**Dr. Evan Zucker**

Keep in mind that it is all multiple choice questions and covers the major areas of Psychology, reflective of a “typical” undergraduate curriculum. “Passing” is defined as achieving at the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile or better, meaning your total score is in the top 70% of all those taking this exam nationwide. It does not mean you need to get 70% of the questions correct.

I do recommend preparing for this exam. Minimally, review a current Introduction to Psychology textbook. There are some copies available in the Psychology office that you can borrow if you do not have one, and all faculty members have copies of books that they will probably be willing to lend to you. Be familiar with all the terms in the glossaries of these textbooks and know to which area of psychology they are relevant. Be familiar with the names of the major theorists and contributors and know to which area of psychology they are relevant. Do not forget about research design and statistics, particularly the basics of normal distributions, z-scores, and descriptive statistics (measures of central tendency and variability).

Relax! This test is important, but do not panic. Psychology is your major in college, and presumably, a major interest of yours, which is why you chose Psychology as a major. You know a lot – you are not trying to learn this material for the first time for this exam – you are reviewing and relearning. The material from courses you are currently taking should be fairly fresh in your mind – so start with older, less familiar material.