

March 25, 2008

To: St. Olaf Faculty
From: Curriculum Committee
Re: Psychology 395

At the April Faculty Meeting the Curriculum Committee will move that the faculty approve the following new course.

Psychology 395: Advanced Research Methods in Behavioral Neuroscience

Catalog Description:

A wide array of techniques is used to answer fundamental questions about how the brain and nervous system work in the expression of behavior. Through readings, discussion, and hand-on laboratory experiences students examine various research methods in behavioral neuroscience, considering the strengths and weaknesses of each. Emphasis is placed on ethical considerations of animal research and the application of basic science data to human problems. Topics may include feeding behavior, drug-seeking and pain perception. Prerequisites: Psychology 238 or Neuroscience 234 and Psychology 231 or equivalent. Offered in alternate years.

Rationale:

No other laboratory courses in the area of biopsychology/behavioral neuroscience currently exist in the Psychology department. Many students are interested in this area and have expressed a desire for hands-on experience in the field. At the moment some of these students are able to arrange for Independent Study and/or Independent Research opportunities with faculty, but this is not feasible for all students. Students planning to apply for graduate school in the field are disadvantaged if they have no pertinent laboratory experience, and even a single lab-based course can make a difference. This course would complement a current Biology offering, Biology 387, Neuroethology. No additional staffing is needed to teach this course.