Proposal for Catalog Changes for the Psychology Department

Overview:

This proposal recommends three sets of changes to be made to the Psychology section of the course catalog. They include:

a) Eliminating two courses from the course catalog.

b) Changing the prerequisites for several courses.

c) Changing/updating the names of six courses.

Rationale for Eliminating Psych 10 (Psychology and Life) and Psych 139 (Human Development for Non-Majors)

Psychology 10 and Psychology 139 were added to the curriculum within the past ten years. The idea was that they would serve as courses for non-majors. Psychology 10 was created as an introductory psychology course for non-majors. Psychology 139 was a developmental psychology course for non-majors.

Neither course has been offered in the past three years. The psychology department does not plan to offer either course again in the future.

There were a few reasons why these courses failed. First, offering these courses – rather than placing majors and non-majors in the same course -- resulted in a lack of efficiency. The department often found itself offering a half-full section of the course for majors and a half-full section of the course for non-majors. It would have been more efficient to simply offer one full section of a course for both majors and non-majors. A second problem, which occurred more frequently than the first, was that the either the course for majors or the course for non-majors would become full before the other. As a result, non-majors were routinely signed into the course for majors and majors were routinely signed into the course for non-majors. This weakened the distinction between the two courses. A third problem was that undeclared first-year students very often signed up for the class for non-majors and then decided to major in psychology. These psychology majors – a sizeable number of students – never experienced the introductory course that the department had planned for them. There were other problems with Psychology 10 and Psychology 139 as well, but the issues already listed should be sufficient to help everyone understand why the Psychology Department no longer wants to offer these courses.

Description and Rationale for the Proposed Changes to Course Prerequisites in the Psychology Department
The Psychology Department is proposing several changes to its prerequisites. Some prerequisites will be eliminated; others will be added. However, all of our upper-division courses will continue to have a minimum of one prerequisite.

The proposed prerequisite changes will are described below:

1) Psychology 10 and Psychology 139 will no longer be included in the catalog as possible prerequisites for other courses, because Psychology 10 and Psychology 139 will no longer be offered. This change will impact the prerequisites of the following courses: 115, 141, 142, 143, 144, 148, 165, 172, and 180.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affected courses</th>
<th>Old prerequisites</th>
<th>New prerequisites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>Psych 1, 2 or Psychology 10; or Psychology 1, Biology 15 or 25</td>
<td>Psychology 1, 2; or Psychology 1, Biology 15 or 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142, 143, 144, 148</td>
<td>139 or 140</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>Psychology 1, 2 or Psychology 10</td>
<td>Psychology 1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172, 180</td>
<td>Psychology 1 or 10, or junior standing in psychology, business administration or sociology.</td>
<td>Psychology 1 or junior standing in psychology, business administration or sociology.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) The psychology department proposes the elimination of Psychology 2 as a prerequisite for the following courses: 140, 147, 150, 152, 157, 160, and 174. Both Psychology 1 and Psychology 2 were previously listed as prerequisites for all of these courses. In reality, however, the upper-division courses listed here build upon the material covered in Psychology 1, not Psychology 2. For this reason, the prerequisite of Psychology 2 has been routinely waived by the instructors teaching these courses.

3) The psychology department proposes adding Psychology 2 as a prerequisite for Psychology 106 and Psychology 127 to ensure that students taking these courses have the appropriate background in experimental psychology. Nearly all students have already been taking Psychology 2 before attempting to enroll in Psychology 106 or 127. This change will simply formalize the process.

4) The psychology department proposes the elimination of Psychology 3 as a prerequisite for Psychology 126 and Psychology 127. Psychology 3 serves as an introductory course in statistical analysis and research methodology. The students receive the necessary background in research methodology for Psychology 126 and 127 when they take Psychology 2. The students do not need to know how to carry out statistical analyses for 126 or 127. Therefore, Psychology 3 is not a necessary prerequisite for students enrolling in Psychology 126 or Psychology 127.

5) The psychology department proposes adding “junior standing” as a prerequisite for Psychology 152 and Psychology 174. These are psychology courses that include
many discussions of sensitive issues related to psychological health. It can be expected that some students enrolled in the course will be coping with one or more of the psychological issues included within the course content. Therefore, the instructors of the courses believe that the students taking the courses require a greater level of social and emotional maturity than is the case for the typical college course.

Course Titles – Proposed Changes

The psychology department is proposing changes to the titles of six courses that are currently offered. These changes do not reflect any substantial changes to the course content. Instead, the new names were chosen to better reflect current practices within the field.

Psychology 2:
- **Current Title:** Introduction to Physio-Experimental Psychology.
- **Proposed Title:** Introduction to Brain and Behavior.
- **Rationale:** The Psychology Department wishes to change the title of this course for two reasons. First, the department believes that the new title describes the content of the course in a way that is more easily understood by non-psychology majors. Second, the term “experimental” in the title can cause the misperception that the content of Psychology 1 is not based upon experimental research. The content of this course will not change.

Psychology 127:
- **Current Title:** Learning, Memory and Cognition.
- **Proposed Title:** Cognitive Science.
- **Rationale:** The study of cognition has grown dramatically in recent decades. Learning and memory are commonly understood as two of the many forms of cognition. Most colleges and universities now refer their corresponding courses with titles that don’t mention learning or memory but instead emphasizes the term “cognition” (e.g., Cognitive Psychology (Stanford and Santa Clara University), Basic Issues in Cognition (UC Berkeley)). We are proposing the new title for this course to reflect the current practice within the field. Learning and memory remain important topics within the course, but they are no longer dominant as other research topics (e.g., attention, language, decision making) are also discussed in depth.

Psychology 150:
- **Current Title:** Theories of Personality.
- **Proposed Title:** Personality Psychology.
- **Rationale:** The current title for this course is rather old fashioned. Most colleges and universities now call their equivalent courses either Personality Psychology (e.g., UC Berkeley) or simply Personality (e.g., Santa Clara University). There are psychology departments that still call the course Theories of Personality. However, that title now typically refers to a course
that emphasizes historically important theories, such as those developed by Freud, Jung, and Maslow. Courses that use the title “Personality Psychology” are more likely to focus on the field of study as it practiced today. In addition, modern Personality Psychology courses do not limit themselves to descriptions of theory, but instead place great weight on the importance of research methods, personality assessment, and the application of personality research to therapy and everyday social life.

Psychology 152:

Current Title: Human Sexuality.
Proposed Title: Human Sexualities.
Rationale: Historically, many Human Sexuality courses developed within Health Sciences departments and have approached sexuality as a set of normative biological responses that can express health or pathology. This course however draws mainly from a social scientific perspective that emphasizes how people and societies construct varied "sexualities" to serve particular purposes and support particular meanings. It is designed to enhance students' awareness of the social construction of sexuality and teach them to question unexamined claims of any particular sexuality’s “naturalness” and/or universality. We actively explore the territories between “normal”, “marginal” and “pathological” sexualities and analyze how these labels are implicated in broader social power relations. The new title would more accurately express this perspective and distinguish the course from the traditional offerings within Health Sciences. Recognizing that there are multiple and multiply-determined "human sexualities" opens the door to the kinds of inquiry central to this social scientific approach.

Psychology 157:

Current Title: Abnormal Psychology
Proposed Title: Clinical Psychology
Rationale: We propose changing the title of this course from Abnormal Psychology to Clinical Psychology following the lead of other notable institutions (e.g., UC Berkeley). The change in title reflects no revision of the course content. Instead, the psychology department wishes to change the name, because many people now find the existing title to be insulting and in poor taste.

Psychology 172:

Current Title: Groups and Organizations
Proposed Title: Groups, Organizations and Societies
Rationale: This course is relatively specific to the Saint Mary’s College psychology curriculum. Most other colleges do not offer courses that are obvious equivalents. The psychology department proposes an updated title for the course to reflect the gradual evolution of the course over the past decade. The purpose of this course is to help students understand human behavior
within the larger social context. The larger social context can take the form of a small group, an organization, or a larger society. The topics included within the course (e.g., culture, norms, diversity, leadership, decision making) are discussed at the small group level, the organizational level, and the societal level. Given the College’s choice to include Global Perspective as one of its twelve primary learning goals, we anticipate that the course will continue to evolve to include a greater emphasis on globalization and the impact of societies on the experiences of their members.