

A Note to Students

P sychology is a hugely popular major, and careers related to psychology are growing—so now is a good time to be majoring in psychology. This book is designed as something of a guidebook for psychology students who really want to get the most out of their education. If you want to have an exceptional college experience and want to make sure to set yourself up on a path toward success, then this book is for you.

What Is the Point of This Book?

Psychology is famous for not being what people initially think it is. As you'll see throughout this book, it is common for students to go into psychology thinking that the field is primarily focused on various forms of psychological abnormalities and therapeutic approaches. As any student of psychology comes to find out, these facets of the field represent only a sliver of what is in store for you in this major. This book will help provide you with a large-scale perspective of the field as well as guidance on many specific activities that you can take part in to ensure that you are getting the most out of your experience with the major. My specific goals in writing this book include the following:

- help you to see the breadth of content in the field of psychology,
- demonstrate the scientific tools that psychologists use,
- give you a heads-up about some of the large questions that underlie the field of psychology,

Note. Sections of several chapters in this book were adapted from various blog posts of mine from *Psychology Today* ("Darwin's Subterranean World"). American Psychological Association owns copyright to all content in this book, and I own copyright to the material as it appears on my blog posts. Any lists, infographics, tables, and other content from either source may be reproduced for personal use only.

- show you how to make the most of the research process,
- offer you tips on how to take advantage of internship opportunities,
- provide clear and specific guidance regarding graduate programs related to psychology,
- provide clear and specific guidance regarding careers related to psychology, and
- help you get a sense of how an education in psychology can lead you to make the world a better place.

Throughout this book, I'll be clueing you in to the main content and skill areas that your undergraduate psychology degree will most likely require. Odds are, you didn't know just how much ground your psychology major would cover—and that's OK. I've taught undergraduates since 1994, and I have more than a hunch that most students don't know exactly what they're getting into when they declare themselves psychology majors.

As I'm laying out the content and skills that a typical psychology BS or BA degree track entails, I'll try to help you see how these areas are all related to each other. More than that, I'll help you see how they are related to the knowledge and skills that today's psychology professionals have said they want new graduates to bring to the field. You may already know that the largest organization of psychology professionals in the United States is the American Psychological Association (APA). It's the hope and aspiration of APA members that have shaped the foundation of the curriculum your professors are using today. Leaders of undergraduate psychology programs across the U.S. look to the *APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major* (2013). The *Guidelines*, as well as psychology course requirements nationwide, are updated regularly based on trends that APA member researchers and practitioners identify through their work.

The 2013 iteration of the *Guidelines*, which is the most recently updated version, breaks the subject matter into five goals, which I cover in this book over 12 short chapters. I also include a host of examples that will help you form pictures in your mind of what lies ahead. I hope that by understanding the five goals and seeing some examples of what it looks like to practice them both inside and outside the classroom, you'll be excited and proud of your major. My other hope is that you'll be inspired to make choices that take you beyond *This is required, so I'll do it* and, instead, adopt a mind-set of *These are my goals and I'm going to achieve them!*

OK, ready? Here we go!