



The FORUM

The Newsletter of the SPSP Graduate Student Committee Summer 2007

Hello! We hope you have all had a productive and successful academic year. As summer gets into full swing, many students will begin doing new things (e.g., traveling, starting on new research projects, teaching new classes) while others will be continuing on with ongoing projects (e.g., dissertations/thesis). This issue of the FORUM will touch on a few issues near and dear to many grad student's hearts: teaching, learning, and research. However, we have focused specifically on these issues in the context of summer (teaching summer courses, learning in new environments, and preparing for conferences). We hope you find the information in this issue of the FORUM useful in the many pursuits you have over this summer!

How to effectively teach a summer course... while maintaining your sanity

The perks of teaching over the summer are numerous! You prepare fewer lessons and can focus on topics you enjoy. You can build a solid foundation for teaching Fall/Spring classes without being overwhelmed with prepping a full course. Class sizes are typically smaller giving you the opportunity to get to know your students and experiment with different teaching methods. With the right attitude and some preparation, your summer teaching assignment can be a positive and enriching experience.

First and foremost, *preparation is key to having a successful experience.* Eric Jones, a 4th year student at Purdue University observed that because classes typically meet every day, it is easy to feel overwhelmed if you try to prepare the lecture the day before. Fourth year student Kelly Trindel from UT-Arlington notes that "if you prepare adequately in advance, you should be able to have a life and work on other things while you are

teaching your session." Although preparation is vital, Madeline Rex-Lear, a 2nd year student at UT-Arlington, suggests that you be "flexible and ready to switch your approach." It is important to remain flexible since each class has a different personality, equipment may fail, and discussion might run longer or shorter than expected.

Carrie Lane, a first year professor at Florida State University, advises that you *find a mentor* who you can discuss your course and teaching methods with. The mentor may be an advanced graduate student or a professor. Ask to use their materials (e.g., class notes, powerpoints) as a springboard for your own preparation. Other students who have previously taught the class are invaluable resources; do not hesitate to ask for their advice.

Be sure to *set the tone of the class from day one.* Trindel suggests that you be up-front with students the first day of class; explain that the nature of summer classes is to progress through the material

quickly. Encourage your students to raise questions or concerns early, to utilize your office hours, and to be familiar with the syllabus since exams and due dates will arrive quickly. As Steven Estrada, a 5th year student at Cornell University, points out, "it is important to have realistic expectations for your students and yourself." Keep in mind that assigning papers requires both time for students to write the paper and time for you to grade it.

Do not try to teach the whole book! Colette Jacquot, a 3rd year student at UT-Arlington, recommends that instructors "select material that they can get excited about and then organize that material in a meaningful way." Rex-Lear suggests using specific topics you are interested in (i.e., your own research) as discussion topics and lectures to springboard into main points covered in the textbook.

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How I Spent My Summer “Vacation”: Grad School Edition

In stark contrast to undergraduate life, the graduate student’s academic year is not cut short at a blissful 8 months; instead, it painfully endures the full 12. This sudden transition into “real-world” temporal space can leave the new graduate student feeling lost; what exactly is one to do with this extra 4 months of obligatory productivity? Fear not wayward graduate student – when academic guilt tears you away from sipping daiquiris poolside, you can look to this short article for ideas on how to get the most out of your summer months.

Perhaps the most obvious of grad school friendly summer activities is reading. These 4 months provide ample time to catch up on the many articles you’ve set aside in your “To Read” pile throughout

the year. Without the pressures of coursework, you can take your reading to your favorite park bench and let inspiration take its course. This is also a good time to expand your reading horizons beyond current articles to classic works from psychology and other disciplines. The more ambitious among us may even have time to start new literature reviews to harvest research ideas for new fall projects. If nothing else, you can use this time to take your journals out of their cellophane wrap and put them up on your bookshelf. Closely related to this first option is writing. Summer is also a good time to write up data that you haven’t had a chance to get to throughout the year. Set a goal for yourself to have at least one paper out the door by the end of August.

Another useful (and fiscally productive) summer option is to teach or co-teach a summer course. Many universities offer students the opportunity to teach summer courses. This is a good way for you to build your teaching dossier and, again, without the pressures of coursework, you’ll have much more time to devote to putting together a good course.

Finally, try to set aside some time this summer to make plans for the upcoming academic year. Make a list of all of the projects you are involved with and make sure that they are all on track. Start thinking about new projects and set goals for the upcoming year. This will also help you in the process of updating your CV, another task you might want to try to complete over the summer.

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President’s Corner

Graduate student survival depends on seeking the guidance of others. Other students - lab mates, friends in your cohort, classmates - are valuable sources of info and fun to bounce ideas with. They are the people you speculate with about issues in your department and trade nuggets of wisdom on how to survive grad school.

I like to think of the GSC as an extension of your social support network. We want to offer advice on any topic that concerns you. Last year, as a Member-at-Large, I was able to contribute to the successful projects the GSC worked on. We added more content to our website (<http://www.spsp.org/student>), sent out different postings over the listserv, and hosted a number of exciting programs at the conference.

As the new term begins, I am very optimistic that the momentum generated in the last year will continue. The GSC will be expanding on the numerous resources and programs we already sponsor. Please be on the lookout for more updates on the exciting events we’re planning for the conference in future issues of the FORUM. Also if you have any ideas or concerns, don’t hesitate to let us know what you think by sending an email to spspgsc@yahoo.com. We all know much of what it takes to be a successful grad student is learned outside of class. Let the GSC be another source of helpful info you can turn to when you have questions about graduate student life.

Hope your spring semester went well! Here’s to a successful and productive summer. I look forward to serving as your President and hearing from you.

by Elizabeth Lee

Using the Summer to Prep for Conferences

Many students use the summer to prep for classes they will teach, continue research projects, catch up on work and studying, and to relax a little. One useful thing students can do is to consider which conferences during the next academic year they would like to submit their work to. By doing this, you can guarantee you will be ready for the following academic year's submission deadlines and will avoid the last minute panicking about conference submissions. Sarah Savoy, a social psychology grad student at Rutgers University-Newark, suggests that "summer is a great time to get ahead in preparing submissions for conferences because it takes time to adequately describe your research in a clear but concise manner." In addition, Kristina Wilson, a grad student in applied social psychology at Colorado State University says, "the summer is a great time to prep for conferences. Once classes are finished I have so much more time to spend putting together posters, as well as to prepare abstracts for future conferences."

The first thing that you should consider is which conference or conferences would be the best venue to submit your work to. The sizes and goals of conferences differ; some are big and fairly general, while others are small and very specialized. Some may value very basic research, while others may more highly value applied research. Wilson says, "things I typically consider are whether other people at-

tending will be interested in the work I am presenting, the size of the conference, whether or not the conference is well respected by others in my field, as well as the location of the conference." A good place to start to investigate conferences is the web since many organizations have information for students regarding the scope as well as the requirements for submissions (for SPSP see <http://www.spsp.org/confer.htm>). In addition, you may also want to talk with other grad students or your advisor about good venues for research. Savoy says "sample characteristics can influence my decision. For example, if my sample consists of adolescents, submitting to a conference for research on adolescents would be a good option."

The next thing you should consider doing is making a list of the submission deadlines for the conferences you are interested in submitting your work to. These may be scattered throughout the next academic year, but by noting the deadlines early in the summer well before the dates arrive, you will be able to pre-plan your schedule and know when you need to have your work completed in order to submit to the conference. Savoy suggests that looking at deadlines can be a great way to "motivate yourself to get data collection rolling."

The summer can also be used to prepare materials (e.g., posters or talks) that have already been accepted for upcoming confer-

ences. This can sometimes be a challenging task because you must really "shrink" a potentially large project into a relatively small poster or 10-15 minute talk. By doing so during less busy summer months, you can give yourself extra time to prepare materials and Savoy suggests having someone unfamiliar with your research area read and edit your submission.

Remember to check the requirements as to whether you need to be a member of the organization you are submitting your work to or you need a sponsor from the organization. Becoming a member or securing a sponsor could take up valuable time and keep you from getting your submission in by the deadline. Also, make sure if you are collaborating with people from universities or organizations other than your own that you allow extra time to work with others via e-mail. Wilson says planning ahead during the summer is important because, "like you, the people you are collaborating with are likely to be less busy than during the school year. However, it can pose a challenge if the people you are collaborating with go on vacation."

Whichever conferences you decide to attend, remember to make the most of them. Savoy reminds us that "conferences are a great time to catch up with former colleagues and old classmates or professors." Best of luck in your conference submissions in the upcoming year!!

by Megan O'Grady

Graduate School Summer Camp

This summer roughly one hundred psychology graduate students will descend on the University of Texas at Austin for the biannual Summer Institute in Social Psychology (SISP). This intensive two week program, started in 2003, gives students the chance to delve into a new area or expand on existing knowledge in a small class format with two instructors who are experts in the field. Previously held at the Universities of Michigan and Colorado, SISP is modeled on the long-running summer institute put on by the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology (EAESP) and is designed for SPSP graduate students in their second through fifth year of study. This summer the five courses offered are: Social Neuroscience, Political Ideology, Novel Approaches to Assessing Social Behavior and Individual Differences, Self-Regulation and Goals, and Gender and Social Roles. Workshops on Web-Based Research and Multi-Level Data Analysis will also be offered. The small size of each course, limited to about 20, allows for a good deal of interaction in the course with the faculty and students from other schools.

For graduate students summers can be either a time to relax or a time to get research done without the distraction of classes and other responsibilities. SISP allows for both, with intensive courses and projects but also the chance to meet students from other programs and live at another university for two weeks. Stephenie Chaudoir, a

graduate student at the University of Connecticut who attended the Social Justice course at SISP in 2005 at the University of Michigan noted that in addition to it being, "one of the best things I could have done for my professional development" SISP was a lot of fun, and that it made her realize, "just how small a field Social Psychology is." For those of you with other summer responsibilities such as studying for qualifying exams, there is time to fit in that work in addition to the course work. In fact Stephenie said that attending SISP made studying easier since she could put names to faces and made connections to those in the field through other students at SISP.

Each course is designed to attract students with a mix of expertise in the topic; by no means do you already have to be an expert on the topic to enroll in the course. Rather, SISP courses can be an introduction to a new field of research or an in-depth look at a field that may help you better understand your own research.

Getting in to SISP is highly competitive and is open to U.S. and Canadian pre-doctoral student members of SPSP and a limited number of students represented by EAESP. Students are selected on academic merit, promise as a researcher, and diversity which includes gender, ethnicity, year in graduate school, area of interest and graduate department, and are specifically drawn from different graduate programs. Applications are due in January for the following summer; more information on

the next SISP to be held in 2009 can be found at <http://www.spsp.org/sisp/>. If you don't want to wait that long, a limited number of SPSP students are admitted to the EAESP summer institute held in even numbered years when SISP is not in session (<http://www.spsp.org/eaespsum.htm>). SISP is co-sponsored by EAESP and funded by the National Science Foundation.

by David Portnoy

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Summer Teaching -

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Try various teaching methods to help keep students' attention during long class periods. Trindel pulls students back in to the lesson by telling a first-hand experience related to the material or connecting the material to pop culture or a news story. Try to keep your class as interactive as possible with class discussions or activities. Estrada recommends bringing in an occasional guest lecturer. Jones gives ungraded group quizzes at the end of major topics. He finds that the quizzes allow students to both learn from each other and be exposed to the difficulty level of your exam questions. Furthermore, it takes advantage of research showing that repeated testing improves long-term memory. Finally, give your students and yourself five minute breaks every hour or so.

Carefully schedule your time outside the classroom. Denise Arellano, a 5th year student at UT-Arlington, says that she starts her day early and builds in breaks for herself. She suggests that you “set a schedule, but forgive yourself for going over and reward yourself for finishing segments early. If you teach early, take the evenings off. Do something in the morning besides sleep.” Rex-Lear suggests setting your office hours close to your class time. By grouping all your responsibilities together (e.g., office hours, preparation, grading, etc.) it is easier to move to other tasks and responsibilities you have outside of teaching (e.g., running participants, data analysis, coursework, writing). Jacquot suggests that you first complete tasks that you least en-

joy and later reward yourself by completing work you find more interesting. This will help ensure that you can be productive outside of your teaching responsibilities.

Keep it simple and fun! Have a straightforward grading system. Specify that all assignments be typed to avoid hours of deciphering handwritten work. Alter your speech pace and avoid giving a monotone lecture. As Rex-Lear points out, remember that your students have chosen to give up their summer to learn! Make the most of their enthusiasm and get excited about the material you are presenting!

As Arellano sums up, “Remember what the other side of the desk feels like and make the class something you’d like to take, while still doing justice to the subject.” Not only will you learn the material better, but you will have fun in the process!

by Jennifer M. Knack

Summer “Vacation”

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Although the summer months can be a productive time, they should also be a time for restoring balance in your life. Travel and other leisure activities are a common summer pursuit among graduate students. Maybe you’ve been meaning to try out a new sport or hobby – this is the time! If you don’t have the finances to travel, take some time off and enjoy some day trips around your area. A change of scenery will help you relax, rejuvenate, and maximize the potential of the upcoming 4 months. Whatever you decide to do, have a great summer!

by Sonia Kang

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS!

The SPSP GSC would like to announce a call for submissions for the “Outstanding Research Award.”

Award Eligibility: Must be graduate student member of SPSP and 1st author of a completed research project in the field of social psychology (applicants must not already be committed to speaking at another symposium).

How to Enter: The complete application must include the following and be submitted by *June 22, 2007*: 1) Cover sheet with name, contact information (phone, address, e-mail address), school affiliation, and title of research. 2) Abstract of 500 words or less summarizing the research. 3) Project Summary: purpose, brief intro, methodology, results, and discussion/implications. 4) Summary limited to 3 double-spaced pages and should be in APA format. Omit the author’s name and school affiliation within the summary, but include the title of the submission in the header of every page. Submit application electronically as an e-mail attachment (MS Word or PDF format) to spspgsc@yahoo.com and write “Outstanding Research Award” as the subject of the email.