



# PSYCHOLOGY MATTERS



SU Psychology Department Newsletter | Summer 2021

## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: DR. RACHEL STEELE

*I am an assistant professor of psychology at SU, and I received my Ph.D. in social psychology from UMass-Amherst. I teach social psychology, psychology of prejudice, psychology of attitudes and attitude changes, research methods, psychology of personality, political psychology, Caste in India and the U.S., and individual directed study.*



### How did you decide to pursue a career in Psychology education?

I took a general psychology course in high school through my community college and wrote my first paper on Charles Manson. For a time, I thought I wanted to be a clinical psychologist, but I realized psychology applies in many fields and includes many subfields. I loved my undergraduate social psychology course, but it was not until multiple work experiences that I decided to go back for a Ph.D.

### Throughout your time at SU, what has been your most fulfilling experience?

I greatly value having thoughtful discussions with students and other faculty about racism and others issues on our campus. I have learned so much from others, and I have been challenged to examine

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## IN THE WORDS OF OUR CHAIR

As we prepare to return to campus, many of us have mixed feelings, including excited, nervous, anxious and relieved. All of these feelings are normal. After adjusting to a year of learning, working and taking courses from home, we now need to pivot to our new “new normal.” We are experiencing what has been referred to as “collective trauma.” Many of us are grieving. **The American Psychological Association reports that Americans are experiencing the highest levels of stress since April 2020, and that half of surveyed adults are uneasy about returning to in-person interactions.** It is important to acknowledge the difficult challenges and transitions that we have faced and continue to face.

The CARE Model\* is a good way to navigate our transition back to campus:

**Take Care** - Be flexible and kind with yourself and others

**Be Aware** - Check in regularly with yourself

**Get Ready** - Think about practical issues and plan ahead

**Express Your Needs** - Be honest and open, with yourself and others

Here are some tips to help ease the transition this fall:

- Get back into a routine – including scheduled breaks!
- If you are having a tough time, reach out for help – from faculty, friends, fellow students, family or counselors. We are all adjusting, and we are here to listen.
- Limit your expectations for how quickly things will seem normal again and realize that fellow students and faculty are in the same boat.

I hope you all have a restful and restorative summer and I look forward to seeing all your faces (in person!) in the fall.

– Dr. Meredith Patterson,  
Psychology Department Chair



## The CARE Model

\*Citation: The CARE Model is being used here with permission obtained from the presenters of the June 7, 2021, USM webinar titled Back to Campus: Hitting the Reset Button – Jill Rice, Cameron Hostetler and Namrata Ram-Andriessens.

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: INES TCHIENGA

*I am from Silver Spring, MD, and was born in Douala, Cameroon. I am the youngest of five siblings (all male) and I love them dearly.*

### What led you to decide to become a student at Salisbury University?

I originally enrolled at SU as a pre-nursing student because Salisbury's nursing program was among the top programs of the University. Also, I really wanted to gain some independence from my family.

### Throughout your time at SU, what was your favorite memory?

During my time at SU, my favorite memory was being awarded the summer fellowship where I worked in close proximity with Dr. Echo Leaver on the dental anxiety project, which would later be published by *Laridae* and NCUR. While working with Dr. Leaver, I fell in love with the idea of becoming a psychologist. I learned that with enough research and clinical experiences, I could become a clinical neuropsychologist, and it was then that everything clicked.

### Did you have a favorite instructor or mentor, and, if so, why?

My favorite faculty mentor would be Dr. Leaver. As a woman working in a male-dominated field, she is definitely a source of inspiration. As a mentor, she provided enough scaffolding and is always willing to provide support (educational and emotional). It is also a plus that she has a very friendly demeanor, which makes it easy for students to approach her (well, at least for me!). Other faculty members that I look up to dearly are Drs. Kyoung-Rae Jung and Yuki Okubo. I took two courses with Dr. Jung and his willingness and dedication to help students during lecture and office hours were always remarkable. He always ensured that his students understood the materials by oversimplifying concepts. As for Dr. Okubo, she was my advisor for three years and put me in contact with Dr. Leaver because I expressed an interest in acquiring research experience. She also ensured that I was on track to graduate on time. For all three professors, I enjoyed our conversations because I always gained some wisdom from them.

### Outside of being a student, what are your interests?

I enjoy going on hikes with my best friend, trying new recipes, sight-seeing and reading.

### What are your plans after graduation?

I will be attending Nova Southeastern Clinical Psychology (Ph.D.) Program with a concentration in neuropsychology this upcoming fall.

### Tell us a few fun facts about you.

I am trilingual. My family claims that I am a "comedian." I also cannot go a month without reading a novel.



## WELCOME, DR. MITRA!

We are excited to welcome Dr. Deeya Mitra as an assistant professor in the Psychology Department starting fall 2021.

Dr. Mitra is a cultural-developmental psychologist by training with a background in counselling psychology. She completed her doctorate in developmental psychology at Clark University, Massachusetts. Her research is grounded in the theory of emerging adulthood within the lifespan perspective. Specifically, she focuses on life choices and developmental regulation during emerging adulthood (ages 18-29) into early established adulthood and the long-term repercussions on well-being in understudied populations. She is currently working on different populations within South Asia, including India and Bangladesh. Overall, she hopes to disseminate the implications of development during this period for mental health and successful adult functioning in South Asian populations that are currently underrepresented in research. We look forward to working with her!



## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

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my assumptions. I appreciate students who visit my office hours or stop to chat before or after class. It is good to be aware of the issues most concerning to students.

### What research topics interest you most and why?

I research *why* people have prejudice toward specific social groups. I grew up exposed to many negative messages, including racism, heterosexism and xenophobia in a rural town in Montana. I want to understand what helps people confront those “isms” and work for change.

### When you're not wearing your psychology faculty hat, what are your personal interests?

I'm a parent, and I love reading, biking and going to the beach with my seven-year-old. I also enjoy knitting, sewing and learning how to make things from scratch.

### Who/what/when/where inspires you?

Ongoing world events inspire my research, such as acts of violence, discrimination or war. I want to understand how people think about these issues and how attitudes form and change.

### If you could go back in time, with whom would you be most interested in having a conversation?

Evelyn Hooker. She came from a poor family, faced discrimination as a woman seeking a Ph.D. and faced discrimination because of her values. Her research, during an intense period of homophobia in the U.S., led to the removal of homosexuality as a mental illness from the DSM. If you want to read more, check out this bio: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/02/myth-buster>

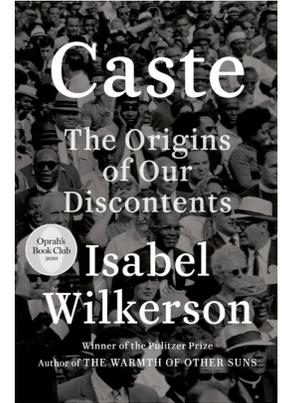
## NEW HYBRID CLASS FOR FALL 2021

PSYC 495.601

Selected Topics: Caste in India and the U.S.

- **Monday, Wednesday, Friday | 9-9:50 a.m.**
- May count toward the Social category area for psychology major; counts toward psychology minor
- This class explores themes in Isabel Wilkerson's book *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* from a psychological perspective.
- Co-Taught by Drs. Michèle Schlehofer and Rachel Steele
- Seats still available! Don't miss out on your chance to take part in this unique opportunity to study with and learn from peers in India.

Please reach out to Drs. Schlehofer or Steele with any questions or for more information.



**PSI CHI**

## GETTING TO KNOW PSI CHI

### What is Psi Chi?

Psi Chi is the international honor society in psychology with the mission of recognizing and promoting excellence in psychological science. The first chapter was founded in 1929. The SU chapter was founded in 1975.

### How do I join?

Every semester, invitations are sent out to eligible students around program planning time via SU email. This email will contain the instructions for how to accept the invitation and pay membership dues.

### What are the eligibility requirements?

The student must be a psychology major or minor, have completed 36 hours of college credit (transfer students must have completed at least 12 hours at SU) and 9 hours of psychology coursework, with a 3.3 minimum overall and psychology GPA.

### What is the benefit of Psi Chi?

Membership dues provide lifetime access to a wealth of resources, including awards and grants for research and graduate school plus career and graduate school advice. Explore the possibilities on the Psi Chi Website: [www.psi-chi.org](http://www.psi-chi.org)

In light of the pandemic restrictions limiting indoor group activities this spring, Drs. Heidi Fritz and Echo Leaver, the Psi Chi co-advisors, used their creativity and hosted a drive-through induction ceremony, which was attended by 40 of the 73 new members. The event included three stations. Inductees read the Psi Chi pledge to Halle Lane, the current student president (and past secretary), they got swag bags with some special goodies from Drs. Leaver and Fritz, and they had the opportunity to take some photos at the selfie station before leaving.

Dr. Larence Becker shared his musical talents to make the event truly special.

For Psi Chi updates and photos visit: [www.salisbury.edu/psychology](http://www.salisbury.edu/psychology)

## PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH LAB UPDATES

### Dr. Okubo's Racism and Coping Lab

The Racism and Coping Research Lab, supervised by Dr. Yuki Okubo, remained active during this Zoom-filled, unusual and taxing year. Lab members are Soleil Darbouze (joined in spring 2021), Caitlin Fell, Brielle Gourley, Jenna Hutson, Sebastian Mantilla, Leah Maratea (graduated in fall 2020) and Jennifer Welch. All students joined the lab wanting to learn more about racism and how to dismantle it as a result of racist incidents that occurred on campus. Thus, the focus as a collective became learning about antiracism and how to change the institutional climate. After reading seminal literature on racism and racial microaggressions and engaging in discussions on what could bring such change in an already existing institutional culture, students decided to create a peer-led antiracism workshop. The final product became a two-hour, peer-led workshop titled Antiracism 101: Starting a Race Dialogue, which was conducted on April 24 via Zoom. While more expressed interest, 10 people participated and engaged with the workshop materials, which included terminology, personal stories and case scenarios to think through, and strategies on how to act when racist incidents occur. Lab students facilitated the entire workshop, including small group discussions. Feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive. In particular, participants appreciated fellow students facilitating the workshop and wanted a workshop like this to be available to more students at SU.

Lab members also had two presentations at national conferences in spring 2021. Fell, Gourley, Mantilla and Dr. Okubo presented a roundtable discussion at the 38th Annual Winter

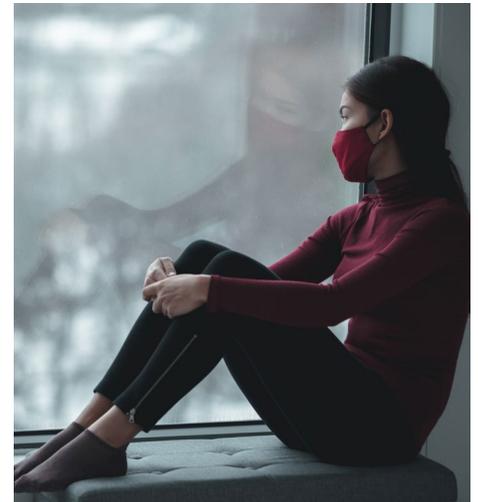
Roundtable Conference at Teachers College, Columbia University, titled "We Want Change!": The Benefits of Undergraduate-Led Peer Workshops on Antiracism in Higher Education." Fell, Gourley, Hutson, Mantilla, Maratea, Welch and Dr. Okubo presented a structured discussion on "Developing an Antiracist Climate at a PWI: An Undergraduate Perspective" at the 2021 Association for Women in Psychology.

Fell, Gourley, Hutson, Maratea and Welch have/are graduating this academic year. Darbouze and Mantilla have another year and another semester, respectively with us at SU. To learn more and support the lab, please email Dr. Okubo at [yxokubo@salisbury.edu](mailto:yxokubo@salisbury.edu) or check it out on Facebook @ Racism & Coping Research Lab at SU.



### Dr. Fritz's Research Lab

During the past year, Dr. Heidi Fritz's research lab has investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental and physical health outcomes and on resilience factors that promote positive coping. Psychology students Sandra Zelaya, Ian Hare, Erica Hall, Sydney Steeves and Taylor Karnes helped Dr. Fritz design and run a study examining Salisbury University students' adjustment in February and March 2021 and compared their progress to SU students from three prior semesters. Compared to students from 2017 and 2018, the spring 2021 students (N = 134) reported significantly greater depressive



symptoms and lower positive mood. In addition, students who experienced greater stress about the pandemic reported worse depressive symptoms and lower positive mood, less adherence to a healthy diet and greater sleep disturbance. Dr. Fritz's students presented the study at the Salisbury University Student Research Conference in April, with a discussion of the implications of these results for students' well-being and potential strategies for addressing the physical and mental health challenges posed to SU students by the pandemic.

In another study, Dr. Fritz surveyed 99 parents of children with disabilities as soon as the pandemic began in March 2020 and again four months later in July 2020. She was interested in examining the impact of school closures and lockdown measures on parents' psychological well-being, particularly among this sample of parents for whom the loss of school resources (special education teachers and physical, occupational and speech therapists) may have an even greater effect on well-being as compared to the parents of typically developing children. Dr. Fritz was also interested in examining the role of humor as a coping strategy to promote resilience in the face of stress. Compared to the general population, parents in this study exhibited significantly higher

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## PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH LAB UPDATES

levels of depressive symptoms at both time points. Parents who used positive humor strategies, such as making upbeat jokes, telling funny stories or trying to find the humorous aspects in negative situations, experienced greater psychological well-being and family satisfaction in March as well as increases in these outcomes by July. By contrast, parents who used negative humor strategies such as excessively putting themselves down or using aggressive or sarcastic humor to put others down, experienced worse psychological well-being and family satisfaction in March and decreases in psychological well-being by July. Dr. Fritz has written a manuscript reporting these results and discussing their implications for parent psychoeducational support groups, which is currently under review at the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

### Dr. Steele's Intergroup Relations and Prejudice Lab

Dr. Rachel Steele directs the Intergroup Relations and Prejudice Lab. Much of the lab's research investigates root causes of group-based prejudice and discrimination, including anti-immigrant and anti-refugee attitudes, institutional

discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, institutionalized racism, and White supremacy. They examine the role of various social influences such as the government and social media and the role of individual differences such as identity and ideology. Dr. Steele typically works with between three and six students per semester. She has mentored 19 students since starting at SU in fall 2017. Her students are exposed to all parts of the research process, including reading the literature, designing studies, collecting data, analyzing and discussing the data, and writing and presenting the results.

Some recent accomplishments by students in Dr. Steele's lab include a poster presented by Mackensie Disbennett (2020), Yasmeen Othman (2020) and Gwynne Richardson (2021) at the Mid-American Undergraduate Psychology Research Conference in 2020 titled "Beliefs About Social Media in the Age of Hate Crimes." Dr. Steele, Sakina Bengali, Disbennett, Richardson and Othman submitted a manuscript, "Muslim Women Negotiating their Identity in the Era of the Muslim Ban." Dr. Steele, Mackenzie Nickle (2022), Richardson, Jennifer Michelitch (2021), Gwendolyn

Globus (2021) and Danielle Meyers (2021) submitted a manuscript, "Condoning Loser Language: Approval of Trump's Racist and Sexist Tweets." Globus and Disbennett presented a poster on some of this data at Posters on the Bay (<https://www.salisbury.edu/administration/academic-affairs/graduate-studies-and-research/ourca/conferences/posters-on-the-bay.aspx>) in March 2021; and Disbennett, Richardson, Globus, and Michelitch presented the data at the Salisbury University Student Research Conference in April 2021. This summer, Globus is presenting a talk with Dr. Steele at the annual conference of the International Society of Political Psychology titled "Institutionalized Discrimination Against LGBTQ+ People: Is the Chapter Closed on the Lavender Scare?"

### Dr. Leaver's Research Lab

Dr. Echo Leaver took a unique approach and interviewed the three students who are doing research work with her this summer.

### ■ Samantha Walsh - Summer Research Fellowship

**Tell us a little about yourself.** I am an incoming senior at SU and am studying psychology, with a minor in cognitive science.

### How did you hear about the Summer Research Fellowship?

I heard about the Summer Research Fellowship through Dr. Leaver. I was in a lab meeting with her and the other students that took 490 with me!

### How difficult was the application process?

The application process was not difficult, but it definitely took a lot of editing and preparation. It was clear that the position was for students who knew their short-term and long-term goals.

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Dr. Steele & her lab students

## PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH LAB UPDATES

### What are your goals for this fellowship?

For this summer, my goals are to recruit participants for my study, administer surveys to these participants, collect data and begin analysis. Otherwise, I hope to gain real-life experience in the psychology lab, learning about how to use equipment, how to create and administer surveys, and, the most exciting, how to administer EEGs. This project will create a solid basis for my thesis.

### What has your summer been like so far?

So far, the summer has been an amazing experience. I have been working in the lab on Tuesdays through Thursdays, and I have already learned all about the programs we use. I submitted a project to *Laridae*, the undergraduate research journal at SU and hope to hear back very soon.

### Do you have other plans this summer?

Living near the beach this summer has been an added bonus! For the rest of the summer, I will be studying for and taking the GRE and, of course, working on my fellowship project.

### What are you plans for after graduation?

After I graduate, I hope to get a Ph.D. in cognitive neuroscience, where I hope to learn the skills to become either a professor or another research-related career in cognitive neuroscience.

### What made you want to do research over the summer?

This research opportunity has opened many doors, and my mentor, Dr. Leaver, has been amazing. I have learned more from her already than I ever thought I would. I would have never known about the fellowship if

she had not mentioned it! I'm very lucky to have the opportunity to grow and learn within the field of psychological neuroscience.

### ■ Emma Kelly – PSYC 490

#### Tell us a little about yourself.

My name is Emma Kelly, I am a psychology major, cognitive science minor and a deaf studies minor. I was born and raised in lower Delaware, and I love to spend time with my family and at the beach.

#### What made you want to do research over the summer?

When I began to pursue neuroscience, I quickly realized how vital research experience was in this field. So, when I was offered this opportunity, I knew it was a great way to gain experience and knowledge.

#### What are your goals for research this summer?

Because this is my first time working in a research lab, I would love to learn the basics and build a strong foundation of knowledge and experience for when I continue with Dr. Leaver's team in the fall!

#### What other goals do you have this summer?

Along with completing my summer courses, I hope to spend more time with my family and go to the beach as much as possible!

#### What are your plans for after graduation?

After I graduate, I plan to continue to graduate school where I hope to continue pursuing neuroscience research.

#### How has it been going so far?

It has been great! I have really enjoyed working with Dr. Leaver and the team, and I am so excited to see all that we accomplish this summer!

### ■ Gretchen Beernink – PSYC 490

#### Tell us a little about yourself.

I am a junior psychology major with an art minor from Towson, MD. I am also a writing tutor for the Salisbury University Writing Center. This summer, I am working as a research assistant in Dr. Leaver's lab.

#### What made you want to do research over the summer?

I loved the project conception that I have done in previous classes, and I have always been interested in learning more about the research process that occurs post-conceptualization.

#### What are your goals for research this summer?

This is my first research experience, so my main goal is to learn as much as possible and to apply the skills I learn to my future endeavors.

#### What other goals do you have this summer?

My other goals for this summer include studying for the GRE, exploring studying abroad and continuing to draw as much as possible. I am also trying to watch all of the TV that I did not have time for during the spring semester.

#### What are your plans for after graduation?

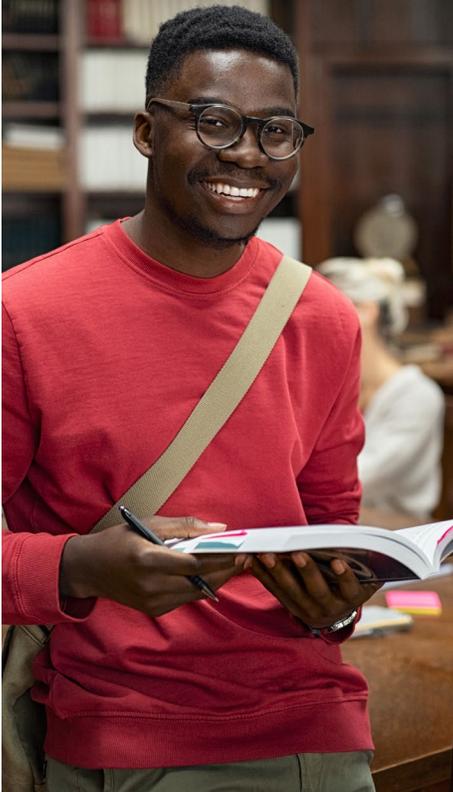
After college, I hope to be accepted into a master's program for school psychology to then administer psychoeducational assessment in the Maryland school sector.

#### How has it been going so far?

We are just getting started, but I have enjoyed continuing to learn about psychology and getting to know Dr. Leaver and my fellow research assistants.

*“Don’t become  
a mere recorder  
of facts, but  
try to penetrate  
the mystery of  
their origin.”*

– Ivan Pavlov  
(1849-1936)



## FACULTY/STUDENT PUBLICATION

Former student Kacie Cassar and Dr. Lance Garmon recently co-authored a paper titled “Social Media and Hooking Up in College Emerging Adults: Sliding into DMs” in an edited book titled *Sexuality in Emerging Adulthood*. Cassar started this project in fall 2017 and completed it before she graduated in 2019, but they had to wait until April 2021 for it to be published. After earning her B.A. at SU, Cassar continued to follow her career goals by earning an M.A. in history from SU in spring 2021 and, starting in fall 2021, by attending Royal Holloway, University of London in the U.K., to pursue a degree in public history.



## PSYCHOLOGY CLUB: JOIN US IN FALL 2021!

- Dr. Larence Becker, Psychology Club Advisor

What comes to mind when you think of a club? Perhaps you think of a group of people with a shared interest, sitting in a room, having a lively discussion, while eating pizza. You know, mostly things prohibited during a pandemic. And yet, over the past year, led by Club President Kayleece Seals and Vice President Jennifer Michelitch, the Psychology Club continued in its stated purpose to promote interest at SU in the field of psychology. The club held weekly meetings via Zoom on wide-ranging topics such as fears and phobias, human memory, and the psychology of religion. The club also tackled some difficult, topical issues, including a session dedicated to mental health in the Black community. And, especially for Halloween, we learned the gory truth about female serial killers(!).

And, what’s up for the fall? As things return to a semblance of normalcy, we hope to schedule regular in-person meetings. In addition, we’ll resume community activities, as have long been part of the club’s repertoire. So, please join us! Membership is open to students of any major – not only psychology. This academic year, we will be led by newly elected officers, President Soleil Darbouze and Vice President Lindsay Remetz, but other positions are still open. Perhaps you could be our next treasurer or secretary? Being a member provides a great opportunity to meet other students interested in psychology, engage in lively discussions ... and, yes, on occasion, there will be pizza.

For more information on the Psychology Club, contact [psychclub@gulls.salisbury.edu](mailto:psychclub@gulls.salisbury.edu) and watch for announcements in the fall.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE STUDENTS WHO MADE PSYCHOLOGY PRESENTATIONS AT SUSRC IN APRIL 2021:**

Blessing Ajayi  
 Gabrielle Atkinson  
 Regan Benton  
 Abigail Miano-Burkhardt  
 Gisselle Canales  
 Soleil Darbouze  
 Breland Daye  
 Whitney Demond  
 Caitlin Fell  
 Chaim Freedman  
 Shelby Gash  
 Gwen Globus  
 Erica Hall  
 Romona Harden  
 Ian Hare  
 Jenna Hutson  
 Jak'Quan Jackson  
 Andrea Jaramillo

Taylor Karnes  
 Halle Lane  
 Sebastian Mantilla  
 Jenna Markland  
 Jennifer Michelitch  
 Jada Mitchell  
 Briana Murray  
 Mackenzie Nickle  
 Jacob Nutter  
 Ashley Olortegui  
 Kelsey Pintzow  
 Emaline Printz  
 Gwynne Richardson  
 Allyson Rivera  
 Marissa Schmidt  
 Sydney Steeves  
 Sandra Zelaya

**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RECIPIENTS OF THE FOLLOWING AWARDS IN SPRING 2021**

**William and Eva Anderson Award in Applied Psychology**

Ines Tchienga

**Psychology Award**

Ines Tchienga and Jamie Nicholson



**SEMESTER DATES**

**Summer 5-Week Session I:**

June 2-July 7, 2021

**Summer 5-Week Session II:**

July 12-August 13, 2021

**Fall Regular Semester:**

August 30-December 17, 2021

**Winter Session:**

January 3-21, 2022

**UPCOMING FALL EVENTS**

**September**

■ **PSYCH FORUM:**

**Jobs You Can Start with a B.A. in Psychology**

Facilitator: Dr. Lance Garmon

■ **PSYCH FORUM:**

**Research Opportunities**

Facilitator: Dr. Rachel Steele

**Date TBA**

■ **PSYCH FORUM:**

**Internship Information**

Facilitator: Dr. Charisse Chappell

■ **PSYCH FORUM:**

**The Nuts and Bolts of Applying to Grad School**

Facilitator: TBA

■ **WATCH PARTY & PANEL DISCUSSION:**

***The Social Dilemma***

Facilitator: Dr. Mark Walter



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