

HINTS TO ASPIRING PARAPSYCHOLOGISTS

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If you want to study parapsychology at college, you can do it - but it won't be easy. Let me paint the dark side of the picture first, then go to the bright spots.

In the first place, no college in this country offers good training in parapsychology, with a reasonably large, competent faculty and good sequence of courses. Don't look for it; you won't find it. Next, even when a single course is offered, the person who teaches it may not be well trained in parapsychology. In the third place, a college degree isn't usually enough for professional competence. The phrase you hear is, "The Ph.D. is the union card." Keep in mind the possibility of eventually doing graduate work which will lead to a doctoral degree.

Now, if you're still with me, we'll turn to the sunny side. In the past few years an astonishingly large number of colleges either introduced a course in parapsychology or incorporated it into some ongoing course (usually introductory or experimental psychology). This is good. It gives you a start; it implies that the books you want will be in the library; it shows a general openness in the Department and probably an enthusiastic interest on the part of at least one faculty member. (If the catalogue of the college you're thinking about doesn't list such a course, you might write a letter of inquiry to find whether a sub-unit on parapsychology is taught.)

There are also workshops and summer apprenticeships where able parapsychologists work with students to train them in research methods. They do not give academic credit, but you can learn as much from them as if they did. An excellent one is offered each summer by the Rhine Research Center in Durham, North Carolina. For further information visit [Summer Study Program in Parapsychology](#). And if you are ready for a doctorate, consider the University of Edinburgh. It offers a fine program: a Ph.D. in psychology with a specialization in parapsychology. (Write to Professor Robert Morris, Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh, 7 George Square, Edinburgh, Scotland EH9 8JZ and/or view his bio, [Professor Robert Morris](#).)

Since parapsychology is not a recognized college major, you must major in some other field. But this is good, because the skills you learn will almost surely be applicable to parapsychology. Almost everything is, from psychology and biology and physics to computer programming or anthropological field studies or mathematical theory. The general advice here is to study what interests you; it will be relevant.

Almost all colleges offer research opportunities for juniors or seniors, perhaps in an Honors program or an advanced research or reading course. If you have been trained in a parapsychology workshop or apprenticeship, and perhaps also if you have had basic research training in your own major and done parapsychological reading on your own, you should be able to find some faculty member who will sponsor your "independent" research or reading in parapsychology.

You yourself may be able to arrange new opportunities. At one university, for example, when students in General Studies were asked to list their choices for new courses, parapsychology rated high. On the strength of this demand a faculty committee went to the administration with a request, later granted, for such a course. A petition signed by several students might have the same effect. Or you might start a study group and find some sympathetic professor to join it, sponsor it or even lead it.

Now let's come back to the first question: how do you become a parapsychologist? Answer: by working in parapsychology. And if you say, "No, that's no answer!" I can respond only with a question of my own: how did any of us become parapsychologists? I'll tell you how I did: took a doctorate in psychology (which trained me in research methods); audited a course with Dr. Gardner Murphy; and began experimenting. How did Dr. Murphy? He took a doctorate in psychology and did a lot of reading on his own. How did Dr. Rhine? He took a doctorate in biology and worked with Dr. McDougall. How did Professor Morris? He took a doctorate in psychology and worked with Dr. Rhine. Dr. Schmidt is a physicist; Dr. Stevenson is a psychiatrist ... there are lots of routes.

A final suggestion: read the *Journal of Parapsychology*; see in its pages who is working in parapsychology and where they are located, *then write to appropriate ones, asking what study opportunities they offer.

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