

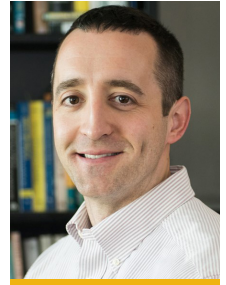


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Research Profile: Chris Cunningham, Ph.D.

Dr. Chris Cunningham joined the UTC faculty in 2007. He received his bachelor's degree in psychology at Lehigh University in 2003. He then went on to complete his master's degree in Industrial-Organizational Psychology in 2005 and his PhD in I-O with a specialization in Occupational Health Psychology in 2007, both at Bowling Green State University. During his final year at Bowling Green, preparing to hit the job market, Dr. Cunningham submitted an application to UTC. Now, 12 years later, he and his family are proud to call Chattanooga home.



DR. CHRIS CUNNINGHAM

Dr. Cunningham's mother was a professor and his father was a clinical psychologist. He has been steeped in the world of psychology and education his whole life. But neither of his parents do research and psychology wasn't taught at his high school, so he wasn't aware that psychological research was even an option until he got to Lehigh University. He began helping with his professors' lab studies and eventually ended up working for a year and a half as a lab assistant for a sociology professor whose research examined the sociology and psychology of team functioning - Dr. Cunningham found exactly what he wanted to study.

Since joining the faculty at UTC, Dr. Cunningham has chaired more than 30 graduate and undergraduate honors thesis projects and conducted several of his own studies. Through all of that, he still carries the inspiration he felt as an undergraduate student — an interest and appreciation for social cognitive theory. Specifically, the concept of triadic reciprocal causation, the idea that person, behavior, and environment all influence each other.

Social cognitive theory is the focus of the majority of the research conducted in his lab, the Healthy and Optimal Work (HOW) Lab. "Every study I do, I learn something else that makes the next one better. For me now, the best part about research is that it's an excuse and an opportunity to learn something new every single day," he says.

One particularly interesting study with a research master's student examined how medical residents manage their stress

"The best part about research is that it's an excuse and an opportunity to learn something new every single day."

and recovery needs at work. Their novel findings suggested that residents recover, not just after the work day, but they also engage in moments of resource recovery periodically throughout their shifts. These results stood in contrast to most other studies that suggest that someone cannot recover until the work is complete.

Dr. Cunningham also recently examined the role of a person's religiosity or spirituality in explaining what they value as a resource. In other words, what do people turn to when they are faced with stress at work, and how do their beliefs affect where they turn? "It's arguably one of the most important [individual] differences, because it's not a superficial trait. It's something deep. It affects our values. It affects our behavior. It affects what we eat. It affects who we spend time with. It changes everything, and for us to just ignore it is really silly."

Currently, Dr. Cunningham and the members of the HOW Lab are busier than ever. They are getting started on a largely qualitative study examining how people who work in hospital environments derive a sense of meaning in the work they do and how these could be factors protecting against burnout. Dr. Cunningham and the HOW team are also working hard to complete a number of writing initiatives by the end of this coming spring, including *Essentials of Occupational Health Psychology*, the first textbook in a new series coming out through the Society for I-O Psychology that he and Dr. Kristen Black have been working on together for the last couple of years!



The HOW Lab members - Shelby Farrar, Damian Spears, Emily Nixon, Camille Wheatley, Braden Sanford, and Ginny Britto.

Applying Psychology *with* Practicum

"It is...one of the best opportunities offered for success at UTC."

"It gives you real-life work experience in the psychology field."



Emerson Cook, Camp ZooAbility Week 1, 2019



Group photo, Camp ZooAbility Week 3, 2019



Hannah Clark, Camp ZooAbility Week 2, 2019

What is practicum?

- ▶ Practicum is the Psychology Department's version of an internship.
- ▶ It provides the ability to gain experience in your field of study while earning credit.
- ▶ It is designed to enhance your learning and guide you as you decide what to do with your degree.

What do I need to be eligible?

- ▶ Minimum 2.5 overall GPA.
- ▶ Junior standing (60 credit hours).
- ▶ Leadership skills, organization, drive, dependability, and critical thinking skills.

Where do I start?

- ▶ Attend a practicum information session for more details or connect with Dr. Warren or Dr. Ozbek.





Meet Our Psychology Majors



Joanna Hill was born here in Chattanooga and has always called it her home. Her dual enrollment Intro to Psychology class in high school was what sparked her interest in the field, and she immediately fell in love with it. She is very passionate about helping people and has always wanted to do something with her life that is meaningful and makes a difference in others' lives - she plans to pursue a career in counseling.

Joanna's favorite part about UTC's psychology department is the Applying Psychology category because it provides an experience that can help you determine whether you're in the right field. This has allowed her the opportunity to be a research assistant in Dr. Warren's lab. A current project involves examining the ways in which different types of play with children influence learning, so she will be analyzing data collected at the Children's Discovery Museum soon!

Joanna's Best Advice?

Psychology majors, engage with your professors in class. Ask them questions because that's how you connect it to what you're already thinking on the topic. First year students, get connected on campus. It will help so much to have a strong support group.

Braden Sanford is from Hendersonville, Tennessee. Until the end of his first year of college, Braden's passion was theatre tech and design; however, he quickly discovered that what he liked most about theatre was helping people, so he decided to switch his major to psychology to explore that part of himself that wanted to be an agent in making other people's lives better.



Braden is highly involved in UTC's psychology department. He is the vice president of PSI CHI, the international honor society for psychology. He is also involved in a handful of current research studies examining everything from the portrayal of comic book characters, to minority involvement in outdoor activity, to episodic future thinking. He's even helping Dr. Cunningham and Dr. Black finalize their new textbook!

After graduation, Braden's plan is to go to graduate school either for research or clinical psychology.

Braden's Best Advice?

Be as curious as possible! Often times what keeps students from connecting to their professors or engaging with the content in their classes is that they are just not curious enough. Being curious is not just a state of mind, it's a skill.

The Downside of Multitasking at School

Have you ever felt as though you're not doing well enough in school despite how hard you've been working? **Psychology can explain that!** Research has shown that, though people think they can multitask, you cannot actually do more than one thing at a time.

Cognitive neuroscience studies have revealed that when we try to multitask, like listening to music while reading, our brains actually shift *between* the tasks, making it difficult to do either task well. Instead, focus on one task at a time.

Now that you know this, try to create a learning and studying environment for yourself with minimal distractions. Give yourself a work/study limit, turn off the TV, turn off the music, put away the phone, and reward yourself at the end with something fun!



Great Things are Happening!



Stand Up Science, a two-hour show full of both scientific conversation and comedy, was created by award-winning comedian and science podcast host, Shane Mauss. Last month, our very own Dr. Ferrier was featured as a guest speaker and had the opportunity to share his research with the crowd!



Congratulations to Dr. Shelton on being selected as a Fellow in the Psychonomic Society. This demonstrates a recognition of her engagement in rigorous and interesting high level research, her reputation for excellence, and her qualification to conduct and supervise scientific research in psychology or allied sciences.

Angelique's Advice

It's that time again! Ready or not, final exams are coming soon. Here are a few tips as you prepare.

5: Determine what you are up against Do you know how much the final exam is worth? What's the format (multiple choice, essay, etc.), is the final comprehensive or over a few chapters? Knowing this information can help with your study plan.

4: Location is everything Try to find a nice, quiet, and comfortable location to study. The library and dorm rooms are acceptable, however restaurants with loud noise may not be ideal.

3: Turn off social media Trust me, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, etc. will still be there when you are done with finals.

2: Don't cram the night before Cramming causes anxiety, which inhibits your ability to retain information. Set aside time everyday for studying and set realistic goals.

1: Try your best Remember that you studied hard and have confidence in yourself. You can do it!



Interested in an independent study opportunity to develop your science writing skills?

Contact Dr. Clark about getting involved with the Psych Department newsletter!
Amanda-Clark@utc.edu



There's still time to join

Team UTC Au-Some MOCS

for the 7th Annual
**Chattanooga Autism
Awareness Walk**

The UTC Au-Some MOCS are one of the largest teams and they NEED you!

[Click here
for more information!](#)