

EMA TANOVIC

1. Please provide a brief overview of the organization for which you will intern or program/project you are developing.

I will be interning as a full-time research assistant for eight weeks at the Cognitive Affective Personality Science Laboratory at Wesleyan, where I have been working since the beginning of this semester. The lab, run by Professor Charles Sanislow, focuses on research in psychopathology through behavioral studies of cognition-emotion interactions, with the goal of improving understanding, diagnosis, and treatment of mental disorders.

2. Briefly provide details of the internship or experience, including responsibilities and tasks.

The focus of the summer will be to run a pilot study with our new electroencephalography (EEG) machine that will investigate a brain signal known as error-related negativity (ERN). This signal occurs when people make errors and we are interested in how it might be different in people with different pathologies (for example, do people with anxiety disorders have different ERNs than people with depression?). This is important because it gives us insight into the underlying neural mechanisms of these disorders, which has implications for a number of enormous debates in psychopathology. For the pilot study, we will be designing the procedure, recruiting and running participants, reviewing relevant literature, entering data, analyzing data, and creating a poster. We will also be making a training video for the (very expensive) EEG machine for students who work with it in the future.

As well, I will be continuing a project I have been involved with this semester, where we developed and tested a set of film clips as stimuli for eliciting particular emotions. An effective, standard method of emotion induction is really lacking in psychological research, so to develop one would be a great contribution to the field. However, we need more participants and data to be able to publish a paper, so I will likely be recruiting and running more people this summer.

3. How will this experience enhance or broaden your career goals?

I am passionate about clinical psychology; I am majoring in psychology, and I plan to pursue a doctorate in clinical psychology when I graduate. This research assistantship would be an invaluable experience for me, both in terms of helping me achieve my career goals and enhancing my Wesleyan experience.

The research we do in the CAPS Lab is very relevant to my own interests and to the kind of research I hope to be involved in after Wesleyan. I am personally very committed to and interested in doing research to further understanding of different psychopathologies and an intense research assistantship like this one will be an asset when I apply to graduate programs in clinical psychology. I am very excited about the role I will have this summer especially, because I, with two other research assistants, will be responsible for all aspects of the pilot study, which is such a valuable experience to have as an undergraduate.

As well, I will be taking a lab research methods course with Professor Sanislow in the fall that will be a continuation of the ERN research; by working on the pilot study intensely over the summer and laying the groundwork for what we will do in the fall, I will get a lot out of the class as a result. It will also be great preparation for future work in the lab, which will use EEG, and could potentially lead to a senior thesis.