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| **The Virginia Affect and Interoception Laboratory (VAIL)**  **University of Virginia, Department of Psychology**  **Principal Investigator: Dr. Jennifer MacCormack**  **Who We Are.** In the VAIL, we study how the body and brain together help create and shape everyday human feelings and behaviors—ranging from bodily sensations such as feeling hungry or sick to your emotions, social perceptions, and decisions. We primarily focus on how the body-brain shapes feelings and behaviors via *affect* and *interoception*. There are many ways our lab investigates these relations between body, brain, and mind. For example:   * We experimentally or pharmacologically induce certain bodily states (e.g., hunger, inflammation) or affective states (e.g., acute stress, feeling tense vs. relaxed, angry vs. happy) to determine how these states and their physiological pathways (e.g., ghrelin, cytokines, sympathetic nervous system) translate to the brain and behavior. * We examine how people can vary in their sensitivity to, awareness of, and beliefs about their bodily signals and sensations (“interoception”), whether interoception matters for emotion, sociality, and health, and to what extent interoception can vary with age, health, cultural or socioeconomic background, etc. * We study the role of development and aging in changing how the brain and mind process bodily states and sensations—and what this means for our cognitive and social affective functioning across the lifespan.   **How To Get Involved.** Open research assistant (RA) positions typically open in the summer or early fall, but new projects are always starting, so it is worth letting us know if you are interested! Please complete the application form below and send to Dr. MacCormack ([maccormack@virginia.edu](mailto:maccormack@virginia.edu)).  **What Is Involved.** Depending on your interests, our current studies, and how long you stay in the lab, you will be able to assist with the research process from study design and recruitment to data collection and data processing. There will also be opportunities to acquire hands-on training and experience in psychophysiology, human neuroimaging, biological assays, and behavioral experiments, depending on a given project or study’s needs. RAs are expected to attend a bimonthly lab meeting, where we discuss professional development and practical or theoretical questions related to our research.  **Position Types.** Volunteer positions usually involve a 5-7 hour weekly commitment. Research participation for course credit (PSYC3590) can be for 2 credit hours (6 hours per week) or 3 credit hours (9 hours per week). Students should *always* first discuss and ask permission from Dr. MacCormack if they are interested in completing research course credit. Course credit priority is given to students who are already in the lab.  **Position Length.** RAs are encouraged to work with us for at least 1 year or 2 semesters for two reasons. First, because we are working with special types of data collection such as psychophysiology, neuroimaging, or experiments, training in the lab takes more time. Due to this, you will get more out of your experience if you work with us for at least a year. Second, if you would like us to provide a letter of recommendation for you, then we are able to write a stronger letter on your behalf when we have had a chance to know you. | |
| **Undergraduate Research Assistant Application** | |
| **Contact Information** | |
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| **First & Last Name:** | **Preferred Name:** |
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| **Name Pronunciation (if helpful):** | **Pronouns (if comfortable sharing):** |
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| **Email:** | |
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| **Academic Information** | |
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| **Major(s):** | |
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| **Minor(s):** | |
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| **Anticipated Degree Date:** | |
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| **Cumulative Overall GPA:** | **Cumulative Major GPA:** |
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| **Lab Experience and Goals** | |
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| **Do you have prior research experience in other labs or coursework?** This can include designing studies, collecting or analyzing data, helping manage or prepare study stimuli or measures, conducting literature searches, recruiting or screening participants, clinical hours, etc. **If yes, please describe your prior experiences in terms of the context (lab, class), how long (1 semester, etc.), and research skills or tasks you gained and completed.** | |
| **What are you planning to do after you graduate from UVA? And how do you hope your experiences in the lab can help you achieve your goals?** | |
| **Related to the above questions, please share a bit about why you are drawn to our laboratory and the types of research we do. Is there a particular research topic we study that you are interested in? Are there particular skills or knowledge you want to gain more of?** | |
| **How did you hear about us?** | |
| **Anything else you would like us to know about you?** | |