What does it mean to study Psychology as a Human Science at an Undergraduate Level?

Duquesne University’s Psychology Faculty are well known for our expertise in human science psychology. Our approach can be contrasted to natural science psychology, which developed in the late 1800s, and was modeled after natural sciences such as physics and biology. Experimental and quantitative research methods drawn from the natural sciences yield much valuable knowledge, but there are many dimensions of the human experience that are best addressed with qualitative research methods developed specifically to study human beings. For example, a human science approach that addresses questions of meaning, values, experience, history, culture and power is well suited for studying love, dreams, spirituality, interpersonal relationships, gender roles, race issues, and so on. Our faculty believe that human science approaches provide an appropriate and illuminating path to grasp the full depth and subtlety of human experience.

What does this mean for undergraduate students? As a psychology major, you will gain broad exposure to both the human science and natural science approaches to psychology, but our focus is firmly rooted in the human science tradition. Our Psychology Department’s emphasis on the human science perspective means that coursework aims to foster critical thinking, ethical reflection and creative attention to the nature of psychological life. Many students find that our human science orientation is especially helpful to students who plan to pursue careers or graduate study in disciplines that focus on serving others.