

## PSYC 2505a – ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY

Fall 2012  
Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:50 – 12:05  
PE-250

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### Course Description<sup>1</sup>

This course is an introduction to the study of the causes, development, manifestations, and treatments of psychological disorders. Abnormal psychology typically refers to “diseases of the mind”, and there is indeed a very personal experience to most disorders we will study in this course. As we will see, however, a careful study of psychological disorders requires a good behavioural description of the phenomena, and psychological disorders are often tightly connected to one’s circumstances.

In this course we will study some of the most common and severe psychological disorders, such as depression, schizophrenia, and phobias. We will ask three fundamental questions:

- (1) What is the disorder, and how is it manifested?
- (2) What are the known causes of the disorder?
- (3) What are the best treatments, and how do we know a treatment is indeed effective?

We will also examine whether these disorders are disorders in the first place, requiring a good conceptual handle on the different meanings of the terms *disorder* and *pathology*. If it is true that 25% of people experience a major psychological disorder at some point in their lives, how is it that natural selection has produced a mind that is so prone to such “problems”?

The course material will consist of two components: (1) a textbook and (2) presentations by the instructor (and teaching assistants). The textbook is self-contained and provides students with extremely clear information covering the three fundamental questions. Students are

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<sup>1</sup> Prerequisite: Psychology 1000. Equivalent: Psychology 3500.

required to read and understand designated chapters from the textbook (see Schedule below). Eighty to ninety percent of the exam questions will cover information from the textbook. The class presentations will serve to illustrate the material presented in the textbook and to provide students with a deeper understanding of the material. Ten to twenty percent of the exam questions will cover material presented in class.

## **Textbook**

Barlow, D. H., Durand, V. M., & Stewart, S. H. (2012). *Abnormal psychology: An integrative approach* (Third Canadian edition). Toronto: Nelson.

## **Evaluation**

The evaluation will be based on four exams<sup>2</sup> and a short writing assignment.

The first three exams will be worth 25% of the final grade, and the fourth 20%. Exams will be conducted with Moodle at the Testing Centre over a 72-hour period, and will consist of about 50 multiple-choice questions each (not cumulative) with a 90-minute time limit.

The writing assignment (5%) will consist of a brief review of an empirical article on a question of your choice. It should be no longer than 350 words, excluding your name, title, and references. The first page of the target empirical article should be attached (the first page of an empirical article typically includes the title, the authors, and the abstract). Referencing should follow the guidelines of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (6<sup>th</sup> edition). The assignment should be submitted in class on November 20, 2012. Late submissions will not be accepted. Additional instructions will be provided in class.

The following ranges will be used to convert percentage marks to a letter grade:

A+	90-100	A	85-89	A-	80-84
B+	77-79	B	74-76	B-	71-73
C+	68-70	C	65-67	C-	61-64
D+	56-60	D	50-55	F	0-49

## **Research Participation and Bonus Marks**

This course provides students with an opportunity to participate in active research programs of faculty members. This participation allows you to get direct experience in how some of the studies you will read and hear about are actually done, and provides an opportunity for you to

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<sup>2</sup> If you are not able to write an exam during the assigned time please contact the instructor as soon as possible before the beginning of the exam period. Medical reasons must be supported by a physician's statement that test performance would be seriously affected along with the physician's name, address, and telephone number. Non-medical reasons must also be supported. It is the student's responsibility to set up a make-up exam with the course instructor.

see what goes on in the research laboratories, and meet senior undergraduate and graduate students conducting their own laboratory research projects. Calls for volunteers to assist in these projects will be made during the semester via e-mails and advertisements on the Psychology Department Sona System. Each project usually requires one hour or less of your time, but this will depend on the individual research project. In recognition of your time, and in recognition that you are learning something about the discipline of psychology beyond what you would in the normal classroom environment, an extra credit of 1% for each study in which you participate will be added to your total grade to a maximum of 2%. Note that there is no guarantee that all students will be able to achieve the maximum extra credit.

The available studies will be listed on the Sona System at <http://psychleth.sona-systems.com>. Your username will be the same one you use to access Moodle. The password will be psyc2505a. The system should be available starting September 17 and the deadline for participating in studies is December 4. (Note that there will be no transfer of credits between courses. If you are registered in another course that offers credits, a second email will be sent to you with a different email and password. Sign up in the course that you want your credits to be assigned. If you experience problems with the Sona System, or you have inquiries regarding participation, please contact Leanne Wehlage, Assistant to the Chair, at [wehlage@uleth.ca](mailto:wehlage@uleth.ca).)

## Schedule

September 6	Introduction
September 11	Chapter 1 (Historical Context)
September 13	Chapter 2 (Integrative Approach)
September 18	Chapter 3 (Diagnosis)
September 20	What is an empirical article, and how to find one?
September 25	Chapter 4 (Research Methods)
September 26-28	<b>Exam 1</b>
October 2 & 4	Chapter 5 (Anxiety)
October 9 & 11	Chapter 7 (Mood)
October 16	Chapter 8 (Eating & Sleeping)
October 17-19	<b>Exam 2</b>
October 23 & 25	Chapter 10 (Sexuality)
October 30 & November 1	Chapter 11 (Substance Use)
November 6	Chapter 12 (Personality)
November 7-9	<b>Exam 3</b>
November 13 & 15	Chapter 13 (Schizophrenia)
November 20	<b>Writing Assignment</b>
November 20 & 22	Chapter 14 (Development)
November 27 & 29	Chapter 16 (Mental Health Services)
December 4	Recap
December 5-7	<b>Exam 4</b>