

PSYC 3500 – ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY

Spring 2010

Tuesdays & Thursdays 16:30 – 17:45
AH 118

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Course Description

This course is about *psychopathology*, the study of the origins, development, and manifestations of psychological disorders. The actual etymological origin of psychopathology is “disease of the mind,” and there is indeed an intra-psychic manifestation 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.

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 “diseases”?

The course material consists of three parts: (1) a textbook and a few articles, (2) lectures by the instructor and teaching assistant, and (3) presentations by students. The textbook is self-contained and provides students with extremely clear information covering the three fundamental questions. Students are required to read and understand designated chapters from the textbook (see Schedule below). The lectures by the instructor (and, occasionally, the teaching assistant) will cover topics necessary to understand the study of psychological disorders. These topics include research designs, molecular genetics, the meaning of disorder and pathology, diagnostic tools, the placebo effect, clinical science, the role of evolution in promoting certain psychological responses that are sometimes considered disordered, and the contribution of modern society to the prevalence of psychological disorders. Students will give group presentations on specific topics throughout the semester.

Prerequisite: Any two 2000-level courses in Psychology.

Reading Material

- (1) Barlow, D. H., Durand, V. M., & Stewart, S. H. (2009). *Abnormal psychology: An integrative approach* (second Canadian edition). Toronto: Nelson.
- (2) Articles distributed by the instructor throughout the semester.
- (3) One of three books for a book report assignment.

Evaluation

The evaluation is based on three exams, a group presentation, a book report, and a term paper. The three exams are compulsory, and students must complete all of them to pass the course. The group presentation, book report, and term paper are optional. Students can determine for themselves the weighting of each evaluation component.¹

Exam I:	15-30% (required)
Exam II:	15-30% (required)
Exam III:	15-35% (required)
Presentation:	0-15% (optional)
Book Report:	0-25% (optional)
Term Paper:	0-25% (optional)

So, for example, someone might chose to complete all components of the evaluation, in the following way: Exam I (20%), Exam II (20%), Exam III (20%), Presentation (5%), Book Report (20%), Term Paper (15%). For another example, someone might decide to write the three exams at 30%, 30%, and 35%, and do the presentation at 5% (and not write any papers). Students will write down the % weight they want for each evaluation when they hand in the exams, book reports, term papers, and at the beginning of the presentations. These percentages cannot be changed afterwards.

Exams. The exams will consist of multiple choice questions, definitions, matching statements, and open-ended questions. They will encompass all material covered in prior weeks, with a focus on the more recent material (i.e., partially cumulative). Exams will cover the textbook chapters, the lectures, student presentations, and other assigned readings.

- Exam 1: February 11 (75 min) – Chapters 1 to 5
- Exam 2: March 18 (75 min) – Chapters 7, 8, 10, 11
- Exam 3: April 27 (90 min) – Chapters 12, 13, 14, 16

¹ If you cannot be present for an exam or presentation, or if you cannot submit your book report or term paper by the deadline, you must contact the instructor as soon as possible before the exam or presentation date (or before the due date for the book report or term paper). Medical reasons must be supported by a statement that test performance would be seriously affected, with the physician's name, address, and phone number included in the statement. Non-medical reasons must also be supported by appropriate documentation. Failure to notify the instructor prior to the due date will result in a mark of zero.

Presentation. The student group presentations will be 15-20 minutes long, plus 5 minutes for questions and discussion. The goal of this exercise is to give you a chance to learn about a particular question or topic relevant to psychopathology through library research and to teach other students a synthesis of what you have learned. Students teach on a topic covered in the textbook, and describe one published empirical study on that topic.

The instructor must approve the topic at least two weeks prior to the presentation (by that time, students are committed to do the presentation). The number of students per group must be 3, 4 or 5. Presentations will occur on Thursdays from February 4 to April 17, and topics must match the chapter assigned for that particular week (see Schedule below). For example, a presentation on February 4 must cover a topic under Chapter 5 (Anxiety Disorders). There can be no more than two presentations per day. The schedule for the presentations will be posted on the WebCT Calendar, on a first-come basis.

Book report. The book report will consist of a five-page discussion of one of three books (excluding title page, abstract page, references, tables, or figures):

Endler, N. S. (1990). *Holiday of darkness* (revised edition). Toronto: Wall & Thompson
Carr, D. (2008). *The night of the gun*. Toronto: Simon & Schuster.
Bergner, D. (2009). *The other side of desire*. Toronto: HarperCollins.

Quality of exposition and formatting (APA) will be taken into account in grading the report. Reports should be submitted in hard copy to the instructor by February 23 (in class). Marks will be deducted for late papers, at a rate of 5% per 24 hours. Reports submitted by email will not be accepted. Instructions for the book report will be given in class.

Term paper. The term paper will consist of a five-page (excluding title page, abstract page, references, tables, or figures) exploration of a topic relevant to psychopathology. Students can select any topic they want, as long as it is related to the topics discussed in class or in the textbook; it is quite all right to select the same topic as the presentation topic (if you indeed do a presentation). The focus of the paper will be on an empirical article relevant to the topic, with a discussion of the study methodology and findings. Quality of exposition and formatting (APA) will be taken into account in grading the paper. Papers should be submitted in hard copy to the instructor by March 30 (in class). Marks will be deducted for late papers, at a rate of 5% per 24 hours. Papers submitted by email will not be accepted.

Final grade. 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

Class Discussion

I encourage questions and discussion in class. Because of the large size of the class, this might not always be easy to do. Therefore I also encourage using the class discussion board on WebCT to ask questions and continue class discussions. The instructor and the TA will regularly log on to answer questions and contribute to the discussion. All questions to the instructor (other than questions having to do with personal issues) should be asked in class or via the discussion board.

Research Marks (optional)

This course provides students with an opportunity to participate in active research programs of faculty members and students in the psychology department. Calls for volunteers to assist in these projects will be made during the semester. If you are asked to volunteer, and you accept, each project usually requires one hour or less of your time, but this will depend on the individual research project. In recognition for your time, and in recognition that you are learning something about the discipline of abnormal psychology, beyond what you would in the normal classroom environment, an extra 1 to 2% for each study in which you participate will be added to your total grade, up to a maximum of 2%. Note that there is no guarantee that all students will be able to achieve the maximum extra credit. These extra credits are added only after all grade cutoffs have been established such that students who choose not to participate are not disadvantaged. Please check with the Research Assistant for the Experiment to ensure that you have not completed this study previously. Please note that you will only receive this credit if you participate in experiments that are listed on this class' WebCT site.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and is well defined in the University Calendar. Make sure to familiarize yourself with this document. Make sure to ask the instructor or the TA if you are not sure about paraphrasing or quoting.

Schedule

January 7	Introduction
January 12, 14	Chapters 1, 2 (Historical Context, Integrative Approach)
January 19, 21	Chapter 3 (Diagnosis)
January 26, 28	Chapter 4 (Research Methods)
February 2, 4, 9	Chapter 5 (Anxiety)
February 11	Exam I (required)
February 16, 18	Reading week
February 23, 25	Chapter 7 (Mood); Book Report due on the 23 rd (optional)
March 2, 4	Chapter 8 (Eating & Sleeping)
March 9, 11	Chapter 10 (Sexuality)
March 16	Chapter 11 (Substance Use)
March 18	Exam II (required)

March 23, 25	Chapter 12 (Personality)
March 30, April 1	Chapter 13 (Schizophrenia); Term Paper is due on March 30 th (optional)
April 6, 8	Chapter 14 (Development)
April 13, 15	Chapter 16 (Law and Ethics)
April 27	Exam III (required)