

PSYC 3500 – ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY

Spring 2009

Tuesdays & Thursdays 16:30 – 17:45
UHall B650

Instructor: Martin Lalumière (D854)
Teaching Assistant: Annabree Fairweather (D482)
<https://courseware.uleth.ca/webct/logon/4404834066001>

Course Description

This course is about *psychopathology*, the study of the origins, development, and manifestations of behavioural 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. As B.F. Skinner cogently argued, feelings, emotions, thoughts, and attitudes can often be understood as *behaviour* emitted under certain conditions.

In this course we will study some of the most common and severe behavioural 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 behavioural 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 four parts: (1) a textbook, (2) lectures by the instructor and teaching assistant, (3) presentations by students, and (4) a biography by Professor Norman S. Endler. 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 below). The lectures by the instructor (and, occasionally, the teaching assistant) will cover topics necessary to understand the study of psychopathology. These topics include research designs, molecular genetics, the meaning of disorder and pathology, diagnostic tools, the role of evolution in promoting certain psychological responses that are sometimes considered disordered, and the contribution of modern society to the prevalence of behavioural disorders. Students will give group presentations throughout the semester. The biography will be used in a written assignment.

Prerequisite: Any two 2000-level courses in Psychology.

Required Readings

- 1) Barlow, D. H., Durand, V. M., & Stewart, S. H. (2009). *Abnormal psychology: An integrative approach* (second Canadian edition). Toronto: Nelson.
- 2) Endler, N. S. (1990). *Holiday of darkness: A psychologist's personal journey out of his depression (revised edition)*. Toronto: Wall & Thompson.
- 3) Articles distributed by the instructor throughout the semester.

Evaluation

Evaluation is based on two exams (20% and 30%), a group presentation (10%), a term paper (20%), and a book report (20%). Students must complete all five components of the evaluation to pass the course.¹

The two 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., cumulative). Exams will cover the textbook chapters, the lectures, student presentations, and other assigned readings.

Exam schedule: Mid-term Exam, February 24 (Chapters 1 to 5); End-of-Term Exam, April 27 (Chapters 7-8, 10-14).

The student group presentations will be 15 minutes long, plus 5 minutes for discussion. The goal of this exercise is to give you a chance to learn about a particular question relevant to psychopathology through library research and to teach other students a synthesis of what you have learned. The instructor must approve the question at least two weeks prior to the presentation (questions having to do with mood disorders should be avoided). The presentation will focus on one empirical article relevant to the question. Assuming there are 60 students, we will organize into groups of five students each, for a total of 12 presentations (3 per day).

Group Presentations schedule: March 3, 17, 31, and April 14.

The book report will consist of a five-page discussion of *Holiday of Darkness* (excluding the title page, references, tables, or figures). Because the book was originally written in 1982, some of the information presented is outdated, and part of your task is to provide an update based on the more recent scientific literature. Quality of exposition and formatting (APA) will be taken

¹ If you cannot be present for an exam or presentation, or if you cannot submit your term paper or book report 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 term paper or book report). 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 exam will result in a mark of zero.

into account in grading the report. Reports should be submitted in hard copy to the instructor by March 10 (in class). Marks will be deducted for late papers, at a rate of 2 (out of 20) per 24 hours. Reports submitted by email will not be accepted.

The term paper will consist of a five-page exploration of a topic relevant to psychopathology (again, excluding the title page, references, tables, or figures). Students can select any topic they want (except mood disorders), as long as it is related to the topics discussed in class; it is quite all right to select the same topic as the presentation question. 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 April 7 (in class). Marks will be deducted for late papers, at a rate of 2 (out of 20) per 24 hours. Papers submitted by email will not be accepted.

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 (fail)	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 and Bonus Marks

This course provides students with an opportunity to participate in active research programs of faculty members. Calls for volunteers to assist in these projects will be made during the semester, in class or via e-mail. 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 psychology, beyond what you would in the normal classroom environment, an extra credit of 1 to 2% 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. 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.