Psychology 300A-002 – Abnormal Psychology

Course Information:

Instructor: Silvain Dang  
Email: silvain@psych.ubc.ca  
Office hours: after class & by appointment

Teaching assistants: Ellen Jopling  
TA Email: ellen.jopling@psych.ubc.ca

Course description: This course will cover the definition, organization, and etiology of psychological disorders, abnormal behaviors, and mental health difficulties. There will be an emphasis on understanding how and why psychological disorders manifest, and how they fit into a broader individual, biological, and societal context. You will be expected to think critically about relevant issues and examine the empirical literature, not merely memorize information.

Lecture time & location: Tuesdays and Thursdays; 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm; Buchanan A104

Key dates:
- Sep 4 – Start of term
- Sep 18 – Last day to withdraw without W standing
- Oct 12 – Last day to withdraw with W standing
- Nov 30 – Last day of class
- Dec 4 – Start of final exam season
- Dec 19 – End of final exam season

Course Materials:

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – 5th Edition; American Psychiatric Association (2013)  
This text is mandatory.  
UBC students can access this for free through the UBC Library: https://psychiatryonline-org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca

This text is optional. You may find it useful for providing additional perspectives, examples, and references. You are not required to have this book.

Research papers
I will use published research papers from academic journals to supplement the course materials. You are responsible for content in these readings for exams.

Course notes
I will provide additional course notes and readings, which may contain material not covered in lecture. You are responsible for knowing this content for exams.

Evaluations:

Midterms:
There will be two midterms (see schedule for dates). They will be 1 hour 20 minutes in length, scheduled during class time. Midterms are non-cumulative for specific content, but general ideas and concepts will span the entire course. Questions will include recognition (multiple choice, true-false), recall (fill-in-the-blank, short answer), and synthesis (informal essay) questions.
Final exam:
The final exam will be scheduled by the university during the final exam season. It will be similar in structure as the midterm exams.

Grade breakdown:
- Midterm 1: 30%
- Midterm 2: 30%
- Final Exam: 40%

General Course Policies:

Attendance: Attendance to lectures is required, as all lecture content are potentially testable material for exams. If you do miss a lecture, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate. Instructor and TA will not re-teach lecture materials for those who miss a class.

Electronics: Feel free to use electronic devices (laptops, etc.) to take notes or look up materials in class. However, please make sure that you are not disrupting the class (e.g., ringing phones, loud OS sounds, etc.) with these devices.

Recordings: If you need to record my lectures, please make sure to get permission from me first.

Participation: Participation in class is highly encouraged. Please ask questions, get clarification if anything doesn’t make sense, and give a shot at answering questions that I raise.

Personal anecdotes: Topics covered in this class are likely relevant to the personal lives of some, if not most, of the students in the class. Therefore, I welcome students to share their perspectives and experiences in class if it is in service of helping the class understand and learn more. However, I ask the class to keep the following in mind:

1) If someone else is sharing a personal anecdote, please be respectful towards them and their experience. This includes maintaining their confidentiality when you leave the classroom.
2) Please keep all comments constructive and with intention to provide information or further the class’s learning.

Missed Exams:

Alternative arrangements for exams or the paper will be considered in the following situations:

1) If you need to miss a midterm due to medical reasons, please provide me with a note from your physician at the earliest date (before the exam if possible). For non-medical reasons, please provide equivalent documentation (note that I reserve the right to make the final decision about whether your reason is acceptable). It is your responsibility to contact the instructor and TA in this case. We will arrange for a make-up exam, which may contain different questions from the missed exam.

2) Accommodations requested through Access and Diversity Office, with appropriate A&D documentation, will of course be accepted. Please let me know as early as possible if this is the case, and also please let me know what type of accommodation is needed.

3) If you need to miss the final exam, please contact your program faculty advising office (e.g., Arts Advising) as only they can approve final exam deferrals.
**Department of Psychology Policy on Academic Misconduct**

“Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct are very serious concerns of the University, and the Department of Psychology has taken steps to alleviate them. In the first place, the Department has implemented software that can reliably detect cheating on multiple-choice exams by analyzing the patterns of students’ responses. In addition, the Department subscribes to TurnItIn – a service designed to detect and deter plagiarism. All materials (term papers, lab reports, etc.) that students submit for grading will be scanned and compared to over 4.5 billion pages of content located on the Internet or in TurnItIn’s own proprietary databases. The results of these comparisons are compiled into customized “Originality Reports” containing several sensitive measures of plagiarism; instructors receive copies of these reports for every student in their class.

In all cases of suspected academic misconduct the parties involved will be pursued to the fullest extent dictated by the guidelines of the University. Strong evidence of cheating or plagiarism may result in a zero credit for the work in question. According to the University Act (section 61), the President of UBC has the right to impose harsher penalties including (but not limited to) a failing grade for the course, suspension from the University, cancellation of scholarships, or a notation added to a student’s transcript.

All graded work in this course, unless otherwise specified, is to be original work done independently by individuals. If you have any questions as to whether or not what you are doing is even a borderline case of academic misconduct, please consult your instructor. For details on pertinent University policies and procedures, please see Chapter 5 in the UBC Calendar (http://students.ubc.ca/calendar) and read the University’s Policy 69 (available at http://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/policy69.html).”

**Grade Scaling**

The Department of Psychology requires that all grades in this course be scaled to a certain mean average and distribution. Please note that this is not my personal policy, but a departmental requirement. For this course, I am required to produce a final grade distribution as follows:

1) Class average (mean): 66% – 70%
2) Letter grade distributions:
   - Grade A: 5%-25% of students in the class
   - Grade A or B: less than 75% of students in the class
   - Grade F: less than 20% of students in the class
Course Outline & Schedule

Introduction
History
Classification
Paradigms
Stress & PTSD
Anxiety Disorders
OCD
Midterm 1: Oct 4
Depressive Disorders
Bipolar Disorders
Psychotic Disorders
Eating Disorders
Somatic Disorders
Dissociative Disorders
Midterm 2: Nov 6
ADHD
Substance Use Disorders
Personality Disorders
Choice Topic 1
Choice Topic 2
Final exam: Dec 4 – Dec 19 (scheduled by university)

Sample Choice Topics:
Perfectionism
Attachment Style
Mental Health & Self Care
Sexual Dysfunctions
Dissociative Identity Disorder
Gender Dysphoria
Clinical Research
Diagnosis & Formulation
Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy
Psychodynamic Therapy
Pharmacological Treatments
Alternatives to the DSM
Suggest your own. Tell me what you want to learn about!