



ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY

PSYCHOLOGY - 214

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

This course is a survey of the field of adult psychopathology. We will consider the clinical characteristics of the major mental disorders, the leading theories advanced to account for these conditions, and some of the empirical research that has shaped our current understanding of them. Our approach to the subject matter will be scientific and heavily influenced by neuroscience, but we will also encounter some of the clinical, philosophical, and ethical controversies that pervade this field of study. My primary goals are: a) to increase your knowledge about mental disorders; b) to increase your understanding of the scientific method as it relates to the study of abnormal behavior; and c) to foster in you an appreciation of the tremendous complexity of human behavior and of the challenges we face in attempting to understand it. I hope that the course meets these goals and stimulates your interest in this area.

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REQUIRED MATERIALS

Textbook. Oltmanns, T., & Emery, R. *Abnormal Psychology (6/e)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010.

Blackboard course website. This site contains, among other things, a short list of required readings, along with PDFs of the readings themselves. Please familiarize yourself with this website and monitor it closely.

COURSE CONTENT

Sources of information. You will be exposed to three sources of information: a) lectures; b) textbook; and, c) a small amount of supplemental required reading. Although these information sources overlap, they are substantially distinct. Mastery of the content of this course requires that you master all three sources. I do not believe that Oberlin students need to have reading assignments spoon-fed to them in wholly-redundant lectures. Accordingly, I will rarely duplicate in lectures the material that is in your text. Likewise, I may not discuss this or that supplementary reading in class. I recognize, however, that reading assignments sometimes require clarification or elaboration, and I hope that you will seek me out when you require such assistance. I am *always* willing to speak with you outside the classroom about *any* aspect of the course content.

What won't be covered. The field of psychopathology is vast; and it is undergoing explosive growth, especially in the domain of biological psychiatry. It is impossible to cover everything in a one-semester course, and I always struggle with the tradeoff between depth and breadth of coverage. There are several important respects in which my efforts to increase depth will reduce breadth.

First, I will focus primarily on adult psychopathology. You will do some reading on child psychopathology, from time to time I will discuss childhood antecedents of adult conditions. But that's it. Interested students might wish to take *Developmental Psychology* (PSYC-216), which includes a section on childhood psychopathology; *Seminar in Child Developmental Disorders* (PSYC-490); or *Practicum in Autism* (PSYC-501) to learn more about childhood psychopathology.

Second, I will limit my lectures to what traditionally were referred to as *functional* (as opposed to *organic*) mental disorders. The growing recognition that there are biological contributions to all mental disorders renders the functional-organic distinction anachronistic—but we can still draw a fuzzy distinction between mental disorders that arise from patent central nervous system insult, substance-induced intoxication, or disease, and those for which the pathophysiology is less distinct, less specific, or even wholly unknown. Accordingly, I will have little to say about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, mental retardation, and so forth, although you will gain some familiarity with these conditions from your textbook.

Third, I will not discuss psychotherapy to any significant degree. I believe that the fields of psychotherapy and psychopathology have diverged to the point that they often have surprisingly little to do with one another. The modern literature on psychopathology depends upon empirical developments in psychology and biology. The theories of behavior put forth by Freud, Jung, Rogers, and others have long since been abandoned as inadequate, and they exert little influence upon contemporary thinking about mental disorder. Nevertheless, many psychotherapists still place credence in such theories, with the result that there is a substantial gap between psychotherapeutic practice and the science of psychopathology. In this course, we will concern ourselves with the latter.

Finally, there are other worthy topics within the domain of psychopathology that I simply will not have time to cover in lecture. These included sexual dysfunctions and disorders, substance use disorders, psychological contributions to physical illness, and most of the personality disorders. Once again, you will gain basic familiarity with these topics from the textbook, and I would be happy to discuss them with you outside of class. These omissions are regrettable, but they will permit us to cover other core topics—in particular, the anxiety, mood, and psychotic disorders—in something closer to the depth that they deserve.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Textbook quizzes. You will complete four open-book, online quizzes, each consisting of multiple-choice questions drawn exclusively from your textbook. Each of these quizzes will cover four textbook chapters each (see table). Quizzes will be posted on our *Blackboard* site in the *Exams & Quizzes* section and will be available for at least 10 days before their designated “expiration dates,” at which time they will be removed. Chapters covered and expiration dates for each quiz can be found in the table on the right. Note that you will be quizzed on every textbook chapter except 16 and 17, which means that *you will be responsible for a number of topics that will not be covered explicitly in lecture*. Note, too, that *each quiz expires on a Wednesday at 10:00 PM local time*.

Quiz	Chapters	Expires @ 10 PM on
1	1-4	22-Feb
2	5-8	21-Mar
3	9-12	18-Apr
4	13-15 & 18	9-May

Although these quizzes will be open-book, they must be taken without any other sources of help (e.g., classmates, Google, etc.) They will also be strictly timed, and you will lose 1 point for each minute you exceed the time limit. I do not advise taking these quizzes without having studied the designated chapters first.

Exams. You will complete three in-class unit examinations which will cover only lecture material and any supplemental readings that were associated with the lecture topics (see the *Blackboard* site). The approximate dates for these exams are listed in the course calendar below. The third exam will be administered during our designated final exam period. Although none of these exams will be explicitly cumulative, I may ask you to relate previously-covered material to current concepts in an exam question.

GRADING

For each quiz and each exam, the top score in the class will become the “100% mark” against which all other scores will be scaled. So, if the class leader on a 100-point exam obtains a raw score of 91, 91 will become 100% and all other exams will be converted to adjusted percentages relative to that mark (e.g., a score of 85 will be recorded as 93.4%). Together, the three exams will make up 72% of your final grade, and the four quizzes will make up the remaining 28%. I will assign course grades according to the cutoffs shown in the table on the right. Note that for the P/NP grading option, a final tally of at least 68% (C-) is necessary to pass the course. A final grade of A+ will be assigned to one or two students at the top of the final grade distribution if, in my judgment, his/her/their performance has been consistently superior.

96% = A	76% = C+
92% = A-	72% = C
88% = B+	68% = C-
84% = B	60% = D/NP
80% = B-	<60% = F/NP

HONOR CODE POLICY

The *Oberlin Honor Code* will apply to all examinations and quizzes taken in this course. In addition to the *Honor Code's* basic assumption that all work submitted is the sole and original product of the individual student, a special stipulation for this course is that you may not use old *Abnormal Psychology* exams as study aids, nor may you make your own exams or quizzes available to students who might take this course in the future. Should you violate the *Honor Code* for this course, you will fail (i.e., F or NP, as appropriate) the course—retroactively, if necessary—in addition to suffering whatever penalty the Student Honor Committee deems appropriate. If you have any questions about the *Oberlin Honor Code* as it pertains to this course, I'd be happy to answer them. Further information about Oberlin's Honor System can be found under *Course Documents* on our *Blackboard* site.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

1. It is your responsibility to monitor *Blackboard* for developments relevant to this course.
2. If I need to get in touch with you, I will do so through the email address listed on *Blackboard*, which is, by default, your *oberlin.edu* address. If you rely on another email account, set your OC Mail to forward incoming messages to that account.
3. Quiz expiration dates will be extended only for personal emergencies or significant illnesses.
4. Our final exam time is established by the Registrar and cannot be rescheduled without written approval from the Dean of Studies (Ms. Kathryn Stuart).
5. Students with special needs (e.g., learning disabilities, vision or hearing problems, etc.) should introduce themselves to me immediately so that we can discuss any special arrangements that might be necessary for lectures, quizzes, and examinations. I will accommodate any reasonable request.
6. While I hope to adhere to the course plan described herein, I reserve the right to make changes (e.g., dropping a topic, changing exam dates, reading assignments, etc.) as the semester progresses. If and when I make a change, I will try to minimize any adverse impact on you.
7. If you are having trouble with any aspect of the class, please come see me—sooner, rather than later. I may not be able to help, but you never know; and I am certainly willing to try.

Day			Content			Day			Content		
F E B R U A R Y	Tu	7	Introduction			A P R I L	Su	1	SPRING BREAK		
	We	8					Mo	2			
	Th	9	What is "Mental Disorder"?				Tu	3	Mood Disorders		
	Fr	10					We	4			
	Sa	11					Th	5	Mood Disorders		
	Su	12					Fr	6			
	Mo	13					Sa	7			
	Tu	14	Basic Concepts				Su	8			
	We	15					Mo	9			
	Th	16	Basic Concepts				Tu	10	Mood Disorders		
	Fr	17					We	11			
	Sa	18					Th	12	Mood Disorders		
	Su	19					Fr	13			
	Mo	20					Sa	14			
Tu	21	Classification & Diagnosis			Su	15					
We	22	Quiz 1 expires at 10 PM			Mo	16					
Th	23	Classification & Diagnosis			Tu	17	Exam 2				
Fr	24				We	18	Quiz 3 expires at 10 PM				
Sa	25				Th	19	Psychopathy				
Su	26				Fr	20					
Mo	27				Sa	21					
Tu	28	Exam 1			Su	22					
We	29				Mo	23					
M A R C H	Th	1	Anxiety Disorders			Tu	24	Psychopathy			
	Fr	2				We	25				
	Sa	3				Th	26	Schizophrenia			
	Su	4				Fr	27				
	Mo	5				Sa	28				
	Tu	6	Anxiety Disorders			Su	29				
	We	7				Mo	30				
	Th	8	Anxiety Disorders			Tu	1	Schizophrenia			
	Fr	9				We	2				
	Sa	10				Th	3	Schizophrenia			
	Su	11				Fr	4				
	Mo	12				Sa	5				
	Tu	13	Anxiety Disorders			Su	6				
	We	14				Mo	7				
Th	15	Somatoform Disorders			Tu	8	Schizophrenia				
Fr	16				We	9	Quiz 4 expires 10 PM				
Sa	17				Th	10	Wrap-Up				
Su	18				Fr	11					
Mo	19				Sa	12					
Tu	20	Dissociative Disorders			Su	13	Reading Period				
We	21	Quiz 2 expires at 10 PM			Mo	14					
Th	22	Dissociative Disorders			Tu	15					
Fr	23				We	16					
Sa	24	SPRING BREAK			Th	17	Exam 3 (2 - 4 PM)				