



## Department of Psychology

### Current Issues in Psychopathology

#### Psychology 431 (LEC 20) – SPRING 2006

##### COURSE OUTLINE

**Instructor:** Dr. Assen Alladin; Clinical Psychologist  
Foothills Medical Centre

**Phone:** 944-1340

**Email:** Assen.Alladin@CalgaryHealthRegion.ca      **Office Hrs:** After class  
(or by appointment)

**Lecture Day/Time:** Mondays & Weds 5:00-7:45 PM      **Location:** SS12

**Dates:** May 15 – June 30, 2006

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##### **Textbook:**

Halgin, R. P. (2007). Taking Sides: Clashing Views in Abnormal Psychology (Fourth Edition). McGraw Hill Contemporary Learning Series Contemporary Learning Series.

##### **Course Description:**

Discussion of current developments and controversies in the assessment, etiology and treatment of psychopathologies. Emphasis will be on teaching students how to strengthen their critical thinking skills using controversial issues in the fields of abnormal and clinical psychology as a basis for discussion and debate.

##### **University of Calgary Curriculum Objectives**

This course addresses the following curriculum objectives set forth by the University of Calgary: (1) developing skills in the analysis of current problems in clinical psychology, (2) assessment and interpretation of often conflicting evidence on controversial issues in abnormal psychology, (3) ability to effectively assimilate and organize information from multiple sources such as primary and secondary data sources, and (4) strengthening skills in oral and written reports.

##### **Evaluation:**

1. 35% of your mark will be based on a mid-term exam scheduled during class time. The 1-hour exam will consist of 60 multiple-choice questions based on materials covered.
2. 30% of your mark is based on a class presentation/debate and paper. A team of 2-4 students will debate another team of 2-4 students on a contentious issue in abnormal or clinical psychology. Detailed information on the debate format, expectations, and grading is provided in the attached document. A position paper must be submitted at the time of the presentation.
3. 35% of your mark is based on a final 1-hour exam scheduled by the Registrar during the final examination period. The exam will consist of 60 multiple-choice questions from the class presentations, lectures, and readings. The final exam will cover materials from the midterm exam on.

Grades for the mid-term, presentation, and final examination will be computed as a percentage and then combined as a weighted overall average for the course. Final percentage grades will

be rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage (i.e., 89.5% will be rounded up to 90%; 89.4% will be rounded down to 89%, etc.).

Mark	Grade	Mark	Grade
96 – 100	A+	67 – 71	C+
90 – 94	A	63 – 66	C
85 – 89	A-	59 – 62	C-
80 – 84	B+	54 – 58	D+
76 – 79	B	50 – 53	D
72 – 75	B-	< 50	F

Written assignments may be handed in class. Late assignments may be handed in at the Psychology Office, A275 (after hours, the green box outside this office). Late assignments will be assessed a penalty of 10% per day. Electronic submission of assignments is accepted.

**Spring 2006**  
(May 15 to June 30)  
MW - (Monday, Wednesday)

DATE	TOPIC	CHAPTER
May 15	Introduction: Content and Structure of the Course Does Attention Deficit Disorder Exist?	Part 1, Issue 5
May 17	Last day for registration and changes of registration. Is Ritalin Over Prescribed?	Part 2, Issue 10
May 24	Is Psychological Debriefing a Harmful Intervention for Survivors of Trauma?	Part 1, Issue 2
May 29	Demonstration of Dissociation and Hypnotic Phenomena Is Multiple Personality Disorder a Valid Diagnosis?	Part 1, Issue 4
May 31	Are Blocked and Recovered Memories Valid Phenomena?	Part 1, Issue 3
June 5	Debate 1: Should Individuals with Anorexia Nervosa Have the Right to Refuse Life-Sustaining Treatment?	Part 1, Issue 1
June 7	Midterm Exam (Multiple Choice, 1 hour) Debate 2: Are Prozac and Similar Antidepressants Safe and Effective?	Part 2, Issue 8
June 12	Debate 3: Should Psychologists Prescribe Medication?	Part 2, Issue 11
June 14	Debate 4: Is Electroconvulsive Therapy Ethical?	Part 2, Issue 12
June 19	Debate 6: Is Sexual Orientation Conversion Therapy Ethical?	Part 3, Issue 13
June 21	Debate 5: Is Divorce Always Detrimental to Children?	Part 3, Issue 16
June 26	Last day to allocate Bonus Credits to Spring Session courses Debate 7: Should Mental Health Professionals Serve as Gatekeepers for Physician-Assisted Suicide?	Part 3, Issue 18
June 28	Spring Session Lectures End. Last day to withdraw from Spring Session courses. Revision	
June 28-30	Spring Session Final Exams	

## Psych 431 Debates

**Rationale:** Presentations at 400-level psychology courses are common. Although most students are apprehensive about speaking in front of their peers, the experience can be invaluable in preparing you for future oral reports, whether for graduate school, medical school, law school or the business world. The material in Psychology 431 lends itself perfectly to a debate-style presentation format. You will notice the textbook is organized in a pro/con format. For every topic, there is compelling evidence on both sides of the issue. There is no right or wrong answer to each issue, so there will be no winner or loser to the debates. Rather, the debates provide the opportunity to review evidence in detail (i.e., sort out opinion/myth from fact), promote discussion and critical evaluation of the issue.

**Format:** A team of 2-3 students will debate another team of 2-3 students on a contentious issue in abnormal or clinical psychology. Fifteen minutes is allotted to each team member for presentation and 5 to 10 minutes for each team's rebuttal (each team select a member for rebuttal). The order of speakers will be (1) Yes Side – main presentation, 2) No Side – main presentation, 3) Yes Side – rebuttal, 4) No Side – rebuttal. Your main presentation can follow any style you think would work for the topic. The majority of students use PowerPoint slides; you can also use overheads. You don't need to provide an exhaustive background on the topic except how it pertains to your side of the issue. The debates are intended to be enjoyable, so feel free to use cartoons, video clips, class demonstrations, or other ice-breakers. However, try not to let your presentation get too casual—these are still scientific discussions.

In previous classes, the back and forth discussion during the rebuttal often became quite "spirited." Although I encourage this, it creates the frequent problem of going over time. Therefore, I will ask each side to limit their rebuttal comments to two major points. That is, choose two major points the other side presented and attempt to dispute them with your evidence or arguments. The debate will conclude with questions from the class.

**Paper:** An 8 to 10 page (double spaced) position paper must be submitted at the time of the presentation. The paper gives you the opportunity to expand on your presentation points in greater detail. Please note that it's not sufficient to use the argument that the "research is flawed" to support your side. All research is flawed in some way. Provide specific criticisms of why research on the topic is flawed, and how this affects the credibility of the evidence. Whenever possible, look at the preponderance of evidence (e.g., results from meta-analyses) and not just one or two studies that have findings supporting your position.

The paper should be double spaced, in APA format and have at least 5 to 10 references. Please review primary source material (original articles) in addition to secondary sources. Use headings to structure the text please! You can use tables or point form to summarize arguments or specific evidence, however the bulk of the paper should be written in complete sentences like a regular term paper.

**Choosing a topic:** For the debate, I have pre-selected a sample of issues from the textbook. These topics I feel are the most interesting and controversial in the field of abnormal/clinical psychology. New findings are appearing on these issues literally every day. Each team is assigned a debate topic. List of team members and selected topics for debate will be handed out at the beginning of the course. The selection of each team was based on alphabetical order (of each student's last name). Once you have identified your group, I suggest the team get together and start the reading and preparation for the debate.

**Group work:** Ninety percent of the teams from previous classes reported no problems working together in preparing for the presentations. Inevitably, at least one team per class experiences

problems within their group. The most common complaint I hear is that one person in the group is not doing his or her share. A few suggestions to prevent this from happening are:

1. Divide the work up logically with clear expectations on length and quality.
2. Set deadlines in advance of the presentation date to review the material within your group. For example, if you are each writing a section of the paper, have it ready at least one week before the due date to review, edit, and condense the material to everyone's satisfaction.
3. Have open discussions on how the work is going on and who in the group should be doing more or less. Electing a team leader is not a bad idea provided the individual delegates work equally and is not expecting to do everything himself or herself.
4. Please be mindful of individual strengths and weaknesses. Some students are naturally better writers, while others are better at public speaking. Divide up the work according to the strengths of your group members.

If you are experiencing problems within your group and can not resolve them internally please talk to me before the presentation date. We can probably work out a solution. Please do not wait until after the presentation is done and the paper is submitted to tell me about the problem. At that point there is little I can do grade-wise.

**Grading:** Your overall grade will be based of quality of the presentation, soundness of arguments, and use of supporting material. The total 30 marks for the debate breaks down as follows:

- 15 marks for the paper (writing, organization, consistent use of APA style)
- 15 marks for the quality of presentation (e.g., use of A/V aids, organization, clarity of speech, flow of the presentation, rebuttal comments) and soundness of arguments (use of empirical evidence vs. opinions, use of material outside of textbook chapter, soundness of rebuttal points).

### **Reappraisal of Grades**

A student who feels that a piece of graded term work (term paper, essay, test, etc.) has been unfairly graded, may have the work re-graded as follows. The student shall discuss the work with the instructor within fifteen days of being notified about the mark or of the item's return to the class. If not satisfied, the student shall immediately take the matter to the Head of the department offering the course, who will arrange for a reassessment of the work within the next fifteen days. The reappraisal of term work may cause the grade to be raised, lowered, or to remain the same.

If the student is not satisfied with the decision and wishes to appeal, the student shall address a letter of appeal to the Dean of the faculty offering the course within fifteen days of the unfavourable decision. In the letter, the student must clearly and fully state the decision being appealed, the grounds for appeal, and the remedies being sought, along with any special circumstances that warrant an appeal of the reappraisal. The student should include as much written documentation as possible.

### **Plagiarism and Other Academic Misconduct**

Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge and requires that the contribution of others be acknowledged. Consequently, plagiarism or cheating on any assignment is regarded as an extremely serious academic offence. Plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Students should examine sections of the University Calendar that present a Statement of Intellectual honesty and definitions and penalties associated with Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct.

### **Academic Accommodation**

*It is a student's responsibility to request academic accommodation.* If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation and **have not** registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. If you are seeking academic accommodation, please notify your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the commencement of the course. Note that the lecturer must approve any tape recordings of lectures.

### **Absence From A Test**

Make-up exams are NOT an option without an official University medical excuse (see the University Calendar). You must contact the instructor before the scheduled examination or you will have forfeited any right to make up the exam. At the instructor's discretion, a make-up exam may differ significantly (in form and/or content) from a regularly scheduled exam. Except in extenuating circumstances (documented by an official University medical excuse), a makeup exam is written within two (2) weeks of the missed exam.

A completed Physician/Counselor Statement will be required to confirm absence from a test for health reasons. The student will be required to pay any cost associated with the Physician Counselor Statement.

### **Bonus Course Credits for Research Participation**

Students in most psychology courses are eligible to participate in Departmentally-approved research and earn credits toward their final grades. A maximum of two credits (2%) per course, including this course, may be applied to an individual's final grade. Information about current experiments is on the Experimetrix website at <http://experimetrix.com/uc>. The read.me link at that site provides a guide to using the system and assigning your credits. The last day to participate in research and ALLOCATE YOUR CREDITS TO YOUR COURSES is June 26, 2006.

### **Important Dates**

The last day to drop this course and **still receive a fee refund** is May 17, 2006. The last day to withdraw from this course is June 27, 2006.