

PSYC 431

Current Issues in Psychopathology

Winter 2016

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Course Description and Goals

This course will provide an overview of current and classic issues in the field of psychopathology. Examples of issues to be covered include the legitimacy of sex addiction, prescription of medical marijuana for emotional disorders, the harms of pornography, the impact of violent video games, whether gender identity disorder is a mental disorder, the use of gay conversion therapy, whether marijuana is addictive and others. The format of the course will be lectures and debate-style presentations. Students who complete the course will gain a broad understanding of the current controversial topics in psychopathology, develop critical thinking skills, and gain experience in consuming and critically evaluating psychology research literature.

Prerequisites

Psyc 312 – Experimental Design and Quantitative Methods for Psychology
Psyc 385 – Abnormal Psychology

Required Text

Halgin, R. P. (2014). *Taking sides: Clashing views in abnormal psychology* (8th edition). McGraw Hill, Iowa. The text is available for purchase at the University of Calgary bookstore. **Note:** previous editions of the text are not suitable for the course since the examined issues are different from the current edition. Any other assigned readings are available via the University of Calgary electronic library.

Evaluation

1. 25% of your mark is based on a multiple choice and short essay question mid-term exam scheduled during class time (February 23). The exam will cover all material covered in class prior to the exam date (up to, and including February 11), together with corresponding text chapters and assigned readings.
2. 45% of your mark is based on a class presentation/debate. A team of 2 people will debate another team of 2 people on a contentious issue in clinical psychology. A position paper must be submitted at the time of the presentation.
3. 30% of your mark is based on a final 2-hour exam scheduled by the Registrar during the final examination period. The exam will consist of multiple choice, short-answer, and essay questions from the text, and lectures. The exam will cover all lecture material presented by the instructor, as well as all assigned readings (text and articles) after the first midterm. Exact chapters and readings will correspond to the topics select by the debate teams on January 25.

Note: exams will be non-cumulative and closed-book (i.e., textbooks/notes/electronic devices are not permitted).

Rationale: Presentations at 400-level psychology courses are common. The experience can be invaluable in preparing you for future oral reports, whether for graduate school, professional school or work settings. Some of the material in Psychology 431 lends itself to a debate-style presentation. The textbook is organized in a pro/con format. For every topic in the text, there is compelling evidence on both sides of the issue. There is no right or wrong answer to each issue. 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 people will debate another team of 2 people on a contentious issue in abnormal or clinical psychology. 20 to 25 minutes is allotted for each team's presentation and 5 to 10 minutes for each team's 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; 5) Class discussion.

Your presentation should be delivered via PowerPoint. You do not need to provide extensive background on the topic selected 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, etc. However, it is important to keep them professional. During the Rebuttal, choose a few major points the other side presented and attempt to dispute them with your evidence or arguments. Your rebuttals should be based on logic, and opposing data, not just on opinion that is not based on evidence. During the Class discussion, questions from the class can be directed at one or both groups. At the end of each debate the class will evaluate each team on the quality of presentation, soundness of arguments, and use of supporting materials on a 10 point scale, with space for comments. These ratings will not be used for the grade assignment. Each team will be provided with the class rating averages, a summary of the comments and feedback.

Paper: A 10 to 12 page (double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman) position paper must be submitted at the time of the presentation (each team hands in ONE paper, which you have both contributed to writing). The paper gives you the opportunity to expand on your presentation points in greater detail. Please note that is 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 majority or summary of available research evidence (e.g., results from meta-analyses) and not just one or two studies that have findings supporting your position. **Note** that your paper should **expand** the detail of your presentation and not merely summarize it. The paper should be in APA format and have at least 8 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 to summarize arguments or specific evidence, however the bulk of the paper should be written in complete sentences like a regular term paper. Electronic submissions of the paper on the day of the presentation are preferred, though hard copies will also be accepted.

Choosing a topic: You may choose any of the topics from your textbook for your presentation, EXCEPT for the topics that have been chosen for lectures. New research is published on these topics on a regular basis, so do not restrict your coverage of the issue to data presented in the chapters of the textbook. Once you have your group together, come prepared with your 1st and 2nd choices for a topic (name of topic, preferred date and whether you want pro or con side). You can also choose a topic that does not appear on the list but you will need to find another team of students willing to debate the other side of

the issue. If there are too many students expressing interest in a topic, I will invite students to change topics if they do not have a strong preference. If this does not resolve the issue, the topics will be assigned by draw as needed. All topics are finalized on the date listed in the lecture schedule.

Group work: The majority of students have no problems working together in preparing for the presentations. However, occasionally a team experiences problems within their group. The most common concern 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 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 him or herself.
4. Please be mindful of individual strengths and weaknesses. Some students are better writers, while others are better at public speaking. Divide up the work according to the strengths of your group members. I do suggest, however, that both team members participate in the presentation.

If you are experiencing problems within your group and cannot resolve them internally **please talk to me well 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.

Grading for debate portion:

Your overall grade will be based on quality of the presentation, soundness of arguments, and use of supporting material. The total 45 marks for the debate breaks down as follows:

1. 25 marks for the paper (writing, organization, consistent use of APA style)
2. 10 marks for the quality of presentation (e.g., use of A/V aids, organization, clarity of speakers, flow of the presentation, rebuttal comments)
3. 10 marks for soundness of arguments (use of empirical evidence vs. opinions, use of material outside of textbook chapter).

Failing to present on the scheduled date would result in a loss of 5% of the total course mark. Papers not handed in at the time of presentation would result in a loss of 1% of the total course mark for each day late (including weekends).

Department of Psychology Grade Distribution Policy

The distribution of grades in Psychology courses (the percentage of A grades, B grades, etc.) will be similar to the distribution of grades in other courses in the Faculty of Arts. The Department monitors the grade distributions of 200-, 300-, and 400-level courses in the Faculty to ensure that the grade distributions in Psychology courses are comparable. Based on these reviews, students can expect that 1) up to 30% of grades in 200- and 300-level psychology courses will be "A" grades (A+, A, and A-), and 2) up to 40% of grades 400-level psychology courses will be "A" grades.

Department of Psychology Criteria for Letter Grades

Psychology professors use the following criteria when assigning letter grades:

A+ grade: *Exceptional Performance*. An A+ grade indicates near perfect performance on multiple choice and short answer exams. For research papers/essays/course projects/presentations, an A+ grade is awarded for exceptional work deserving of special recognition and is therefore not a common grade.

A, A- Range: *Excellent Performance*. Superior understanding of course material. Written work is very strong in terms of critical and original thinking, content, organization, and the expression of ideas, and demonstrates student's thorough knowledge of subject matter.

B Range: *Good Performance*. Above average understanding of course material. Written work shows evidence of critical thinking and attention to organization and editing but could be improved in form and/or content.

C Range: *Satisfactory Performance*. Adequate understanding of course material. Knowledge of basic concepts and terminology is demonstrated. Written work is satisfactory and meets essential requirements but could be improved significantly in form and content. Note: All prerequisites for courses offered by the Faculty of Arts must be met with a minimum grade of C-.

D range: *Marginally meets standards*. Minimal understanding of subject matter. Written work is marginally acceptable and meets basic requirements but requires substantial improvements in form and content. Student has not mastered course material at a level sufficient for advancement into more senior courses in the same or related subjects.

F grade: *Course standards not met*. Inadequate understanding of subject matter. Written work does not meet basic requirements. Student has not demonstrated knowledge of course material at a level sufficient for course credit.

Grading Scale

A+	96-100%	B+	80-84%	C+	67-71%	D+	54-58%
A	90-95%	B	76-79%	C	63-66%	D	50-53%
A-	85-89%	B-	72-75%	C-	59-62%	F	0-49%

As stated in the University Calendar, it is at the instructor's discretion to round off either upward or downward to determine a final grade when the average of term work and final examinations is between two letter grades. To determine final letter grades, final percentage grades will be rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage (e.g., 89.5% will be rounded up to 90% = A but 89.4% will be rounded down to 89% = A-).

Tentative Lecture Schedule

Date	Topic/Activity/Due Date	Readings
T Jan 12	<p>Winter term lectures begin.</p> <p>Course overview</p> <p>Discuss debate topics, format, choosing debate teams</p> <p>Introduction topic</p>	Halgin Introduction chapter

R Jan 14	Can Positive Psychology Make Us Happier?	Halgin Issue 5
T Jan 19	Can Positive Psychology Make Us Happier? (continued)	Halgin Issue 5 (continued)
R Jan 21	Do We Still Need Psychiatrists?	Halgin Issue 6
F Jan 22	Last day to drop Winter Term half-courses.	
M Jan 25	Last day to add or swap Winter Term half courses. Last day for change of registration from audit to credit or credit to audit. Final day for debate teams to announce, schedule and get approval for topics (have 2 potential topics prepared)	
T Jan 26	Do We Still Need Psychiatrists? (continued)	Halgin Issue 6 (continued)
R Jan 28	Should Gay Conversion Therapy Be Prohibited by Law?	Halgin Issue 15
T Feb 2	Should Gay Conversion Therapy Be Prohibited by Law? (continued)	Halgin Issue 15 (continued)
R Feb 4	Is Forced Treatment of Seriously Mentally Ill Individuals Justifiable?	Halgin Issue 16
T Feb 9	Guest lecture: Dr. Jonathan Stea – Addiction Centre, Alberta Health Services Are Cannabis Use Disorders Real?	Assigned readings
R Feb 11	Is Forced Treatment of Seriously Mentally Ill Individuals Justifiable? (continued)	Halgin Issue 16 (continued)
Feb 14-21	Reading Week. No lectures. University open (except Family Day).	
M Feb 15	Alberta Family Day, University closed (except Taylor Family Digital Library, Law, Medical, Gallagher and Business Libraries). No lectures.	
T Feb 23	Mid-term Exam #1 (in class)	
R Feb 25	Debate 1	Assigned readings
T Mar 1	Debate 2	Assigned readings
R Mar 3	Debate 3	Assigned readings
T Mar 8	Debate 4	Assigned readings
R Mar 10	Debate 5	Assigned readings

T Mar 15	Debate 6	Assigned readings
R Mar 17	Debate 7	Assigned readings
T Mar 22	Debate 8	Assigned readings
R Mar 24	Debate 9	Assigned readings
T Mar 29	Debate 10 (if needed) Lecture Topic TBD	Assigned readings
R Mar 31	Should psychologists prescribe medication?	Assigned readings
T Apr 5	Should psychologists prescribe medication? (continued)	Assigned readings
R Apr 7	Topic TBD based on presentation topics	Assigned readings
T Apr 12	Topic TBD based on presentation topics	Assigned readings
W Apr 13	Winter Term Lectures End. Last day to withdraw from full courses and Winter Term half courses.	
Apr 16- 27	Winter Term Final Examinations.	

Reappraisal of Grades

A student who feels that a piece of graded term work (e.g., term paper, essay, test) has been unfairly graded, may have the work re-graded as follows. The student shall discuss the work with the instructor within 15 days of being notified about the mark or of the item's return to the class; no reappraisal of term work is permitted after the 15 days. 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 15 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 15 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 offense. 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

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services ; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf.

Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than 14 days after the start of this course.

Absence From A Test/Exam

Makeup tests/exams are **NOT** an option without an official University medical excuse (see the University Calendar). A completed **Physician/Counselor Statement will be required** to confirm absence from a test/exam for health reasons; the student will be required to pay any cost associated with this Statement. Students who miss a test/exam have up to 48 hours to contact the instructor and to schedule a makeup test/exam. Students who do not schedule a makeup test/exam with the instructor within this 48-hour period forfeit the right to a makeup test/exam. At the instructor's discretion, a makeup test/exam may differ significantly (in form and/or content) from a regularly scheduled test/exam.

Travel During Exams

Consistent with University regulations, students are expected to be available to write scheduled exams at any time during the official December and April examination periods. Requests to write a make-up exam because of conflicting travel plans (e.g., flight bookings) will **NOT** be considered by the department. Students are advised to wait until the final examination schedule is posted before making any travel arrangements.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act

The FOIP legislation disallows the practice of having student's retrieve tests and assignments from a public place. Therefore, tests and assignments may be returned to students during class/lab, or during office hours, or via the Department Office (Admin 255), or will be made available only for viewing during exam review sessions scheduled by the Department. Tests and assignments will be shredded after one year. Instructors should take care to not link students' names with their grades, UCIDs, or other FOIP-sensitive information.

Evacuation Assembly Point

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

Please check this website and note the nearest assembly point for this course.

Student Organizations

Psychology students may wish to join the Psychology Undergraduate Students' Association (PSYCHS). They are located in Administration 170 and may be contacted at 403-220-5567.

Student Union VP Academic: Phone: 403-220-3911 suvpaca@ucalgary.ca

Student Union Faculty Rep.: Phone: 403-220-3913 socialscirep@su.ucalgary.ca

Student Ombudsman's Office

The Office of the Student Ombudsmen provides independent, impartial and confidential support for students who require assistance and advice in addressing issues and concerns related to their academic careers. The office can be reached at 403-220-6420 or ombuds@ucalgary.ca (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>)

Safewalk

The safewalk program provides volunteers to walk students safely to their destination anywhere on campus. This service is free and available 24 hrs/day, 365 days a year.

Call 403-220-5333.

Important Dates

The last day to drop this course with no "W" notation and **still receive a tuition fee refund** is **January 22, 2016**. Last day for registration/change of registration is **January 25, 2016**. The last day to withdraw from this course is **April 13, 2016**.