PSYC 3NO3 - Abnormal Psychology 1 (Fundamentals)

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Required Text:


General Course Content:

In this course we will survey the current knowledge about abnormal behaviour in humans, and develop an understanding about specific mental disorders within the context of human biology, development, and society. Various approaches to understanding abnormal behaviour and its treatment will be addressed.

Course Objectives:

At the end of this course, successful students will be able to define abnormality from various perspectives. They will be able to describe the diagnostic process, along with all of the difficulties inherent in diagnosis. Students will have discussed diagnostic criteria and their definitions with peers in the class, and will be able to differentiate among many diagnostic categories. They will have examined research about the experience of living with a mental illness and will have written about that experience. Successful students will understand terms that are commonly used in discussion and diagnosis of abnormal behaviour, and will use those terms correctly when writing and describing in class and on assessments.

Assessments:

Midterm (30% of final grade):

The midterm test will take place on Tuesday, May 27th. It will be based on readings, in-class lectures and discussion. You will have 2 hours to write this test. The text will be of mixed format (short answer, multiple choice, complete a chart, etc.). There will be no rescheduling or make-up tests. If you cannot write this test for a valid medical or personal reason then your final grade will be averaged out of the remaining assessment grades.
**Written Report (20% of final grade):**
Each student will prepare a 6-8 page written report on a topic approved by the instructor. A description of requirements and instructions is attached to this outline. This report will be due on June 12. Late submissions will receive a penalty of 10% per day late, starting at 8:00 pm on June 12th. Submissions received after 8:00pm on June 17th will not be graded.

**Final exam (35% of final grade):**
The final exam will be administered on June 19th. It will be based on readings and in-class lectures and discussions. Students will have 3 hours to complete the exam. The exam will be of similar format to the midterm, but of greater length. The exam will be cumulative, with approximately 25% of the exam covering material directly from the pre-midterm portion of the course and 75% of the exam covering post-midterm material, and/or overlapping or integrative material.

**Participation (5% of final grade)**
Your in-class participation will be assessed during class discussions and small-group work. Regular class attendance and sincere attempts at working interactively with your colleagues will result in a better understanding of the material, as well as credit for participation.

**Floating 10%**
Of the midterm, the written assignment and the final examination, your best grade will be worth an additional 10% of your final grade. For example, if your best grade is on the midterm, then your midterm will be worth 40% of your final grade, rather than 30%.

**Statement on Academic Dishonesty**
Students are reminded of the University’s Statement on Academic Ethics and the Senate Resolutions on Academic Dishonesty, which are found in the Senate Policy Statements distributed at registration. These documents are also available in the Senate Office. Students infringing on these resolutions will be treated in accordance with published policy. So don’t cheat, OK?
Tentative Schedule of Topics

May 6  Introductions
       Course outline and assignment
       Defining abnormality (Chapter 1)

May 8  Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on Abnormality
       (Chapters 1 and 2)

May 13 Historical and Theoretical Perspectives, continued
       (Chapter 2)

May 15 The Diagnostic Process (Chapter 4)
       Using the DSM

May 20 Psychotic Disorders (Chapters 10 & 5)

May 22 Mood Disorders (Chapters 8, 9 & 5)

May 27 Midterm

May 29 Anxiety Disorders (Chapters 6 & 7)

June 3  Somatoform and Dissociative Disorders
       (Chapters 11 & Chapter 18 on Amnesia)

June 5  Factitious Disorders

June 10 Disinhibition Disorders
       (Chapter 13 on ADHD, Chapter 14, Chapter 7 on OCD)

June 12 Substance Use Disorders (Chapter 16)
       Papers due by 8:00pm

June 17 Wrap up and review

June 19 Final Exam
PSYC 3N03   Written Report Guidelines

The Technical Stuff:

Topics are to be approved by May 15. You must write your topic down and include your name and student number when you submit it (on paper or by email).

Reports are due June 12. Late submissions will receive a penalty of 10% per day late, starting at 8pm on June 12th. Submissions received after 8pm on June 17th will not be graded. Reports are worth 20% of your final mark.

The report must be 7-8 pages long, typed, double-spaced, using a 12 point font equivalent to Times New Roman, with 1.5 inch margins all around. Marks will be deducted from reports that are too long or too short.

The Important Stuff:

In this report, you will describe the experience of a person with the disorder of your choice. You need not write in the first person, but you may if you choose. The disorder must be one that is listed in the DSM-IV or DSM-IV-TR. Please note that your textbook uses DSM-IV terminology and diagnostic categories. Use disorders from Axis I or Axis II (this encompasses all mental disorders that will be covered in this course). You must choose a specific disorder or a subcategory of a disorder, rather than a general category. For example, Schizophrenia is a category of disorders but Paranoid Schizophrenia is more specific. Dementia is general, but Dementia due to Parkinson’s Disease is specific.

In order to describe the experience of a person with a given disorder, you must understand that disorder. You will need to know the likely symptoms, age of onset, prognosis, demographics, etc. Additionally, you will need to know something about the likelihood of being treated for this disorder, what the treatment options are and if they are likely to be successful. How do others treat a person with this disorder? How does he/she get along in society? Can he/she work or go to school? Can he/she live independently. There are many other questions that you can ask yourself in order to formulate a good description. At minimum, you must include information about the following issues:

- Experience of typical symptoms (pain, psychosis, emotions, arousal, physical changes)
- Impact of symptoms on other aspects of life (sleep, relationships, comorbid mood or substance use disorders)
- Demographic trends (age of onset, gender, etc.)
- Incidence rate
- Treatment options (at least one)
- Prognosis

So long as you include all the important information, you should feel free to be creative and have fun with this assignment!