

Fall 2008

Shepherd University

Abnormal Psychology (PSYC 460)

3 credits

SYLLABUS

Section 01 CRN: 30530

Meets TR 12:25-1:40 pm, in WH 106

Professor: Dr. Anne Murtagh amurtagh@shepherd.edu Phone: (304) 876-5257

OFFICE HOURS: MWF 2:30-4 pm, Tues. 2-3:30 pm -- Other times by appt.

NOTE: *My office is in the Free School, a small brick building about 2 blocks down Princess St.*

**Textbook: *Abnormal Psychology: An Integrative Approach, 5th ed.,*
by David H. Barlow and V. Mark Durand
(Wadsworth CENGAGE Learning)**

Catalog description: A study of the classifications, dynamics, symptoms, and treatment of abnormal behavior. Prerequisite: Intro. To Psychology (PSYC 203)

SOME THOUGHTS

On higher education:

“ .. (you go to a great school not for knowledge so much as for arts and habits; for the habit of attention, for the art of expression, for the art of assuming at a moment’s notice a new intellectual posture, for the art of entering quickly into another person’s thoughts, for the habit of submitting to censure and refutation, for the art of indicating assent or dissent in graduated terms, for the habit of regarding minute points of accuracy, for the habit of working out what is possible in a given time, for taste, for discrimination, for mental courage and mental soberness. Above all you go to a great school for self-knowledge.”

William Johnson Cory

On science:

“Science is not a collection of facts, any more than opera is a collection of notes. It’s a process, a way of thinking, a method, based on a single insight – that the degree to which an idea seems true has nothing to do with whether it is true, and that the way to distinguish factual ideas from false ones is to test them by experiment.”

Timothy Ferris

From The New Yorker, 7-20-98

On mental illness:

“As for me, you must know I shouldn’t precisely have chosen madness if there had been any choice. What consoles me is that I am beginning to consider madness as an illness like any other, and that I accept it as such.”

Vincent Van Gogh, in a letter to his brother, Theo, 1889

Welcome to the study of abnormal psychology!

A few words about general expectations: As you may have heard, the expectation in college is that students will spend 3 hours on work outside of class for every hour they spend in class. That would come to **8-9 hours a week** of reading, studying, and other work **for each class you take**. College is a full-time job; while you are here put your studies at the top of your list of priorities.

Of course, there are times when you will need to spend more time on papers and other assignments for each class, and certain times in the semester are particularly busy – e.g., midterms and at the end of the semester. Careful planning and scheduling of your time is absolutely necessary. Poor planning is not a legitimate excuse for lateness.

GOALS FOR THIS COURSE:

- ❖ To gain a working knowledge of scientific methods and findings in the field of abnormal psychology.
- ❖ To increase awareness of, and sensitivity to, the commonness of psychological difficulties, and to reduce the stigma associated with them.
- ❖ To increase awareness of safe and effective treatments that are available for psychological difficulties.
- ❖ To gain skills in describing and formulating a particular case.
- ❖ To gain skills in literature research – that is, in searching for, locating, and reading empirical articles in the field of abnormal psychology.
- ❖ To gain skills in summarizing and analyzing scientific literature relating to one specific topic within the field of abnormal psychology, as well as writing a concise paper relating that summary and analysis.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

EXAMS Objective items (multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching), plus some short answer essay questions.

2 Unit exams (each covers 4 chapters)

Midterm (covers 1st half of semester)

Final (comprehensive -- covers whole semester)

Having multiple exams should encourage you to keep up with the assigned readings throughout the semester. Research shows that people learn best when they read and study a bit at a time, rather than cramming a lot of material at once.

*(Please note the dates of these exams. If you miss an exam, you **may or may not be permitted to make it up. Documentation will be required** for make-up exams, and make-up exams will consist of **essay questions**.)*

**PARTICIPATION
IN CLASS
ACTIVITIES &
DISCUSSIONS**
1/7 of grade

Much of the quality of in-class discussions and activities depends on YOU, on how well you prepare for class and what you contribute to the class. I will ask questions and invite your comments and thoughts on a regular basis. Come prepared to share your understanding of the

readings, as well as your questions and reactions.

In particular, look for examples of what we are discussing/reading about in newspaper articles, on TV programs or movies, or in your own life. Also, I will give you focus questions to the “Study on Your Own” sections of the chapter; come prepared to discuss the answers to these questions. You will earn **1 pt. for each time you participate**.

40 pts. or more = A; 23-39 = B; 6-22 = C; 5 or less = D

**RESEARCH
PAPER
1/7 of grade**

Write an 8-11 page research paper on some aspect of abnormal psychology – e.g., on some aspect of a particular difficulty, or on a certain risk factor or protective factor that has been researched. Make your topic fairly specific. Use 3 empirical articles from peer-reviewed, professional sources; “empirical articles” refers to specific reports of scientific studies that were conducted (to be sure your articles are descriptions of empirical studies, look for info. about participants, methods used, specific statistics and results, etc.). I will provide in-class training for you in how to locate appropriate articles. Ask me, or consult a reference librarian, if you are still not clear about how to do this. You will need to comb through the articles you locate that are related to your topic – some of them will be quite difficult, and others will be more readable and understandable (with some effort on your part). Naturally, if you want to write a quality paper, you need to choose articles that you can basically understand.

You will submit a **research paper proposal** on Thursday, 10/23. This proposal will be a one-page summary of your topic, with hard copies of your 3 articles attached. Choose your topic early, and be sure to allow yourself ample time to locate and copy the articles you will use so you can submit them. You will not need two copies of each article – I will return them to you promptly.

Use APA style for citations and references. I will give you a sample paper that you can use as a guide to APA style.

Be sure to have in your paper:

- 1) Cover page (follow APA style guide exactly).
- 2) Abstract: one paragraph that concisely but completely summarizes your paper.
- 3) An introductory paragraph that discusses the significance of the topic (why is this topic interesting and/or important?).
- 4) Descriptions of the 3 studies that you read about. Briefly describe the basic question that the researchers were addressing, the participants and methods, what the basic results were, and what was concluded. (about 1-1/2 pages each)
- 5) Critique of the research: discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the 3 research studies (combine your critiques of all three into one section). Most empirical articles discuss the limitations of their study; include these limitations but give it some thought and state your own views too. For example, did it seem like there were enough participants? It is generally best to have diversity in participants -- Was there a range of ages, both sexes? Were they ethnically and/or culturally diverse? Did the articles seem to be written and organized clearly? Were their conclusions warranted – i.e., well supported by what they found? I know this is not easy, but do your best. (about 2 pages)
- 6) Conclusions: discuss what we can be concluded based on this scientific evidence. (a few paragraphs)
- 7) References: using APA style, list your 3 articles. (Your paper should be based completely on these 3 articles.)

Follow the sample paper exactly, with regard to style and placement of headings, page breaks, etc. Insert a running head on the top right corner of each page – your title, or a shortened version of it. Clear, grammatical, well-organized writing (including correct spelling) is important. Should be 8-11 double-spaced pages, counting the cover page, abstract, and references, 10- or 12-point font, 1-inch margins. Be sure to staple it, and then **clip all of your articles to the paper.**

I will not accept:

- e-mailed papers
- non-stapled papers
- papers submitted without the articles you used.

When you are summarizing and analyzing these articles, BE SURE TO WRITE COMPLETELY IN YOUR OWN WORDS!

CASE STUDY
1/7 of grade

Describe someone you know well who has one of the disorders we are learning about. This is not as hard as it may sound. It can be yourself, or a friend or family member. **Disguise the identity of the person as much as possible – do not use real names (make one up); don't give your exact relationship (say "a family member" or "a co-worker"); don't disclose where they live or work (describe in a general way if it is relevant to the case description), etc.** You will need the person's **explicit** permission to write a paper about their difficulties and to discuss the case in class to some extent – that is, you need to tell them exactly what you will do with the information, making it clear that you will carefully disguise their identity, and make sure they give you permission.

Interview your individual and write a 5-7 page paper. 1-2 pages should summarize the symptoms, course, and usual treatment of this disorder. You can use the textbook and other sources, but cite your sources at the end of the paper, and **be sure to write this in your own words.** In a couple of paragraphs describe the person, their sex, ethnic and family background, present living situation, what grade in school or what type of job (if adult). Most of the paper should describe what difficulties the disorder has brought them, when the symptoms began and how they changed over time, and what types of treatment were tried and how effective they were. What has it been like for them, for their family, their friends? **DON'T FORGET to identify strengths the person has** that have helped them to cope with the difficulties (e.g., caring family and friends, intelligence, artistic or creative talents, sense of humor, etc.).

If your individual is under 18, you will need to get written permission (a short note giving permission and signed) from a parent, and attach it to your paper. If the child is young (5 or younger), it is best to observe them and interview the parent, rather than interview them.

DO NO HARM. If the individual wants to stop at any time, respect that. Be careful not to ask questions that are very personal (e.g., about a very painful event or problem, or about puberty or sexual experiences). If the person discusses these things on their own and your relationship is a close one, sometimes this is OK. But **be careful not to pry** or push the person if they are not comfortable with anything. Especially be careful with those who are vulnerable – younger than yourself, or physically, mentally, or emotionally challenged.

BE RESPECTFUL. Be careful not to disclose information about this person to others (outside of your paper and discussion of it, in which the person's identity is disguised).

I will not accept:
- e-mailed papers
- non-stapled papers

PLEASE LET ME KNOW if you are not comfortable with this or anything about our course.

Note:

FREE TUTORING! ANY COURSE! TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A FREE "PERSONAL TRAINER FOR THE MIND!"

**ACADEMIC SUPPORT CENTER IN 114 KNUTTI HALL:
www.shepherd.edu/ascweb; 876-5221; 8:00 – 4:30 am**

POLICY ON ABSENCES. Sometimes things come up over the course of the semester that interfere with class attendance. **It is not necessary to contact me** about every absence. Simply **keep them to a minimum** if you want to do well in this course. If you must miss a class, **be sure to get the notes from another student, and find out what you missed.**

I will take attendance each day. **If you come in late, be sure to let me know at the end of class**, so that I can note that you were present. Please make every effort to be on time; however, it is better to arrive late or leave early than to miss an entire class.

1 or 2 unexcused absences: OK

3 unexcused absences: 5 pts. deducted from Participation grade.

4-5 unexcused absences: 10 pts. deducted from Participation grade.

More than 5 unexcused absences is unacceptable, and will have a serious impact on your grade.

If you have an emergency that leads to *excessive absences* (more than 1 class), you will need to contact me to explain the reason. Some kind of written documentation will be required for excused absences.

POLICY ON ACADEMIC HONESTY.

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Shepherd University Academic Integrity Procedures found in the **Shepherd University Student Handbook**. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e-mail, an e-mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy.

Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the

assignment. Penalty for violation of this can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

During examinations, you must do your own work. Talking or discussion is not permitted during the examinations, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any collaborative behavior during the examinations will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

All papers should reflect your own words and thoughts, unless you indicate otherwise. Academic honesty requires that you give credit for ideas or statements that are not your own. Thus, if you are summarizing someone's ideas in your own words, you must cite the source of the ideas. It should be clear **in every statement or sentence** whether you are expressing your own thoughts, or reporting those of someone else. If you find a quote that you think will add substantially to a paper, you must use quotation marks around the quote, and give the precise source of that quote, including the author, source, and page no.

Plagiarism is taking credit for the ideas or statements of someone else, presenting it as your own work. It is becoming more common these days, as people cut and paste material from the Internet, and falsely submit it as their own writing. However, there are ways to detect this dishonesty. Plagiarism is a serious act, and it will be reported to the Dean of the College. Suspension or dismissal from the college are possible consequences. If you have any questions at all about what is OK and what is not, please ask me. For more information about college policies related to academic honesty, please see the Shepherd University Student Handbook.

Exam Makeup Policy

Students are only allowed to make up an examination if an emergency prevents them from attending class that day. ("Not feeling well" is not an adequate excuse.) Written documentation verifying the emergency must be provided. The instructor reserves the right to deny the request. Makeup exams may be given in the Academic Support Center in 106 Knutti Hall.

Shepherd Late Work Policy

Late work is not accepted unless the student can provide documentation of an emergency preventing them from submitting work on time. The instructor reserves the right to deny the request.

Accommodations for students with disabilities

Please see me to discuss any appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with Disability Support Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

Please feel free to come and talk to me (or call or e-mail) if you have any questions, concerns or comments, or if I can be of service to you in any way. You've heard that saying, "There is no such thing as a stupid question" – I believe that is true. I enjoy meeting with students one-on-one, and I hope you will not hesitate to share your thoughts with me. Let's have a great semester!