

PSYC2620UN Abnormal Behavior
Course Syllabus, Spring 2025
Columbia University
Fridays 1:10 pm – 3:40 pm

Professor:

Jeffrey Cohen, PsyD

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Office Location: 356 Schermerhorn Extension

Office Hours: TBA

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Graduate Student:

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Undergraduate Student:

Office Location:

Office Hours:

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to the study, diagnosis, and treatment of psychopathology. We will provide an overview of psychopathology as defined in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5). Significant updates in the DSM-5-TR (Text Revision) will be noted. The course is comprehensive in scope and will incorporate theoretical perspectives, scientific research, and socio-cultural issues, which inform the conceptualization and treatment of psychological problems and psychiatric disorders.

Class Format

All lectures will be held in-person. There will be no online options available for this class. The lectures will not be recorded.

Course Approach

Introductory class sessions will equip students with a foundational understanding of significant historical and contemporary issues. These include exploring definitions of abnormality, psychotherapy, and an introduction to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). In this initial phase, students will engage with the processes of clinical assessment, diagnosis, and

empirical approaches to psychopathology and psychotherapy, including cultural conceptualizations.

Subsequent lectures will delve into major categories of psychiatric disorders in detail. Classes will feature case presentations where a patient's presenting symptoms are described, and their treatment course reviewed. This approach aims to personalize the disorder and acquaint students with typical symptoms. Additionally, it will foster an appreciation for the complexities of the diagnostic process. An overview of the core symptoms, current theories, and research on etiology, progression, and treatment interventions will be provided. The Biopsychosocial Model will be used as a framework to understand etiology.

Course Readings

One primary text is required for the course: Please purchase or rent the most recent edition. It has been ordered in the Columbia Bookstore.

Hooley, J.M., Butcher, J.N, Nock, M.K, Mineka, S.M. (2021). *Abnormal Psychology, 18th Edition*. Boston, MA.: Pearson Education, Inc.

Note: The publisher has released hard copies for rental only. Digital e-versions may be purchased from the publisher or other retailers.

Additional readings will be posted on the CANVAS website from the following sources:

Craske, M. G., Treanor, M., Conway, C. C., Zbozinek, T., & Vervliet, B. (2014). Maximizing exposure therapy: An inhibitory learning approach. *Behaviour research and therapy*, 58, 10-23.

Cohen, J. M., Feinstein, B. A., & Fox, K. (2022). The promise of digital mental health for LGBTQ+ youths. *Psychiatric services*, 73(9), 1069-1072.

Course Requirements

Attendance

Given the in-person format of this course, both attendance and timeliness are highly recommended. Students are expected to attend all classes punctually unless there is a significant conflict. If you anticipate being unable to consistently attend classes in person this semester, I suggest considering taking the course in a future semester. My aim is to create an environment conducive to in-person learning for everyone.

Participation

We recognize that many individuals may be drawn to the material in this course due to their own experiences. While your experiences can certainly add depth to the material covered, and I appreciate this, we must be mindful of what other students may be going through. Therefore, I ask that you refrain from disclosing your personal lived experiences or those of others in your life during class discussions. This course is focused on the academic study of psychopathology; as such, it is important to engage from a scholarly perspective. Our discussions will concentrate

on research and scholarly works, rather than anecdotal evidence. Class participation should reflect this focus.

It is expected that all students will participate in a collegial and mindful manner. This involves focusing your attention on classroom activities, actively listening to the lecture and your fellow classmates, and responding in a non-judgmental manner. Students are also expected to participate one-mindfully, meaning they should concentrate solely on the class discussion content without distractions like texting or browsing social media. Participation should be effective as well, in a way that fosters learning and contributes positively to the class environment.

Examinations

Students will complete one midterm and one final examination. The final exam is cumulative. If a student is unable to take an exam due to illness or emergency, Professor Cohen must be notified prior to the exam. Documentation, such as from a Dean or Medical Provider, certifying the legitimacy of the absence must be provided as soon as possible. A make-up exam may be taken only under these conditions. A zero grade for the missed exam will be calculated in the final average without such documentation. Under no circumstances can an exam be taken early. We cannot offer make up exams due to vacation plans.

Link to the [projected final exam schedule](#)

Article Reviews / Reaction Papers

To better understand the fields of clinical psychology and psychiatry, students are required to submit two brief reaction papers (e.g., 500 words each) on scholarly articles. These articles are posted on Canvas. Further details of this assignment will be discussed in class.

Please utilize the Columbia Writing Center:

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center>

Final averages will be calculated as follows:

- Midterm (40%)
- Final Exam (40%)
- Reaction Paper 1 (10%)
- Reaction Paper 2 (10%)

Managing Assignments

Throughout the semester, students may face several assignment deadlines and exams within the same week. This volume of work can be stressful. In fairness to all students, having multiple exams and/or papers is generally not considered an appropriate reason for a make-up. Make-ups are allowed only under extraordinary circumstances. Please plan accordingly for these more demanding weeks.

Students should not feel obligated to disclose personal information to Professor Cohen or the Teaching Assistants. If you have a private, personal situation that interferes with your ability to take an exam, you may discuss the details with your Dean or visit the Counseling Center. Office

staff will assess your situation and communicate with Professor Cohen if accommodations are deemed appropriate.

Wellness Statement

It is important for all of us to be mindful of the challenges and stressors in our lives, whether they are personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. I urge you to prioritize your health and wellness. Incorporating sleep, exercise, and healthy eating into your daily routine can be an effective way to cope with stress. Various resources are available to support you in different aspects of your life, and I encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please refer to the following sites:

<https://universitylife.columbia.edu/student-resources>

<https://universitylife.columbia.edu/student-resources-directory#health>

<https://health.columbia.edu/content/counseling-and-psychological-services>

Course Support /Extra Help

I am available for extra help during office hours. Please do not hesitate to ask for assistance if you are experiencing difficulty with the course material. I thoroughly enjoy discussing life at Columbia and/or future career interests with students. Feel free to contact me for any advice, guidance, or support you may need.

We are privileged to have two Teaching Assistants (TAs) assigned to the course. They will be available for individual tutoring during their office hours. If you wish to meet with a TA, please email them in advance to confirm an appointment. Our TAs will also facilitate a review session before exams. I encourage you to take advantage of their support throughout the semester.

Emails

Professor Cohen manages an extremely large volume of daily emails and may not be able to respond immediately. If you have a question about the course, please email one of your TAs first. If your TA is unable to answer your question, they will forward it to me. In a class of this size, I'm unable to respond to all emails as promptly as I would like, and I don't want you to wait for my response.

DISCUSSION TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

January 24

Chapter 1: Abnormal Psychology: Overview and Research Approaches, pages 1 – 31
(all sections in chapter 1)

January 31

Chapter 3: Causal Factors and Viewpoints
pages 53 – 59

Intro - > Perspectives to Understanding the Causes of Abnormal Behavior
pages 74 – 80

The Behavioral Perspective - > The Impact of the Cognitive Behavioral Perspective

Chapter 16: Psychological Treatment, pages 549 – 563

Intro -> An Overview of Treatment -> Evaluating Cognitive Behavioral Therapies

February 7

Chapter 4: Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis, pages 96 - 121

(all sections in chapter 4)

February 14

Chapter 6: Panic, Anxiety, Obsessions, and Their Disorders, 161 -190

Jeni -> The Fear and Anxiety Response Patterns -> Medications

Note: We will be reading all sections in Chapter 6, but the content will be spread across two class meetings.

February 21

Reaction Paper 1 Due

Craske, M. G., Treanor, M., Conway, C. C., Zbozinek, T., & Vervliet, B. (2014). Maximizing exposure therapy: An inhibitory learning approach. *Behaviour research and therapy*, 58, 10-23.

Chapter 6: Panic, Anxiety, Obsessions, and Their Disorders, 190 - 207

Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders -> Summary

February 28

March 7

Chapter 7: Mood Disorders, pages 208 – 246

A Successful “Total Failure” -> Psychotherapy -> Conclusions

March 14

Midterm Exam

March 21

No Class

March 28

Chapter 8: Personality Disorders and Borderline Personality Disorder
Personality Disorders, pages 327 – 334
Intro -> Difficulties in Studying the Causes of Personality Disorders
pages 344 – 348, Borderline Personality, entire section on this disorder

April 4

Professor Cohen is at the [Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#) conference
Class with TAs
Reaction Paper 2 Due

April 11

Chapter 5: Stress and Physical and Mental Health; Adjustment Disorder and PTSD
pages 143 – 157
Stress and Mental Health -> Adjustment Disorder -> PTSD -> Treatment for Stress Disorders

April 18

Substance Use Disorders
Pages 371 – 375
Intro -> The Prevalence... -> DSM Criteria
Pages 383 -> 390
Treatment of Alcohol Disorders -> Substance Use Disorder -> Opium
Pages 383 – 407
Stimulants -> Sedatives -> Hallucinogens -> Gambling Disorder -> Summary

Psychotic Disorders
Pages 440 – 449
Intro –> Other Psychotic Disorders –> Brief Psychotic Disorder

April 25

Chapter 7: Eating Disorders, pages 290 - 314
Intro – Clinical Aspects of Eating Disorders -> Treatment of Binge Eating Disorder

Cohen, J. M., Feinstein, B. A., & Fox, K. (2022). The promise of digital mental health for LGBTQ+ youths. *Psychiatric services*, 73(9), 1069-1072.

May 2

Chapter 15: Disorders of Childhood and Adolescence, pages 521 – 539
Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorder -> ADHD
Q & A with Prof Cohen about mental health careers and graduate school

Final Exam:

Link to the [projected final exam schedule](#)

Academic Dishonesty

As members of the academic community at Columbia University, we are expected to maintain the highest level of personal and academic integrity as outlined in this excerpt the Columbia University Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity: “Each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.... The exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited. In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others’ ideas in all of your research papers and projects... [and] you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.”

Plagiarism – whether intentional or inadvertent – is a serious violation of academic integrity, and will thus not be tolerated. You are required to submit exclusively original work that you wrote, composed, or ideated on your own. If you are uncertain or have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, I encourage you to read the information provided on Columbia’s website about the various forms of plagiarism and ways to avoid it.

I am obligated to report any incident of plagiarism to the appropriate channels at the university, which may result in significant penalties that may impact your academic career at Columbia. If you feel overwhelmed, confused, or that you are likely to resort to plagiarism, please talk to me. It is better to inform me beforehand so that we can problem solve rather than deal with such a serious offense the behavior has occurred.

College/University Support Services

Academic Accommodations

If you are registered with Office of Disability Services (Columbia) or the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources (CARDS), please follow their guidance as to course procedures. If you are not registered and feel that these services could be helpful, do not hesitate to contact either office for additional information.

Barnard CARDS: <https://barnard.edu/disability-services>

Columbia ODS: <https://www.health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services>

Barnard College

<http://barnard.edu/primarycare>

<https://barnard.edu/furman-counseling/about-counseling>

Columbia University

<https://www.health.columbia.edu/>