



Syllabus

PSYCUN3623: Topics in Clinical Psychology Spring 2026

Bulletin Description

A seminar course for students exploring different areas of clinical psychology. This course will provide students with an understanding of topics of current importance in clinical psychology, clinical case formulation and evidence-based treatments of choice for some of the psychological disorders that are the leading causes of disability worldwide.

Brief Course Description

This course offers a survey of the essential issues of debate as well as features of clinical assessment and intervention. We will explore the principles underlying specific evidence-based interventions and their application in the treatment of specific psychological disorders. We will be focusing only on the cutting edge, tested and proven interventions used to address some of the most disabling mental illnesses that contribute to non-fatal health loss globally.

Full Course Description

This course is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of topics of interest in clinical psychology. This course will focus first on topics of current interest such as pros and cons of classification schemes and supporting evidence. This will be followed by discussions on transdiagnostic factors and current research on their validity. Finally, some time-limited, empirically validated interventions including Behavioral Activation (BA), Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT), Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT) will be dealt with in some depth. The defining elements of each intervention will be presented by describing the framework for its delivery. The framework can be divided into the theory supporting each treatment, and the targets and techniques of each treatment. Students will be introduced to manualized treatments delivered by trained professionals. Next, we will examine case vignettes and treatment sessions to gain a better understanding of the application of the specific therapies. Finally, original research articles that have provided evidence for these interventions will be

discussed. Class meetings will consist mainly of facilitated discussions and student-led presentations on the theoretical concepts applied, the cognitions, emotions and behaviors targeted, and what the therapist says or does in the treatment. Students are expected to read and comment on papers, participate actively in class discussions and presentations, and complete written assignments.

Course Objectives

There are two overarching goals of the course. First, to develop a comprehensive overview of the research in psychotherapy and of its underlying theories. Second, given a realistic mental illness scenario, to effectively apply, both theoretically and practically, the knowledge that students acquire in this course. The discussions and the short assignments that students will complete are intended to facilitate this process.

Upon completion of this course, students will have

1. gained an understanding of arguments supporting a dimensional view of psychopathology.
2. acquired knowledge of factors common across various psychological disorders
3. developed an understanding of theories and concepts associated with interventions.
4. acquired knowledge of evidence-based intervention techniques in the practice of clinical psychology
5. become familiar with current empirical support for each intervention.
6. gained an understanding of various factors contributing to the success of the psychotherapeutic process
7. had the opportunity to apply course material to realistic mental illness scenarios

Course Evaluation

Course grades are based on the following five components, weighted as noted.

(I) Reading and Discussion (10%):

Beginning from week 2, each week, all students are responsible for reading the assigned material and are expected to actively participate in the discussion. Each student's level of involvement will be assessed and constitute this component of the final grade.

Students are expected to read each assigned reading prior to each class meeting. Every week, each student must submit at least 1 post to the Discussion Board on Canvas. Postings relevant to each session's reading are due no later than **10 pm on the day before the topic is covered in class**. Postings not submitted by the deadline will result in point deductions. Discussion leaders will then use these postings for their presentations, so it is essential that submissions be made in time.

For each reading, you can submit in total of a maximum of 2 posts to the Discussion Board on Canvas. Your discussion posts should reflect thoughtful analysis and consideration of the research and theories presented in the readings, stimulating further discussion. They should not be limited to content-based questions, the answers to which will be found in a particular section of the reading (e.g., “What are the various therapeutic tasks used in EFT?”). At the same time, they should not be overly vague (e.g., “Can IPT be used to address PTSD?”). A good discussion post should be analytic, insightful, and critical. It should stimulate further discussion. You might reflect on a connection between the current reading and a previous one, or an experience you’ve had: “I see a similarity between this treatment method and _____ in their targets, but what are the differences?” The discussion leader for that topic, will not post in the discussion board, and instead, present their questions and comments in class.

Your participation will be evaluated on the quality of your contributions to the discussion on Canvas [1 point for submitting posts, 1-2 points for response quality (maximum 3 points), and 1 negative point for each missing post. Points possible each week = 3; For 13 sessions = **39 points**]. **Your total points out of 39 will contribute to 10% of your final grade.**

Possible points for the discussion in class are based on the following criteria:

- The student demonstrates knowledge and understanding of reading assignments
- The student provides new insight building on the reading assignments
- The student is an active listener, who addresses and integrates comments from classmates
- The student’s comments are relevant and not tangential or ambiguous
- The student is courteous and respectful of classmates during class discussions

(II) Discussion Leaders (30%):

For every topic, one student will serve as the lead discussant. Students serving as lead discussants are responsible for leading the discussion of the assigned reading each session. The function of the discussant leader is to prepare, **in advance**, 10-12 discussion questions pertaining to the topic scheduled. These questions should be typed and posted on Canvas or emailed to all seminar participants by **Tuesday for Thursday’s class** as they will be used to direct our group discussion. Lead discussants are free to structure their questions as they wish (perhaps questioning theories, hypotheses, methods, results, broader meanings of the readings, etc.). The discussant will also incorporate the questions and issues raised by other participants into the discussion either after or during the discussion of the 10 questions prepared by the discussant leader. Topics will be assigned to students randomly and will be announced during our first meeting.

The leaders will be required to present a summary and critique of the assigned reading (framework) to the class and lead the discussion. The discussion should focus on helping your

classmates gain insight into the experiences of the clinical psychologist and patient, and difficulties encountered in research and treatment. When relevant, discussion leaders should plan to take class members through experiential exercises (e.g., role-playing, personality inventories, etc.).

Each presentation must be accompanied by PowerPoint slides. presentation of the class discussion should be turned in ***two days before the class presentation***. Presentations turned in late will result in point deductions. The Discussion Leader grading rubric is available on Canvas.

You may select the day you would like to be a Discussant Leader by clicking on the link below.

<https://tinyurl.com/SP25-Discussion-Leaders>

III) Class Participation (20%)

Class participation is worth a total of 10% of your final grade. Participation in class will be scored as follows: 1 point for only attending class, 2 points for attendance plus minimal participation (e.g., 1 comment), and 3 points for full participation (3 points per class, for 14 sessions = 42 points total). Point totals will be converted to percentages and will then be factored into your final grade.

IV) Article Presentations (20%):

Each student will prepare and make a presentation of the empirical article relevant to the topic of the week and listed in the weekly schedule. These presentations serve two functions. First, they are a means of exposing the class to research beyond the articles that all of us read. Second, they are a means of learning an important skill -- how to present an empirical paper in a limited amount of time. *In 20 minutes*, you will *summarize* the (a) theory and hypotheses, (b) method, (c) results, and (d) broader relevance of an article. Making appropriate use of visual media, covering only what needs to be covered, and presenting clearly what you have to say in no more than 20 minutes (the typical time allotted at a conference) are essential components of an effective academic presentation. The presentation will be followed by a Q&A session with the audience and the instructor. Your grade (maximum 20 points) will depend on the quality of your presentation and your competence in answering the article-based questions posed to you (10 points for slides, 10 for a well-rehearsed and competent presentation, 10 for answering questions). All presentations must be accompanied by PowerPoint slides and should be turned in ***by noon on the following Friday***.

Presentations dates have been decided as follows. The table with the names of students will be provided as soon as all students make their choices regarding when they would like to be a Discussant.

S. No.	Date	Presenter will be
2	1/29	None
3	2/5	Discussion Leader 10
4	2/12	Discussion Leader 11
5	2/19	Discussion Leader 12
6	2/26	Discussion Leader 13
7	3/5	Discussion Leader 1
8	3/12	Discussion Leader 2
	3/19	NO CLASS SPRING BREAK
9	3/26	Discussion Leader 3
10	4/2	Discussion Leader 4
11	4/9	Discussion Leader 5 & 6
12	4/16	Discussion Leader 7
13	4/23	Discussion Leader 8
14	4/30	Discussion Leader 9

(V) Literature Review Paper (20%)

Each student is to choose one specific therapy and provide a written review of the theoretical framework of a treatment as well as the scientific literature that supports the intervention for a specific condition. Some example topics are CBT for schizophrenia, EFT for marital discord, IPT for suicidal ideation, CBT for psychotic disorders or DBT for anxiety. The purpose of the paper is to evaluate the current state of research and demonstrate your knowledge of scholarly debates around a topic. You can get ideas for your presentation from

<https://div12.org/treatments/>

These papers and presentations will primarily consist of the following components:

- 1) Summary of the disorder the treatment of which is being described (3 points)
- 2) Details of the theory and principles underlying the treatment. (3 points)
- 3) Description of the treatment targets in the context of the specific population. Describe any treatment modifications and adaptations specific to the population or condition. (2 points)
- 4) An outline of the existing empirical evidence supporting the intervention of your choice. All citations must be from recent research journal publications only. Include studies comparing your chosen intervention with other psychological or psychopharmacological treatments (Randomized Control Trials). (5 points)
- 5) Identification of gaps in the research. Identify gaps in the research and provide ideas on how these gaps might be filled (e.g. future directions). (2 points)

You may choose any of the interventions discussed in this class or any that are not discussed. Prior approval by me of your topic is necessary. Therefore, please email me in advance before you settle on an intervention.

Papers should include: (a) a title page; (b) an abstract page; (c) the body, including the components described above (d) references. At least 10 scholarly works (peer-reviewed journal articles or chapters) must be cited. The paper should be written in APA style (7th edition), and it should not exceed *25 double-spaced pages* (including the title page, abstract page, and reference pages). Papers are due by the last day of class (May 1st). The formatting of the paper in APA style carries 3 points.

The topic for your paper is due by session 6 (3/6). An outline for the paper is due by session 9 (4/3) and is worth 2 points. The final paper is due on 5/2 and is worth 15 points (Scoring criteria will be provided on Canvas. The paper is worth 20 points, accounting for 20% of your grade for this class.

Grading Scale:

97-100= A+	80-83= B-
94-96= A	77-79= C+
90-93= A-	74-76= C
87-89= B+	70-73= C-
84-86= B	60-69= D

Class Policies

Academic Integrity

As members of this academic community, we are expected to maintain the highest level of personal and academic integrity. Consider this excerpt from the Columbia University Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity: “[E]ach 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.” More information about Columbia University

Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity can be found here

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity>

Plagiarism

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. Here is the link to a relevant webpage on plagiarism: <https://www.cc-seas.columbia.edu/integrity/dishonesty>

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 we can try and remediate the issue, whatever it might be, than to deal with such a serious offense after the fact.

Attendance

Given the seminar style of this course, class participation, and thus attendance, is mandatory. At times, unplanned absences may occur. Such absences will be excused and not affect your final grade as long as they are documented (e.g., a dean’s note). Regardless, you will be responsible for the work due in that class, including reading responses and other requirements. Please inform me of any absences as early as possible so I can plan in advance if any changes might be needed. Every student will have only one opportunity to attend class via ZOOM. You may use this opportunity when you are unwell or otherwise unable to attend class.

Late Assignments

In general, late assignments will not be accepted and graded. Under certain circumstances, you will be allowed to submit your assignment within 24 hours of the due date. Such circumstances may include a sudden or unplanned event that significantly impacts your ability to submit your assignment on time.

Students with Disabilities/Exceptionalities

Students with any disability or exceptionality that may require any accommodations are requested to contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in Lerner Hall before the start of the course to register for these accommodations. The procedures for registering with ODS can be found at <http://health.columbia.edu/services/ods> or by calling (212) 854-2388. I also ask that you speak with me on the first day of class to inform me of any required accommodations, and I would be more than happy to be of service and assistance to address them.

Typical Seminar Format:

Introductory remarks	15-20 minutes
Presentation + Discussion of assigned readings	1 hour
Article Presentation	20 minutes
Q&A	10-15 minutes

Seminar Topic Schedule

Date	Topic
Week 1	Introductions / Overview / Assignments / Introduction to Clinical Psychology
Week 2	Clinical Assessment and The Categorical Approach to Classification: DSM-5-TR; ICD-11 (2 students)
Week 3	Dimensional Approaches to Classification:
Week 4	Transdiagnostic factors (2 students)
Week 5	Behavioral Activation Therapy
Week 6	Exposure-Based Therapies
Week 7	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
	SPRING BREAK
Week 9	Cognitive Processing Therapy
Week 10	Emotion-Focused Therapy (2 students)
Week 11	Motivational Interviewing
Week 12	Dialectical Behavior Therapy (2 students)
Week 13	Acceptance Commitment Therapy (2 students)
Week 14	Short-Term Psychodynamic Therapy