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Psychology 431

Current Issues in Psychopathology

Fall 2015

**Instructor:** Guy Pelletier, Ph.D.  
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**Lecture Location:** SH 284  
**Lecture Days/Time:** R 18:00 – 20:45

**Office:** A 157  
**Office Hours:** By appointment

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**Course Description and Goals**

Discussion of current developments and controversies in the assessment, etiology and treatment of psychopathology. Emphasis will be on teaching students how to strengthen their critical thinking skills using controversial issues in the fields of abnormal and clinical psychology as a basis for discussion and debate. Course format will be lectures with a strong expectation for student involvement in class discussions. Students will be expected to engage in a formal presentation/debate for this course.

**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* (Eight edition). McGraw Hill, Iowa. The text is available for purchase at the U of C bookstore.

**Attendance**

Exam content will be based on the assigned readings from the textbook, and on any topic covered during lectures; this includes class presentations by students. This is a very compressed course; it is unlikely that students will be able to do well in this course if they miss lectures. Changes in the syllabus are *probable* at the discretion of the instructor, due to the fact that the schedule may get adjusted after students sign up for their debates. If students miss classes being up-to-date on new deadlines and/or material is entirely their responsibility. Lecture slides will be posted on D2L before or after each lecture, depending on what is possible.

## Evaluation

Students are expected to attend class regularly and to participate in classroom activities, including the debates presented by classmates. There will be two **non-cumulative** mid-term exams and one take-home exam in the course. All exams will consist of short essay questions from the text, class presentations and lectures.

1. 50% of the final mark will be based on **two mid-term exams** scheduled during class time. Each mid-term will count for 25% of the final mark.
2. 40% of the final mark is based on a class **presentation/debate (20%)** and **position paper (20%)**. A team of 2-3 people will debate another team of 2-3 people on a contentious issue in clinical psychology. A position paper must be submitted **at the time of the presentation**.
3. 10% of your mark is based on a **take-home exam**. The take home exam will be handed out on the last day of class, on **Thursday December 3**. It will be due a week later **on Thursday Dec 10 by 4:30 PM**. Students will lose 10% of the exam mark for every day late, including weekends.
4. No iPods, iPads, computers, books or notes during tests

Position papers are subject to similar rules. Late papers must be turned in to the Psychology main office, 255 Administration Building and receive a date stamp. Late papers will be subjected to a 10% penalty per day, including weekends. E-mailed papers or assignments slipped under office doors or left on desks will **NOT** be accepted. Students will be asked to e-mail position papers for the purpose of marking only. A position paper is not considered handed in until the instructor receives a hard copy.

### 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.

In this course there will be no rounding up of final grades, especially in light of the opportunities students have to increase their final grade via research participation.

**Tentative Lecture Schedule**

Date	Topic/Activity/Readings/Due Date
T Sep 8	Lecture begins.
R Sep 10	<b>Course overview; discussion of debate teams and debate format.</b> <i>Are mental disorders categorically different from ‘normal’ behavior</i> Reading: Halgin introductory chapter
R Sep 17	<i>Is Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) a real disorder?</i> Reading: Halgin Issue #1 <i>Should Obesity be included in eating disorders?</i>
F Sep 18	Last day to drop full courses (Multi-term) and Fall Term half courses. No refunds for full courses (Multi-term) or Fall Term half courses after this date.
M Sep 21	Last day to add or swap full courses (Multi-term) and Fall Term half courses. Last day for change of registration from audit to credit or credit to audit.
R Sep 24	<b>Final day for debate teams announce and get approval for topics (come prepared with two topics)</b> <i>Should Psychologists prescribe medication?</i> Reading: Halgin Issue #5

	<b><i>Should empirically supported therapies (ESTs) be the only forms of psychotherapy to be taught and used?</i></b>
F Sep 25	Fee payment deadline for Fall Term full and half courses.
R Oct 1	<b>Final decisions on debate topics – topics assigned</b> <b><i>Is gender identity a mental illness?</i></b> <b>Reading: Halgin Issue #3</b>
R Oct 8	<b>Mid Term exam #1</b> <b><i>Is addiction a brain disease?</i></b> <b>Reading: Halgin issue #8</b>
M Oct 12	Thanksgiving Day, University closed (except Taylor Family Digital Library, Law, Medical, Gallagher and Business Libraries). No lectures.
R Oct 15	<b>Debate #1</b> <b>Debate #2</b>
R Oct 22	<b>Debate #3</b> <b>Debate #4</b>
R Oct 29	<b>Debate #5</b> <b>Debate #6</b>
R Nov 5	<b>Mid-term exam #2</b> <b>Lecture: <i>Can suicide be rational?</i></b>
Nov 11-15	Reading Days. No lectures.
W Nov 11	Remembrance Day (Observed). University Closed (except Taylor Family Digital Library, Law, Medical, Gallagher and Business Libraries). No lectures.
R Nov 12	Reading Days. No lectures.
R Nov 19	<b>Debate #7</b> <b>Debate #8</b>
R Nov 26	<b>Debate #9</b> <b>Debate #10 (if needed)</b> <b>Take-home exam handed out after the last debate</b>
T Dec 1	
R Dec 3	Instructor's lectures (topics to be announced) <b>Take-home exam handed out</b>
T Dec 8	Fall Term Lectures End. Last day to withdraw with permission from Fall Term half courses.
Dec 11-22	Fall Term Exam Period.

### **Psych 431 Debates and Position Paper**

**Rationale:** Presentations at 400-level psychology courses is common. The experience can be invaluable in preparing you for future oral reports, whether for graduate school, medical school, law school or the business world. The material in Psych 431 lends itself to a debate-style presentation. You will notice the textbook is organized in a pro/con format. For every topic, there is compelling evidence on both sides of the issue. There is no right or wrong answer to each issue, so there will be no winner or loser to the debates. Rather, the debates provide the opportunity to review evidence in detail (i.e. sort out opinion/myth from fact), and 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. Twenty 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. Your main presentation can follow any style you think would work for the topic. The majority of students use PowerPoint slides; you can also use overheads. You don't need to provide an exhaustive background on the topic 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, or other ice-breakers. However, please keep in mind that those are scientific presentations and you cannot let 'support' or 'fun' materials (audiovisuals, cartoons) dominate your presentation. Video clips, especially, are best used as support material as opposed to a 'fun' break. Excessively casual presentations will result in a loss of marks.

Please submit your PowerPoint presentations and position papers by e-mail by **no later than 9 p.m. two days prior to your debate** so that the notes can be posted on D2L for your classmates to follow. Grade penalties may be assigned for late submissions.

In previous classes, the back and forth discussion during the rebuttal often become quite 'spirited.' Although I encourage this, it creates the frequent problem of going over time. Therefore, I will ask each side to limit their rebuttal comments to two major points. That is, choose two major points the other side presented and attempt to dispute them with your evidence or arguments. The debate will conclude with questions from the class.

**Position Paper: A 10 to 12 page maximum** (double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman) position paper must be submitted as part of the presentation materials. **The paper is due electronically two (2) days before your class debate, and a hard copy of the paper is due in class before your debate.** The paper gives you the opportunity to expand on your presentation points in greater detail. Please note that it 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 preponderance of evidence (e.g. results from meta-analyses) and not just one or two studies that have findings supporting your position.

The paper should be double spaced, in APA format and have at least 10 references (this is a strict minimum; 10 references is unlikely to be enough to support a topic). The maximum of 10 – 12 pages excludes the title page and references. Please review primary source material (original articles) in addition to secondary sources. Use headings to structure the text please! You can use tables, or point form to summarize arguments or specific evidence, however, the bulk of the paper should be written in complete sentences like a regular term paper. An electronic copy of the paper should also be submitted as mentioned above. I will post the paper on the course D2L page for other students in the class to download. The purpose of this is to provide the rest of the class with notes from which to study for the final. It also allows you to focus on listening to your classmate's presentations rather than frantically taking notes.

**Choosing a Topic:** Topics must be chosen from the textbook or from an additional list presented by the instructor. The only topics excluded are those covered in lectures by the instructor. The topics covered by the textbook include many interesting and controversial areas in the field of abnormal/clinical psychology. New findings are appearing on many of these issues on a regular basis. Once you have formed a group, decide on ideas of topics that your group is interested in and provide me with your 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choices for topic (name of the topic and who will be on the pro and con sides) **by September 24**. If there are too many students expressing interest in a topic, I will alert the class and invite students to offer 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. **The process must be completed by October 1 at the latest.** The day when each issue will be debated will be chosen by a draw on September 29.

**Group work:** The majority of students have few 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 is not doing their share. A few suggestions to prevent this from happening are:

1. Divide the work up logically with clear expectations on length and quality. Label who was responsible for what sections of the paper.

2. Set deadlines in advance of the presentation date to review the material within your group. For example, if you are 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 themselves.
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.

If you are experiencing problems within your group and cannot resolve them internally, please talk to me BEFORE the presentation date. We can probably work out a solution. Please do not wait until after the presentation is done and the paper submitted to tell me about the problem. At that point, there is little I can do grade-wise.

**Grading:** Your overall grade will be based on quality of the presentation, soundness of arguments, and use of supporting material. The total 40 marks for the debate break down as follows:

-20 marks for the paper (writing, organization, consistent use of APA style)

-10 marks for the quality of the presentation (e.g. use of A/V aids, organization, clarity of speakers, flow of presentation, rebuttal comments)

-10 marks for soundness of arguments (use of empirical evidence vs. opinions, use of material outside of textbook chapter).

### **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**

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. 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. Except in extenuating circumstances (documented by an official University medical excuse), a makeup test/exam must be written within 2 weeks of the missed test/exam during exam make-up hours provided by the department <http://psychology.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate/exam-and-course-information#mues>. If a student cannot make write their final exam on the date assigned by the Registrar's Office, they need to apply for a deferred exam [http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred\\_final](http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred_final). Under no circumstances will this be accommodated by the department.

### **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. If a student cannot make write their final exam on the date assigned by the Registrar's Office, they need to apply for a deferred exam [http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred\\_final](http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred_final). Under no circumstances will this be accommodated by the department.

### **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](mailto:suvpaca@ucalgary.ca)

**Student Union Faculty Rep.:** Phone: 403-220-3913 [socialscirep@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto: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](mailto:ombuds@ucalgary.ca) (<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>).

### **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 **September 18, 2015**. Last day for registration/change of registration is **September 21, 2015**. The last day to withdraw from this course is **December 8, 2015**.