

## **Psychology 461: Special Topics: Anxiety and Mood Disorders**

Instructor: William E. Breen, MA  
Office: David King Hall 1034B  
Office Hours: Wednesday 6-7pm, Thursday 3-4pm  
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Class Day: Thursday  
Class Time: 4:30-7:10pm  
Class Place: Innovation 133  
Phone: 703-993-4195 x3

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### **Course Description:**

This Special Topics course is designed to offer an advanced undergraduate study of the etiology, pathogenesis, and symptomatology of anxiety and mood related disorders. The course will emphasize a scientific/empirical approach to studying adult psychopathology and will focus on specific conditions such as social anxiety, PTSD, and depression. Students will be exposed to contemporary clinical research and relevant psychological issues. Typically, class meetings will consist of lectures designed to provide an overview of the topic for that class followed by a period of class discussion. Topics to be covered will include diagnosis and classification, epidemiology, and course of specific disorders as well as factors related to the etiology, pathogenesis, and maintenance of the disorders. Class discussion of the readings and relevant issues is strongly encouraged. Throughout the course, treatment issues will be discussed briefly but will not be the core focus of this course.

### **Course Goals:**

Specific goals for the course include the following:

1. Gain exposure to contemporary empirical articles in psychology
2. Be familiar with current concepts and issues related to anxiety and mood conditions
3. Develop an understanding of dominant theoretical models related to these conditions

### **Required readings:**

The required readings consist of journal articles to be read before each class. It is important that you complete the required readings prior to attending class in order to fully participate and follow class discussions. This course is designed to build off previous knowledge acquired in PSYC 325 Abnormal Psychology. Some of the readings and lectures may be difficult for individuals who do not have any previous background in core psychology courses. Please feel free to see me and discuss any concerns you may have related to this matter. When you are reading for each class, please do not get discouraged if you do not grasp all of the information presented in each article. My suggestion would be to focus on the main points of each article and digest the important findings. Come to class with any questions you may have after completing the readings. All readings will be available via a website specific to this class.

**Note on the DSM:** You may find it helpful to purchase and read the relevant sections from the APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fourth edition (DSM-IV). This book is not required for the course but I encourage you to consider making the purchase. Here is the reference:

American Psychiatric Association (2000). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Fourth Edition-Text Revised)*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.

**Course Requirements and Grades:**

- A. Take Home Exams.** There will be two take home exams required during this course. Each take home exam will cover half of the material in the course. The exams will not be cumulative although some ability to integrate material may be required. The take home exams will be constructed in essay format and will consist of writing 3-4 essays of approximately 1-2 pages (per essay) in length. You will be able to refer to your notes and readings to answer the essays but will not be allowed to consult, discuss, or share information with other students in the class. The exam will consist of one required question and the opportunity to choose among additional questions. Each exam will constitute 20% of your final grade (for a total of 40%).
- B. Term Paper.** You will be required to conduct a literature review and write a paper on a topic that is of interest to you and that is related to the course. Ideally, the paper topic will address an area in psychopathology that is of interest to you and about which you would like to learn more. In order to aid in the process, I require that you submit a brief description of your paper topic (two or three sentences) to me by June 14, 2006. Please understand that due to the abbreviated nature of the summer course the process of writing a term paper will move slightly faster than during a full semester schedule. The paper topic must be approved by me prior to turning in the term paper. In addition, the paper will adhere to all APA publication guidelines. We will discuss this more in class and I am available to talk about questions related to the paper during office hours as well. The paper will constitute 30% of your final grade.
- C. Presentation.** In addition to writing a term paper, you will be required to give a brief presentation to the class on your topic. Each presentation will be approximately 15 minutes long. There are several purposes for requiring student presentations. First, presentations provide students with practical experience in sharing information with colleagues and co-workers. Second, other members of the class may benefit from exposure to additional topics of interest that may not be covered formally in class. In addition, this exercise provides students with the opportunity to receive a grade on something other than written essays and papers. The presentation will constitute 10% of your final grade.
- D. Class Participation.** Students are expected to attend class each week and to arrive on time. Please make every effort to be on time as late arrivals tend to disrupt the flow of classroom lectures and discussions. Students are also expected to arrive to class prepared. Class preparation includes completing required readings and handing in at least two questions related to the readings at the beginning of class. Students are also strongly encouraged to engage in discussions and ask questions as part of their grade. Participation will constitute 20% of your final grade.
- E. Research Credit.** In addition, there is the opportunity to receive additional credit by participating in research in the GMU Department of Psychology. Students are encouraged to participate in research and will receive ONE point towards their final grade for every ONE hour of research credit (up to FIVE total points/credits).

PSYC 461 Syllabus  
William E. Breen  
Summer 2006

**Important Dates:**

Last day to ADD class – September 9th  
Last day to DROP class – September 29<sup>th</sup>

**Students with Special Concerns**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

**Statement of Academic Integrity**

In accordance with University guidelines, I am required to take action against students who engage in cheating, misrepresentation, or other dishonest practices. All take home exams are to be completed independently and any form of consulting, sharing, talking/discussing with other members of the class regarding take home assignments will be considered a breach in the GMU Code of Conduct. Penalties for students found guilty of academic dishonesty will be determined on a case by case basis in accordance with university guidelines. Please feel free to contact me if additional clarification is required.

**Schedule of Class Topics and Readings**

**August 31<sup>st</sup>**                      **First Day of Class**  
   **Introduction and Syllabus**

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**NOTE: This syllabus has been edited to conform with the GMU Department of Psychology request that syllabi do not exceed FOUR pages. The exact readings for each week will be available immediately to students via a website created for the specific use of individuals enrolled in PSYC 461.**