

**PSYCHOLOGY 325: Abnormal Psychology  
SUMMER 2006**

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**Day: Tuesday and Thursday**  
**Time: 7:20-10:00 PM**  
**Location: Robinson Hall B224**

**Text:**

Comer, R. J. *Fundamentals of Abnormal Psychology* Fourth Edition (paperback)

**Supplemental Readings:**

- Gleaves, D. H. (1994). On "The reality of repressed memories." *American Psychologist*, 49(5), 440-441.
- Livesley, W.J., Schroeder, M.L., Jackson, D.N., & Lang, K.L. (1994). Categorical distinctions in the study of personality disorder: Implications for classification. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 103, 6-17.
- Loftus, E. F. (1993). The reality of repressed memories. *American Psychologist*, 48(5), 518-537.
- Stice, E., Schupak-Neuberg, E., Shaw, H. E. & Stein, R. I. (1994). Relation of media exposure to eating disorder symptomatology: An examination of mediating mechanisms. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 203(4), 836-840.
- Tucker, G. J. (1998). Putting DSM-IV in perspective. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 155(2), 159-161.

\*More readings may be assigned during the semester.

**Course Description and Objectives**

Welcome to abnormal psychology! The goal of this course is to present and introduce an overview of abnormal psychology. During the course of the semester, you will be exposed to concepts of abnormality, theoretical orientations, phenomenology, epidemiology, and treatment. We will also explore the portrayal of mental illness in the media and in popular culture.

**Course Expectations**

Attendance and Participation – Due to the interactive nature of the course, participation is necessary. Attendance will be taken each class and in order to earn the participation part of your grade, you must attend lecture. Throughout the course of the semester, we will encounter controversial topics in abnormal psychology. In order to present both sides of these issues, we will sometimes have in class debates. Participation in these debates will be part of your participation grade. The more students participate, the more interesting and dynamic class discussion will be, I promise. Additionally, failure to attend class often results in poor performance on exams.

Assigned Reading – You are expected to complete reading assignments before class each week. The majority of readings will come from the text. Supplemental readings will be journal articles that can be found online through the GMU database. These readings are meant to spark discussion and will often be related to controversial issues in abnormal psychology.

Exams – There will be three equally weighted exams during the semester. The third exam will be given during the assigned final slot on July 27. Your lowest exam grade will be dropped, however if you miss an exam, that exam will count as a zero and be your lowest grade. No make-ups will be given unless under extreme circumstances. In such cases, documentation must be given to

me and you must see me in person to discuss the situation. Exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. Exams will not take the entire class period so be prepared for lecture on the first two exam days.

Writing Assignment – There will be one short writing assignment on a topic of your choice. The purpose of this assignment is for you to gain greater understanding of a particular topic in abnormal psychology and to improve your research and writing skills. You will be required to base your research on scholarly journal articles and to use a *minimum* of 4 sources. Papers must be 4-6 pages in length, typed and double-spaced, **must be written in APA style**, and must include a bibliography. You must have your topic approved by me by **June 22**. Papers will be due on **July 18**. My policy on late papers is as follows: Papers turned in after class ends on November 22 will be considered late. For each day your paper is late, up to 4 days, I will subtract 10 points from your grade. If your paper is more than 4 days late, I will subtract 50 points up until a week late. Papers will not be accepted more than a week late. I will go over grading criteria in more detail in class as well as what makes an acceptable topic.

Presentation - We will be covering a wide array of mental disorders during the course of the semester. For most disorders, we will only skim the surface. In order to gain a better understanding of the disorders we study and to examine how mental illness is portrayed in the media, each student must choose ONE of the following two assignments. You must make a decision by **June 15**.

1. Group Presentation: Analysis of a Biography, Literary Work or Popular Movie  
In groups of 4-5, you will choose a biography, literary work or popular movie that includes a portrayal of mental illness and critically analyze it. As a group you must select two potential topics and turn them into me by **June 15**. This will ensure that no two groups present on the same topic. You may e-mail me your topics or hand them in during class. I will then assign presentation dates according to your topic and the lecture topic. Presentations should be 15-20 minutes in length and should be accompanied by a 5-6 page paper, due the day of your presentation. Each group will hand in one paper. Details of this assignment will be distributed separately as well as a list of possible topics.

2. Personal Experience Presentation

If you choose this option, you will present to the class a personal experience relevant to abnormal psychology. The purpose of this assignment is to illustrate how common mental illness is and how many of us have either personal experiences with it or are close to those who have. Possible topics include, "How I recovered from an eating disorder," "How I overcame a drinking or drug problem", or "My sister's struggle with depression." Each presentation will be 15-20 minutes in length and will include your personal experience as well as a short summary of current scientific understanding of your topic. If you are willing, we will also include a short question and answer segment. You will hand in an outline of your presentation. If you decide to do this option, you must submit a one paragraph proposal to me by **June 15** briefly describing what you would like to present. I will then assign you a presentation date according to your topic and the lecture topic.

**An important note:** You should not volunteer for this kind of presentation unless you have resolved the issues involved. It is very hard to present these kinds of experiences to a large group of classmates. Please think carefully before volunteering. If at any point before the presentation, you change your mind and decide not to go forward, you may do an individual activity instead. Details will be distributed if necessary.

Extra Credit - You may earn up to 10 extra credit points for participating in a psychology or related discipline research project if you are willing to provide me with a write-up regarding your participation. The write-up should be 2-5 paragraphs in length and should include the hypothesis of the research project and a brief statement of what your participation entailed. You can locate studies through the Experimentrix web page on the GMU website ([www.experimentrix.com/gmu](http://www.experimentrix.com/gmu)).

## **Grading**

Your grade will break down as follows:

Exams – 50% (25% each)

Paper – 20%

Presentation – 20%

Participation – 10%

Grades will be assigned as follows: 93-100 = A; 90-92 = A-; 87-89 = B+; 83-86 = B; 80-82 = B-; 77-79 = C+; 73-76 = C; 70-72=C-; 65-69 = D; below 65 = F.

If a student's grade is borderline, improvement over the course and active participation will likely result in the higher grade.

## **Class Format**

Class will be mostly lecture. However, class discussion and participation are integral pieces of the course and are expected. Discussion will be based on assigned readings and other relevant topics. Because the class meets twice a week for 2 hours and 40 minutes, I will do my best to break up each class with discussion, video clips, and other in-class activities. There will be a 15 minute break each class. I will present lectures via PowerPoint slides and will cover material from the readings as well as material not found in the text.

## **Honor Code**

The Honor Code of George Mason University deals specifically with cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. Students should be familiar with the code and connected policies, set out at <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies>. This course will be conducted in accordance with those policies.

## **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

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.

### Tentative Schedule\*

| Date                                                | Topic                                             | Reading/Assignment                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 6/6                                                 | Introduction<br>History of Abnormal<br>Psychology |                                                   |
| 6/8                                                 | Models of Abnormality                             | Chapters 1 & 2                                    |
| 6/13<br><b>LAST DAY TO ADD<br/>CLASSES JUNE 14</b>  | Clinical Assessment,<br>Diagnosis and Treatment   | Chapter 3<br>Tucker, 1998                         |
| 6/15                                                | Anxiety Disorders                                 | Chapter 4<br><b>Presentation Proposals Due</b>    |
| 6/20<br><b>LAST DAY TO DROP<br/>CLASSES JUNE 21</b> | Somatoform and Dissociative<br>Disorders          | Chapter 6<br><b>EXAM 1</b>                        |
| 6/22                                                | Mood Disorders                                    | Chapter 7<br><b>Paper Topics Due</b>              |
| 6/27                                                | Personality Disorders                             | Livesly et al., 1994<br>Chapter 13                |
| 6/29                                                | NO CLASS                                          |                                                   |
| 7/4                                                 | NO CLASS<br>4 <sup>th</sup> OF JULY               |                                                   |
| 7/6                                                 | Schizophrenia                                     | Chapter 12                                        |
| 7/11                                                | Eating Disorders                                  | Stice, et al., 1994<br>Chapter 9<br><b>EXAM 2</b> |
| 7/13                                                | Substance-Related Disorders<br>Suicide            | Chapter 10<br>Chapter 8                           |
| 7/18                                                | Child and Adolescent<br>Disorders                 | Chapter 14<br><b>Papers Due</b>                   |
| 7/20                                                | Trauma and PTSD                                   | Loftus, 1993<br>Gleaves, 1994<br>136-148; 156-161 |
| 7/25                                                | Sexual Disorders and Gender<br>Identity Disorder  | Chapter 11                                        |
| 7/27                                                |                                                   | <b>EXAM 3</b>                                     |

\*Schedule subject to change