Psychology 461: Special Topics: Anxiety and Mood Disorders

Instructor: William E. Breen, MA    Class Day: Monday & Wednesday
Office: Robinson B211     Class Time: 7:20pm-10:00p m
Office Hours: Wednesday 6-7pm     Class Place: Innovation 207
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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. 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. In addition, class discussion of the readings and relevant issues will be 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:


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 25% of your final grade (for a total of 50%).

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 if 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 prior to the beginning of class. In addition, students are encouraged to ask questions and engage in class discussions as part of their participation grade. Participation will constitute 10% 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 faculty research and will receive ONE point towards their final grade for every ONE hour of research credit up to FIVE total points/credits.

Important Dates:
Last day to Add Class - June 14th
Last day to Drop Class - June 21st

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.

**Tentative Schedule of Class Topics and Readings**

Please note that this is a tentative schedule and is subject to change throughout the semester. All changes will be announced in class.

**June 5th**  
First Day of Class  
Introduction and Syllabus

**June 7th**  
Intro to Psychopathology


**June 12th**  
General Information on Anxiety  
Generalized Anxiety Disorder


**June 14th**  
Panic Disorder & Agoraphobia  
(Paper Topic Due)


**June 19th**  
Social Anxiety Disorder I


**June 21st**  
Social Anxiety Disorder II

June 26th  PTSD I


June 28th  PTSD II-Resiliency

(Hand out Mid Term Take Home Exam)


July 3rd  No Class - Holiday - Fourth of July

Enjoy the break!

July 5th  Specific Phobias & Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

(Mid Term Take Home Due)


July 10th  Mood Disorders I


**July 12th**  
**Mood Disorders II**  
(Research Paper Due)


**July 17th**  
**Mindfulness, Acceptance, and Alternative Approaches to Psychopathology**  
Hand out Take Home Final


**July 24th**  
**Presentations**  
No readings

**July 26th**  
**Exam Day**  
Take Home Final Due by 12 PM