



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

**Department of Psychology**  
**Psychology 431 (L01)– Current Issues in Psychopathology**  
**Fall 2008**

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<b>Instructor:</b>	<b>Shervin Vakili, Ph.D.</b>	<b>Lecture</b>	<b>A253</b>
<b>Phone:</b>	403-944-2002	<b>Location:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	Shervin.vakili@calgaryhealthregion.ca	<b>Lecture</b>	M 17:00-19:50
<b>Office Hours:</b>	After Class or by appointment	<b>Days/Time:</b>	

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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.

### **Required Text**

Halgin, R. P. (2008). Taking sides: Clashing views in abnormal psychology (fifth edition). MacGraw Hill, Iowa. The text is available for purchase at the U of C bookstore.

### **University of Calgary Curriculum Objectives**

This course addresses the following curriculum objectives set forth by the University of Calgary: (1) developing skills in the analysis of problems in clinical psychology, (2) assessment and interpretation of often conflicting evidence on controversies in the field of abnormal psychology, (3) ability to effectively assimilate and organize information from multiple sources such as primary and secondary data sources, and (4) strengthening skills in oral and written reports.

### **Attendance:**

Exam content will be based on the assigned readings from the textbook, and on any topic covered during lecture, this includes class presentations by your peers. It is unlikely that students will be able to do well in this course if they miss the lecture component. Changes in the syllabus are possible at the discretion of the instructor, and if you miss classes being up-to-date on new deadlines and/or material is entirely your responsibility.

If you must be absent, please arrange to get notes from other classmates. Lecture notes will be posted on the blackboard AFTER each lecture. Students are allowed to audio-tape record my lectures for this course.

### **Evaluation**

Grades for the mid-term, presentation, and final examination will be computed as a percentage and then combined as a weighted overall average for the course. 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. The FINAL grade will be rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage (i.e., 89.5% will be rounded up to 90%; 89.4% will be rounded down to 89%).

1. 30% of your mark will be based on a mid-term exam scheduled during class time. The exam will consist of short answer, essay, and multiple choice questions.
2. 35% of your mark is based on a class presentation/debate. A team of 2 people will debate another team of 2 people on a contentious issue in abnormal or clinical psychology. Detailed information on the debate format and expectations is provided in the attached document.  
A position paper must be submitted at the time of the presentation. Late papers will result in a loss of 10% on the overall debate grade.
3. 35% of your mark is based on a final 2-hour exam scheduled by the Registrar during the final examination period. The exam will consist of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions from the class presentations and lectures.

### 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%

### Lecture Schedule

Date	Topics	Readings
Sept. 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Course Overview,</li> <li>Discussion of Debate topics and format &amp; choosing debate teams</li> <li>Should Psychologists Prescribe Medication?</li> </ul>	Issue 11 (Halgin)
Sept. 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Debate teams announce and get approval for debate topics (come prepared with 2)</li> <li>Are projective assessment techniques valid for assessing personality?</li> </ul>	Lilienfeld, S. O., Wood, J. M., & Garb, H. N. (2001, May). What's wrong with this picture? <i>Scientific American</i> , 81-86.
Sept. 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are psychological disorders real? What is abnormal behaviour?</li> <li>Should Individuals with Anorexia have the right to refuse life-sustaining treatment?</li> </ul>	Class readings Issue 1 (Halgin)
Sept. 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are blocked and recovered memories valid?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>* Debate 1 *</b></p>	Issue 4 (Halgin)
Oct. 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is alcoholism a disease?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>* Debate 2 *</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issue 7 (Halgin)</li> <li>Chapter 1: Why Addiction is Not a Disease. In Peele (1989). <i>Diseasing of America; Addiction treatment out of control.</i> (pp.1-29). Lexington Books, Toronto</li> <li>Leshner, A. (1997). Addiction Is a Brain Disease, and It Matters. <i>Science</i>, 278, 45-47.</li> </ul>
Oct. 13	<b>Thanksgiving – No Classes!</b>	
Oct. 20	<b>* Midterm Exam *</b>	

Oct. 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is Electroconvulsive Therapy Ethical?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>* Debate 3 *</b></p>	Issue 12 (Halgin)
Nov. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are Prozac &amp; Similar Antidepressants Safe &amp; Effective?</li> </ul>	Class Readings
Nov. 10	<b>Reading Days Nov 8-11, no lectures</b>	
Nov. 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is Ritalin overprescribed?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>* Debate 5 *</b></p>	Issue 10 (Halgin)
Nov. 24	<p><b>* Debate 6 *</b></p> <p><b>* Debate 7 *</b></p>	
Dec. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is pornography harmful?</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>* Debate 8 *</b></p>	Class readings
Dec. 8 - 17	<b>Final Exams, scheduled by registrar</b>	

### 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. 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 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

Make-up exams are NOT an option without an official University medical excuse (see the University Calendar). You must contact the instructor before the scheduled examination or you

will have forfeited any right to make up the exam. At the instructor's discretion, a make-up exam may differ significantly (in form and/or content) from a regularly scheduled exam. Except in extenuating circumstances (documented by an official University medical excuse), a makeup exam is written within two (2) weeks of the missed exam. A completed Physician/Counselor Statement will be required to confirm absence from a test for health reasons. The student will be required to pay any cost associated with the Physician Counselor Statement. Note: Make-up exams will be different from regularly scheduled exams.

### **Course Credits for Research Participation**

Students in most psychology courses are eligible to participate in Departmentally approved research and earn credits toward their final grades. A maximum of two credits (2%) per course, including this course, may be applied to the student's final grade. Students earn 0.5% (0.5 credits) for each full 30 minutes of participation. The demand for timeslots may exceed the supply in a given term. Thus, students are not guaranteed that there will be enough studies available to them to meet their credit requirements. Students should seek studies early in the term and should frequently check for open timeslots. Students can create an account and participate in Departmentally approved research studies at <http://ucalgary.sona-systems.com>. The last day to participate in studies and to assign or reassign earned credits to courses is **December 4, 2008**.

### **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 220-5567.

**Student Union VP Academic:** Phone: 220-3911 [suvpaca@ucalgary.ca](mailto:suvpaca@ucalgary.ca)  
**Student Union Faculty Rep.:** Phone: 220-3913 [socialscirep@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:socialscirep@su.ucalgary.ca)

### **Important Dates**

The last day to drop this course and still receive a fee refund is **September 19, 2008**. The last day to withdraw from this course is **December 5, 2008**.

## Psych 431 Debates

**Rationale:** Presentations at 400-level psychology courses are 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 Psychology 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. Rather, the debates provide the opportunity to review evidence in detail (i.e., sort out opinion/myth from fact), 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. 5) Class discussion.

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, try not to let your presentation get too casual—these are still scientific presentations. During the Class discussion, questions from the class can be directed at one or both groups. At the end of each debate the class will evaluate each team and a “winner” will be announced based on class input (this does not impact your grade).

During the Rebuttal, choose a few major points the other side presented and attempt to dispute them with your evidence or arguments. Your rebuttals should be appropriate for a 400 level university course. Avoid emotionally charged comments like “that is ridiculous”, “totally wrong”, etc. rather dispute points based on logic, and opposing data. Although they can sometimes be used effectively, beware of countering based on social or ethical norms, since they can easily be confused with personal opinions.

**Paper:** A 10 to 12 page (double spaced) position paper must be submitted at the time of the presentation (each team hands in ONE paper, which you have both contributed to writing). The paper gives you the opportunity to expand on your presentation points in greater detail. Please note that 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 8 to 10 references. Please review primary source material (original articles) in addition to secondary sources. Use headings to structure the text please! You can use tables 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. I will post the file on the course web page for other students in the class to download (the papers will be removed from the site at the end of the course). 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:** You may choose any of the topics from your textbook for your presentation, EXCEPT for the topics I have chosen for lectures. New findings are appearing on these issues literally every day. Selection of the topic is first come, first served. Once you have your group together, provide me with your 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choices for topic (name of topic and whether you want pro or con side). You can also choose a topic that does not appear on the list but you will need to find another team of students willing to debate the other side of the issue. All topics are finalized on the date listed in your lecture schedule.

**Group work:** The majority of students have no 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 in the group is not doing his or her share. A few suggestions to prevent this from happening are:

1. Divide the work up logically with clear expectations on length and quality.
2. Set deadlines in advance of the presentation date to review the material within your group. For example, if you are each 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 him or herself.
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 can not 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 is submitted to tell me about the problem. In rare instances where a group member is making little to no contribution, and the issue cannot be resolved, the person may be asked not participate in the debate and will be asked to do a different term paper on their own, on a topic which the student can choose with my approval. This paper will be due on the, during class time. **NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.** The student will receive a separate grade than the group based on this paper, minus 15%, for not having participated in the debate.

**Grading for debate portion:**

Your overall grade will be based of quality of the presentation, soundness of arguments, and use of supporting material. The total 35 marks for the debate breaks down as follows:

- 15 marks for the paper (writing, organization, consistent use of APA style)
- 10 marks for the quality of presentation (e.g., use of A/V aids, organization, clarity of speakers, flow of the presentation, rebuttal comments)
- 10 marks for soundness of arguments (use of empirical evidence vs. opinions, use of material outside of textbook chapter).