



**Department of Psychology**  
**Psychology 431 – Current Issues in Psychopathology**  
**Winter 2010 – Course Outline**

<b>Instructor:</b>	Kerry Mothersill	<b>Lecture Location:</b>	KNB 131
<b>Phone:</b>	403-955-6672	<b>Lecture Days/Time:</b>	TR 15:30 to 16:45
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:kerry.mothersill@albertahealthservices.ca">kerry.mothersill@albertahealthservices.ca</a>		
<b>Office:</b>	TBA		
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Prior/after class		

**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 and students will be expected to engage in a formal presentation/debate for this course.

**Prerequisites**

Psyc 312 – Experimental Design and Quantitative Methods for Psychology, and  
 Psyc 385 – Abnormal Psychology

**Required Text**

Halgin, R.P. (2008) Taking sides: Clashing views in abnormal psychology, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. McGraw Hill, Iowa (Available at the Bookstore). Readings will also be posted.

**Evaluation**

Students will be expected to attend all lectures and class presentations, to read the assigned materials, and to participate in classroom activities. There will be two exams: one 1.25-hour midterm exam (**March 2nd**) and a 2-hour final exam to be scheduled by the Registrar’s office during the final exam period. The exams will cover the material presented in the text, readings, lectures and class debates. They will include multiple choice and short essay questions.

Course Component	Percent of Final Grade
Midterm Exam	35%
Final Exam	35%
Class Presentation/debate and position paper	30%

**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. To determine final letter grades, final percentage grades will be rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage (e.g., 89.5% will be rounded up to 90% = A, but 89.4% will be rounded down to 89% = A-).

### Tentative Lecture Schedule

Date	Topic
T Jan 12	Introduction to Course. Is Self-Disclosure Appropriate in Therapy? Assigned Reading
R Jan 14	Are some therapies harmful? Which ones? Assigned Reading
T Jan 19	Common factors and specific therapy techniques/strategies. Which are more important? Assigned Reading.
R Jan 21	Common factors continued... Debate teams, topics and schedule are determined
F Jan 22	<i>Last day to drop a course with no W grade and tuition refund.</i>
T Jan 26	Are Cognitive Therapy methods necessary for change in CBT for depression? Assigned Reading. <i>(Last day for registration/change of registration)</i>
R Jan 28	CBT and depression continued...
T Feb 2	Is homework important in therapy? Assigned Reading
R Feb 4	Debate #1
T Feb 9	What are the most effective treatments for Panic Disorder? Assigned Reading
R Feb 11	Panic Disorder continued...
T Feb 16	Reading Days. No lectures.
R Feb 18	Reading Days. No lectures.
T Feb 23	Debate #2
R Feb 25	Prescription authority for psychologists: Pros and Cons. Chapter 11
T Mar 2	<b>Mid-Term Exam</b>
R Mar 4	Are psychological assessment results always valid? The role of validity tests.
T Mar 9	Debate #3
R Mar 11	Does adult ADD Exist? Are there measureable effects on tests of attention? Chapter 5.
T Mar 16	Does chronic pain interfere with cognitive processing?
R Mar 18	Debate #4
T Mar 23	Is divorce always harmful to children? Chapter 16
R Mar 25	Debate #5
T Mar 30	A case of suicide.
R Apr 1	Debate #6
T Apr 6	CBT for Sleep. Assigned Reading
R Apr 8	Debate #7
T Apr 13	Debate #8
R Apr 15	TBA. -Last day to participate in research and allocate research credits
F Apr 16	<i>Winter Session Lectures end. Last day to withdraw.</i>
M Apr 19 – R Apr 29	<b>Final Exam</b> (scheduled by the Registrar)

### 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, professional school or work settings. Some of the material in Psychology 431 lends itself to a debate-style presentation. The textbook is organized in a pro/con format. For every topic in the text, 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 presentation should be delivered via powerpoint. A copy of your powerpoint presentation will be posted on blackboard for your classmates to study from. You don't need to provide extensive background on the topic selected 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, etc. However, it is important to keep them professional. 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 based on logic, and opposing data, not just on opinion that is not based on evidence. 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 on the quality of presentation, soundness of arguments, and use of supporting materials on a 10 point scale, with space for comments. These ratings will not be used for the grade assignment. Each team will be provided with the class rating averages, a summary of the comments and feedback

**Paper:** A 10 to 12 page (double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman) 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 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. It will be posted on Blackboard for the other students to download and study from.

**Choosing a topic:** You may choose any of the topics from your textbook for your presentation, EXCEPT for the topics that have been chosen for lectures. New research is published on these topics on a regular basis, so don't restrict your coverage of the issue to data presented in the chapters. 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 the 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 well 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.

#### **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 30 marks for the debate breaks down as follows:

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

*Failing to present on the scheduled date would result in a loss of 5% of the total course mark.*

*Papers not handed in at the time of presentation would result in a loss of 1% of the total course mark for each day late.*

#### **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 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 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.

### **Course Credits for Research Participation (Max 2% of final grade)**

Students in most psychology courses are eligible to participate in Departmentally approved research and earn credits toward their final grades. **A maximum of two (2) 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 **April 15, 2010**.

### **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)

### **Important Dates**

The last day to drop this course with no "W" notation and **still receive a tuition fee refund** is **Jan 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010**. Last day for registration/change of registration is **Jan 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010**. The last day to withdraw from this course is **Apr 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010**.