

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Division of Social Science
Fall Semester 2026

Course Title: Abnormal Psychology

Course Code: SOSC 3900

No. of Credits: 3

Pre-/co-requisites: SOSC1960/1969/1980

Lecture Time: Tue & Thu 16:30-17:50pm (HKT)

Venue: G009B, CYT Bldg

	Lecturer	Teaching Assistant
	Dr. Nicolson Siu	Wong Ka-yee
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Consultation	By appointment	By appointment

******The format of the course will follow University guidelines. Consistent with the other SOSC Psychology courses offered, this course will **NOT** be recorded.

******When contacting us by email, please prefix the subject line of your message with the course code [SOSC3900]. Use your university email account only. Do NOT leave your messages in the Canvas inbox.

Course Description

Abnormal psychology is the scientific study of psychopathology and abnormal behavior. This course introduces theories, research methods, and the most updated research findings in the field of abnormal psychology. Students will be introduced to various types of psychological disorders, such as mood disorders, schizophrenia, personality disorders, somatoform disorders, sex-related disorders, etc. They will also learn about the diagnosis, causes, maintenance, and treatment of major psychological disorders from an integrative perspective.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a fundamental knowledge of selected theories and concepts that are of importance and interest in abnormal psychology.
2. Understand how clinical psychologists classify and diagnose various types of psychological disorders.
3. Evaluate the development and treatment of psychological disorders from an integrative perspective; AND
4. Apply the theories and concepts to daily lives and real cases of psychological disorders.

Assessment Scheme

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation.

Assessment Tasks	Alignment of ILOs	Weighting
1. Group Project Presentation	1,2,3,4	20%
2. Individual Paper	1,2,3,4	25%
3. Thought Pieces	1,2,3,4	15%
4. Mid-Term Quiz	1,2,3,4	15%
5. Final Quiz	1,2,3,4	25%

1. Group Project Presentation

Form groups of 5 to watch a feature film (assigned by the lecturer) that deals with psychopathology such as “As Good As it Gets” or “A Beautiful Mind.” You may also use a film if you believe it is appropriate. Many stereotypes/myths about mental illness get perpetuated by inaccurate media presentation. The purpose of this project is to use your knowledge of psychopathology and your critical thinking skills to evaluate and assess the movie’s representation of psychopathology.

- Evaluate the movie’s presentation of the authenticity of the disorder.
 - Did the movie accurately address the cause, maintenance, presentation, and treatment of the disorder?
 - Include any features of the movie that were exceptional, particularly interesting, or inaccurate in the presentation of the disorder.
 - Be sure to address inaccuracies or missing information.
- Prepare a **20-minute presentation of your findings.**
 - You may show important clips of the movie during your presentation

(less than 30% of the presentation time should be spent showing the movie).

- Include background information on the disorder in question to support your conclusions.
- Again, do not forget to highlight the inaccuracies
- You may also include brief information about possible treatment options for the disorder in question
- You may choose the mode of presentation. ie. ppts, handouts, ...basically whatever you think will be most useful in enhancing the learning of your classmates. Don't forget to use **APA referencing for any ppt slides and handouts.**
- Feel free to be as creative as possible – the more creative, the better.

2. Individual Paper

Write an individual paper, with a maximum of 1,000 words, examining a specific psychological disorder within the Hong Kong context. Structured around four core sections—diagnostic features, local prevalence data, relevant risk factors, and the HK treatment landscape alongside barriers to care—the paper must integrate a short, realistic case vignette throughout to illustrate how these elements manifest in practice. Conclude with key insights and recommendations for improving local prevention and early intervention. Further details will be provided in class.

3. Thought Pieces

Students are expected to write **3** separate thought pieces related the heated debate topics in abnormal psychology, with **each thought piece limited to 300 words**. Each thought piece will be based on a **discussion topic provided later in lecture**, so students should write directly in response to that specific prompt and demonstrate understanding of the major concepts covered in class. Students are encouraged to show critical thinking by going beyond simple definitions. The writing should be organized, focused, and academic in tone, using specific details rather than general statements. Overall, the goal is for students to reflect on and engage with the lecture's key ideas in a thoughtful, accurate, and meaningful way.

4. Mid-Term Quiz

The Mid-Term Quiz is designed to evaluate your understanding of core concepts, theories, and practices in abnormal psychology covered in the first half of the course. This assessment will consist of multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, and case analysis.

5. Final Quiz

The Final Quiz serves as a comprehensive assessment of your understanding and application of abnormal psychology concepts learned throughout the course. It will include a variety of question formats, including essay questions, case studies, and practical scenarios.

Final Grade Descriptors

The letter grades represent the following performance standards. These qualitative rubrics guide how student work translates to the final grade descriptors:

Grade	Performance	Elaboration on Subject Grading Description
A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates a deep understanding of the fundamental knowledge and key concepts in abnormal psychology. Familiarizes very well with the implications of the classical and contemporary findings in abnormal psychology. Exhibits exceptional critical thinking skills in evaluating the theories and concepts in abnormal psychology. Reasonably applied the concepts to real-life setting with both practicality and innovation.
B	Good Performance	Shows good understanding of the fundamental knowledge and key concepts in abnormal psychology. Familiarizes well with the implications of the classical and contemporary findings in abnormal psychology. Exhibits good critical thinking skills in evaluating the theories and concepts in abnormal psychology. Applied the concepts to real-life setting with only practicality.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Possesses adequate understanding of the fundamental knowledge and key concepts in abnormal psychology. Demonstrates satisfactory familiarity with the implications of the classical and contemporary findings in abnormal psychology, but with some misunderstandings. Shows satisfactory critical thinking skills in evaluating the theories and concepts in abnormal psychology. Applied the

		concepts to real-life setting, but with limited practicality.
D	Marginal Pass	Has very basic understanding of the fundamental knowledge and key concepts in abnormal psychology. Shows minimal familiarity with the implications of the classical and contemporary findings in abnormal psychology. Shows limited critical thinking skills in evaluating the theories and concepts in abnormal psychology. Applied the concepts to real-life setting with minimal practicality.
F	Fail	Demonstrates insufficient understanding of the fundamental knowledge and key concepts in health psychology. Lacks critical thinking skills in evaluating the theories and concepts in abnormal psychology. Unable to apply the concepts to real-life setting and with no practicality.

Course AI Policy

Students are allowed to use AI-powered tools and models for tasks such as research, brainstorming, and proofreading, provided that the final work submitted is their own. Students must disclose the use of any AI-powered tools or models in their work. This includes acknowledging the use of AI-powered assistants, such as chatbots, for research or ideation purposes.

Course Communication Platform

All lecture materials and announcements will be posted on CANVAS. Be sure to check CANVAS from time to time for any updated news.

Some Other Notes

- ***Interaction in class*** – I believe interactions (both verbal and non-verbal) between the lecturer and the students (and among students) are one of the key ingredients to an optimal learning experience. Your active participation in class discussion or activities will not only enhance your learning, but also motivate the teaching team to do better! Stay behind the class and share with me your thoughts about the course contents.

- **Lecture slides** – Lecture slides will be posted to CANVAS before each class, but the contents will be a bit different from the displayed slides as I hope to encourage you to take your own notes. Note-taking facilitates your reflection and assimilation of the lecture contents.
- **Penalties** – Score deduction applies to any assignments over the word limit. Details can be found in the assignment guidelines.
- **Late submission** – Submissions received less than 5 hours after the deadline will not be penalized. No submissions will be accepted after 5pm HKT on the due date.
- **Communication** – Please expect that your emails will be responded to during weekdays 10am to 6pm HKT.
- **Your feedback** – Your opinions about the course are very valuable to help me improve the course. Feel free to drop by to talk to me. A course evaluation will also be held at the end of the course.
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Required Texts and Materials

Kearney, C. (2023). Psychopathology and life: A dimensional approach (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism. We will investigate every suspected case of plagiarism and report the confirmed case to the Division of Social Science for further review or action. Make sure you understand academic dishonesty would result in a reduction of scores or even a failing grade in the course.

Teaching Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Submission Deadline
1.	1 Set	Introduction	
	3 Sep	Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis I	
2.	8 Sep	Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis II	
	10 Sep	Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis III	
3.	15 Sep	Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis IV	
	17 Sep	[Tutorial 1] Assignment Overview	
4.	22 Sep	Anxiety Disorder I	
	24 Sep	Anxiety Disorder II	Finalized Group List
5.	29 Sep	Stressor-Related and Obsessive Compulsive I	Thought Piece I
	1 Oct	National Day (No Class)	
6.	6 Oct	Stressor-Related and Obsessive Compulsive II	
	8 Oct	Group Project Consultation (No Class)	
7.	13 Oct	Somatic Symptom and Dissociative Disorders I	
	15 Oct	Somatic Symptom and Dissociative Disorders II	
8.	20 Oct	Mid-Term Quiz	
	22 Oct	Mood Disorders and Suicide I	Thought Piece II
9.	27 Oct	Mood Disorders and Suicide II	
	29 Oct	Schizophrenia and Other Psychotic Disorders I	
10.	3 Nov	Schizophrenia and Other Psychotic Disorders II	
	5 Nov	Eating Disorders I	
11.	10 Nov	Eating Disorders II	
	12 Nov	Personality Disorders I	Thought Piece III
12.	17 Nov	Personality Disorders II	Power-point Submission
	19 Nov	Presentation I	
13.	24 Nov	Presentation II	
	26 Nov	Presentation III	
TBC		Final Quiz	

*30 Nov – Individual Paper Submission Deadline.