

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

UG Course Syllabus

SOSC3900 Abnormal Psychology (Spring 2025)

3 Credits

Prerequisites: SOSC1960 Introduction to Psychology, SOSC1969 Discovering Mind and Behavior, OR SOSC1980 Psychology of Personal Growth

Instructor

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*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.

Lecture Time: Tue, Thu 12:00 – 13:20
Venue: R4580

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 and Grading

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.

Summary

Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Course Grade (%)	Due date
Group Presentation	20%	17, 22, 24/4/2025 13/3/2025 (consultation session)
Group PPT Slides	10%	14/4/2025
Individual Paper	20%	10/5/2025
Quiz 1	25%	18/3/2025
Quiz 2	25%	8/5/2025

Group Presentation

- Presentation: In a group of 5 students, select ONE specific psychological disorder (must be different from the ones listed in the teaching schedule) and present the disorder in the following ways:
 - Oral Presentation including the illustration of the selected psychological disorders should 1) describe the diagnostic criteria of the disorder, and 2) provide a role-play demonstrating the symptoms.
 - The PPT slides including the conceptualization of the selected psychological disorders should 1) identify the possible etiology or risk factors, and 2) suggest the major treatment approaches for that disorder. More details can be found in the separate guidelines.

Individual Paper

- Write a paper to discuss the abnormality and diagnostic issues about a psychological disorder. Critically evaluate what you have learned in this course and reflect on the issue about abnormality.
- Be insightful with your thoughts and provide relevant literature supports. More details can be found in the separate guidelines.

Quiz 1 and Quiz 2

- Two quizzes will be administered to test your understanding of course materials. They will include multiple-choice questions only and will be non-cumulative. Both quizzes cover all materials in lectures and required readings (The relevant chapters of the textbook will appear on the last page of the lecture handouts and this course outline).
- Supplementary readings are also listed in the lecture slides, but they will NOT be included in the quizzes. These readings are useful for a deeper understanding of the course contents.
- Arrive on time for the quiz as no additional time will be given for students arriving late.
- No make-up quizzes will be given to students who are absent from the quizzes unless students can provide validated medical reasons. You should notify the teaching team (through email) about your absence by attaching your official medical certificate **within 24 hours of the original quiz date** if you wish to arrange for a make-up quiz. All make-up quizzes will ONLY be in the form of essay questions.

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
Group Presentation and PPT Slides	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4	This task assesses students' ability to understand the fundamental knowledge and key concepts in abnormal psychology (ILO1), familiarize the implications of the classical and contemporary findings in health psychology (ILO2), and apply the key concepts reasonably to the real-life setting (ILO4).
Individual Paper	ILO2, ILO3, ILO4	This paper assesses students' ability to understand the fundamental knowledge and key concepts in health

		psychology (ILO1) and critically analyze the theories and key concepts in health psychology (ILO3).
Quiz 1 and 2	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3	Quizzes are designed to assess students' understanding and familiarity of the fundamental knowledge, key concepts (ILO1) and implications of the research findings in health psychology (ILO2).

Final Grade Descriptors

Grades	Short Description	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 health psychology. Exhibits exceptional critical thinking skills in evaluating the theories and concepts in health 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 health psychology. Familiarizes well with the implications of the classical and contemporary findings in health psychology. Exhibits good critical thinking skills in evaluating the theories and concepts in health 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 health psychology. Demonstrates satisfactory familiarity with the implications of the classical and contemporary findings in health psychology, but with some misunderstandings. Shows satisfactory critical thinking skills in evaluating the theories and concepts in health 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 health psychology. Shows minimal familiarity with the implications of the classical and contemporary findings in health psychology. Shows limited critical thinking skills in evaluating the theories and concepts in health 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 health psychology. Unable to apply the concepts to real-life setting and with no practicality.

Course AI Policy

Use of GenAI in project and individual paper is permitted. Students have to sign a declaration and include the prompts requested.

Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission. Feedback on assignments will include comments on strengths and areas for improvement. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

Late Submission Policy

A 5-hour grace period after the deadline is applied to all submissions. Submissions received less than 5 hours after the deadline will NOT be penalized. NO submissions will be accepted after the grace period of the due date.

Mark deduction applies to any assignments over the word limit. Details can be found in the assignment guidelines.

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.

Other Notes

Interaction in Class

I believe interactions (both verbal and non-verbal) between the teaching team and the students (and among students) are one of the key ingredients to an optimal learning experience. Your active participations in class discussions 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 slightly different from the displayed slides. I hope to encourage you to take your notes. Note-taking facilitates your reflection and assimilation of the lecture contents.

Communication

Expect that your emails will be responded to during weekdays 10 am to 6 pm HKT. Do NOT inbox your message on Canvas.

Teaching Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Required Readings Chapters
1	Feb 4	Psychopathology and Life	1
	Feb 6		
2	Feb 11	Perspectives on Psychopathology	2
	Feb 13		
3	Feb 18	Diagnosis and Study of Psychological Disorders	3
	Feb 20		
4	Feb 25	Anxiety Disorders	5
	Feb 27		
5	Mar 4	Obsessive-Compulsive and related Disorders Trauma and Stressor-related Disorders	5
	Mar 6		
6	<i>Mar 11</i>	<i>Guest Sharing</i>	
	<i>Mar 13</i>	<i>Group Project Consultation</i>	
7	<i>Mar 18</i>	Quiz 1 (from Week 1 to 4)	
	Mar 20	Feeding and Eating Disorders I	8
8	Mar 25	Depressive and Bipolar Disorders	7
	Mar 27		
9	<i>Apr 1</i>	<i>Mid-Term Break</i>	
	<i>Apr 3</i>		
9	Apr 8	Schizophrenia and Other Psychotic Disorders	12
	Apr 10		
10	Apr 15	Feeding and Eating Disorders II	8
	<i>Apr 17</i>	<i>Group Project Presentation</i>	
11	<i>Apr 22</i>		
	<i>Apr 24</i>		
12	Apr 29	Issues of Psychopathology	
	<i>May 1</i>	<i>Labor Day</i>	
13	<i>May 6</i>	<i>Individual Paper Consultation</i>	
	<i>May 8</i>	Quiz 2 (Week 5 to 10)	

Important Dates

Date	Submission
Feb 17	Finalize Group List on Canvas
Apr 14	Group PPT
Apr 29	Peer Evaluation
May 10	Individual Paper