

# The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

## UG Course Syllabus

### **SOSC3900 Abnormal Psychology (Spring 2026)**

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:** **Mon, Wed 09:00 – 10:20**

**Venue:** **4504**

#### **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.

| Assessment Task    | Contribution to Overall Course Grade (%) | Due date  |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Group Presentation | 20%                                      | 29/4, 4/5, 6/5/2026<br>11/3/2026 (consultation session) |
| Group PPT Slides   | 10%                                      | 25/4/2026   |
| Group Paper        | 15%                                      | 30/4/2026   |
| Quiz 1             | 25%                                      | 18/3/2026   |
| Quiz 2             | 30%                                      | <b>To be centralized</b>                                |

#### 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 role-playing 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.

#### Group Paper

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

#### Quizzes

- 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 | 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 abnormal psychology (ILO2), and apply the key concepts reasonably to the real-life setting (ILO4).  |
| Group Paper  | ILO2, ILO3, ILO4 | This paper assesses students' ability to understand the fundamental knowledge and key concepts in abnormal psychology (ILO1) and critically analyze the theories and key concepts in abnormal 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 abnormal 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 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**

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 Chapters |
|------|------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1    | Feb 2<br>Feb 4   | [L1] Psychopathology and Life   | 1                 |
| 2    | Feb 9<br>Feb 11  | [L2] Perspectives on Psychopathology  | 2                 |
| 3    | Feb 16<br>Feb 18 | [L3] Diagnosis and Study of Psychological Disorders<br><i>Lunar New Year</i>                  | 3                 |
| 4    | Feb 23<br>Feb 25 | [L3] Diagnosis and Study of Psychological Disorders   | 3                 |
| 5    | Mar 2<br>Mar 4   | [L4] Anxiety Disorders  | 5                 |
| 6    | Mar 9<br>Mar 11  | <b>Group Project Consultation</b>   |                   |
| 7    | Mar 16<br>Mar 18 | <b>Guest Sharing</b><br><b>Quiz 1 (from L1 to L4)</b>   |                   |
| 8    | Mar 23<br>Mar 25 | [L5] Obsessive-Compulsive and related Disorders<br>[L6] Trauma and Stressor-related Disorders | 5                 |
| 9    | Mar 30<br>Apr 1  | [L7] Depressive and Bipolar Disorders   | 7                 |
| 9    | Apr 6<br>Apr 8   | <i>Mid-Term Break</i>   |                   |
| 10   | Apr 13<br>Apr 15 | [L8] Schizophrenia and Other Psychotic Disorders  | 12                |
| 11   | Apr 20<br>Apr 22 | [L9] Feeding and Eating Disorders   | 8                 |
| 12   | Apr 27<br>Apr 29 |   |                   |
| 13   | May 4<br>May 6   | <b>Group Project Presentation</b>   |                   |

## Important Dates

| Date   | Submission                    |
|--------|-------------------------------|
| Feb 16 | Finalize Group List on Canvas |
| Apr 25 | Group PPT                     |
| Apr 30 | Group Paper                   |
| May 2  | Peer Evaluation               |