

Abnormal Psychology

Last Updated: Wed, 01/07/2026

Course prefix: PSYC

Course number: 2230

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):

31790 20841

Instructor First Name: Dianne

Instructor Last Name: Leader

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This course surveys the spectrum of psychiatric disorders (symptoms, epidemiology, etiology, and treatment) and provides a perspective on adaptive functioning and psychological resilience.

The course is designed to give you an overview of the field of Abnormal Psychology based on current perspectives and scientific research. With compassion for the human suffering involved, we will explore the diagnosis, causes, and treatment of psychological disorders, focusing on the interaction of genes, the brain, the person and the environment. The course will draw on scientific studies to understand disorders at all these levels of functioning. We will also focus on case studies that illuminate the clinical aspects of psychological disorders in the lives of everyday people, as well as the variety of current and historical treatments used to help alleviate suffering and dysfunction.

Prerequisites: General Psychology (PSYC 1101 or equivalent, which will not be waived), and familiarity with the different psychological models, learning theories, and functioning of the brain & nervous system.

Course learning outcomes:

By the end of the course, you should be able to

1. Describe the major concepts, theoretical approaches, criteria for diagnosis, and empirical findings related to psychological disorders.
2. Recognize and explain therapies for psychological disorders and identify evidence-based treatments.

3. Demonstrate familiarity with ethical issues in the clinical diagnosis and treatment of psychopathology.

Required course materials:

The digital bundle includes Comer, R. J. & Comer, J. S. (2025) Fundamentals of Psychopathology. New York:

Worth (11th edition) with Achieve, plus Gorenstein, E.E. & Comer, R.J. (2022) Case Studies in Abnormal Psychology (3rd edition). New York: Worth.

A free trial is available online, allowing you to start working right away. For continued access, you'll need to pay online before the end of the trial, using a credit card or with a code purchased from the bookstore.

Grading policy:

The traditional percentage grading scale will be used.

- A: 90 - 100%+ excellent
- B: 80 - <90% very good
- C: 70 - <80% satisfactory
- D: 60 - <70% passing
- F: under 60% failing
- A grade of C or higher is required to pass if you're taking the course Pass/Fail.
- If your grade misses the cutoff, you've missed the cutoff. All grades are final.

Graded Assignments

Tests will comprise 60% of the course grade. We'll have two midterm tests and a semi-cumulative final exam. Each test will have 50 questions and is worth 200 points. Most test questions will be multiple-choice, with a focus on applications, and will cover material from class, the textbook, videos, and assigned case studies. Each test will have up to four questions that are not multiple-choice (e.g., fill-in-the-blank, select all that apply, or short-answer).

Tests will be taken on Canvas Quizzes using Honorlock.

In-Class Assignments (ICAs) count for 10% of the course grade. We will have a variety of in-class assignments (ICAs) **on an unscheduled basis, with varying point values**, to encourage class participation and student engagement with the material and with one another. Some will be group assignments; others will be individual activities. We will use the iClicker system for in-class polling and quiz-like questions that you can respond to with your phone or laptop.

Another **10% is based on an adaptive self-quizzing** activity (**LearningCurve**) that helps you master the textbook material.

Achieve assignments account for 20% of the course grade through a variety of enrichment activities relevant to each topic. There are videos to watch (your choice) with associated quiz questions (worth 10%). A feature called Clinical Choices gives case studies and lets you simulate being the clinician interviewing, assessing, and diagnosing each patient (8%) with associated questions. There are chapter quizzes for each topic to help you prepare for test questions on the textbook material. You can take each chapter quiz twice, with the higher grade being counted (2%).

Extra Credit

You can earn up to 3% extra credit in this course: 2% from your individual effort (surveys, research studies with questions) and 1% from group effort.

See the Grading Document for details on how the grading is calculated.

Select “Syllabus” on the course navigation menu or click the button on the Home page labeled “Grading” for the Excel spreadsheet, which includes space for you to fill in the points you have earned. You can track your progress throughout the semester by downloading the document and calculating your grade as needed. (No, it doesn’t have approved formulas that do it automatically.)

Late Policy: As a general rule, work submitted late is subject to a penalty of 10% per day.

Attendance policy:

Students are expected to attend class and participate in In-Class Activities (ICAs). We will have individual assignments or group tasks at various times during class throughout the semester. The assignments will be due on that same day, encouraging you to attend class to earn ICA points. Missed In-Class Activities can only be made up with an Institute-approved absence or an official letter from the Dean of Students and must be completed within 7 days of the original in-class activity day or by prior arrangement.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity and result in consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy. Please familiarize yourself with the following sites for more detailed information.

Honor Challenge — <https://osi.gatech.edu/students/honor-code>

Office of Student Integrity — <http://www.osi.gatech.edu/index.php/>

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course helps students master course content, and supports students' broad academic and career goals.

This course directs students toward a broad orienting question: How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course enables students to meet the following learning outcomes:

Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities, and exercises in this course help students develop the following career-ready competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion