

ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY

Tuesday/Thursday | 4:00-5:50 PM | Zoom University

Prerequisite: PSYC 100: Introduction to Psychology.

Recommended preparation: Previous experience reading scientific journal articles (in any field)

why might some people feel, think, and act in ways that are different from the norm?

what does it mean for someone to be “normal,” anyway?

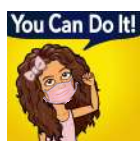
what can clinical science tell me about effectively caring and advocating for myself and those around me?

how can I use that knowledge to contribute to a kinder, healthier, more inclusive society?

If these questions (especially the last two) keep you up at night, this is the perfect section of Abnormal Psych for you. Over the course of the semester, you’ll grapple with these questions and learn the basics of science communication and advocacy—skills that will benefit you through college and beyond, regardless of your major or ultimate career path.

As an overview of the scientific study of mental illness, we will cover everything from the neuroscience behind antidepressants to the current state of the mental healthcare system, as well as the scientific methods that help clinical researchers make discoveries related to the causes and treatment of a variety of mental illnesses. (See the course calendar on the last page for a full listing of topics.) Throughout the semester, you will be highly encouraged to apply your knowledge of the material to your own lives, as well as the world around you.

INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM



Professor: Leslie Berntsen, Ph.D.

Please call me: Leslie or Dr./Prof. Berntsen (pronouns: she/her)

How do you pronounce that? Like the English words “burnt” and “sin”

Ask me about: Anything related to the class, real-world applications of psychology, becoming a psych major, getting involved in research, graduate school and other psych-based careers, being a first-generation college student

E-mail:

Office hours: Mondays, 10:00-11:00 AM and 8:00-9:00 PM, and by appointment

Make an appointment at:

Office: My living room

TA: Jackson P. Trager

Ask him about: Writing assignments, getting involved in research, the psychology of morality, religion, and politics

E-mail:

Office hours: Available on Blackboard



COURSE MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Blackboard (accessible through myUSC) is where you'll be able to find all the materials for this class: lecture slides and videos, a Google doc with all of the optional extra links from lectures, online quizzes, assignment descriptions and rubrics, etc. There is no textbook for this class.

Piazza (linked on Blackboard under "Course Logistics") is a Wiki-style website that the TA and I will use to send announcements and reminders (via email blast). As a bonus, you can also use Piazza to crowdsource answers to any questions you may have about the class.

COURSE FORMAT AND ORGANIZATION

For our time together, we'll be using a flipped class format. This means that I'll give you pre-recorded lecture videos for you to watch on your own time. (Think of it like mental health podcast time.) Just make sure you watch them in advance of the Q&A/discussion date if you'd have questions or would like to chat about the material, and definitely before the respective quiz is due. (You can find all of those dates are listed on the course calendar on the last page.) As a result, our scheduled class meetings can be as interactive as possible since I won't be spending that precious time just delivering the content to you.

With all of that time freed up, our class meetings will take two forms. **Tuesdays** will serve as **writing workshops** so that you have dedicated time to work towards the final drafts of your two short writing assignments with built-in support from each other and from me. On **Thursdays**, you can drop in for **Q&A/discussion** about the material covered in the videos you've watched so far. (Exam Thursdays are the exception.) Attendance during these flipped sessions is not required, but I'll always be available during those times to help you get as much out of the class as you'd like.

It's going to be quite an adventure to fit the entire education you deserve into an abbreviated online semester, but hopefully this flipped class format will help you demonstrate all your newfound knowledge with as much support, flexibility, and one-on-one interaction as possible.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT

WHAT WILL YOU ACCOMPLISH IN THIS CLASS?

1

Exhibit mastery of the principles of abnormal psychology

2

Accessibly communicate empirical research on mental illness

3

Defend opinions on the real-world implications of course material

How will your success be measured?



COURSE REQUIREMENTS

ONLINE QUIZZES

One non-cumulative online quiz will accompany each unit to help you check your understanding as we progress through the course. Quiz questions will be multiple-choice and your three lowest quiz grades will be dropped before computing your final grade at the end of the term. Quizzes will be made available on Blackboard immediately after the Thursday session devoted to Q&A/discussion on those topics, and should be completed by the start of class (4:00 PM LA local time) the following Tuesday. (See the course calendar on the last page for a full list of due dates.)

For these online quizzes, you are free to use your notes and/or work together with a classmate. However, I highly recommend taking each quiz for the first time without any outside assistance to see how much (and what kinds of) information you retained from that unit. Then, when taking the quiz again, use your resources to help you answer the questions you got incorrect (and take note of the topics these questions addressed to help yourself identify areas of improvement). You may re-take each quiz as many times as you'd like. I will only count your highest (pre-due date) score for each quiz and there are no penalties for additional attempts.

EXAMS

This course will have four equally weighted exams: **three non-cumulative short answer exams and one cumulative multiple choice final exam** that you'll have 24 hours to complete (for maximum flexibility). For all the exams, you are welcome to use your notes and work together with up to two peers to help you get on the right track, but the short answer responses you submit must be your own. In other words, directly copying from another source or one of your collaborators (or copying and changing every couple words) will be considered an act of academic dishonesty. Your single lowest exam grade out of the four will be dropped before computing your final grade at the end of the term.

SAVE THE DATES: September 17th, October 15th, November 12th, November 17th

WRITING

This course will have two brief writing assignments (750-1000 words each). The first will be focused on summarizing original empirical research for a general audience (a science communication, or SciComm, piece) and will be worth 18% of your final grade. For the second, you will use multiple empirical studies to support a well developed opinion related to mental health/illness (an op-ed piece), which will be worth 22% of your final grade.

Each of these assignments will be broken up into smaller components over the course of the semester to help you work your way towards your final draft. (My intention is that you'll be able to complete most, if not all, of the work required for these pieces during our dedicated writing workshops.) More details about each of them will be provided in a separate assignment description.

PRO-TIP: The style of writing required for these assignments is likely very different from what's been expected of you in other PSYC classes.

Guidance will be provided every step of the way, but many students have found [The Writing Center](#) invaluable in this process.

EXTRA CREDIT

RESEARCH HOURS

For this class, each SONA research credit you earn will add 0.25 percentage points to your final grade, and you can complete a maximum of five credits for a total of 1.25 extra points. (All studies will be online this semester.)

To receive these points at the end of the semester, you must tell SONA to allocate your credits to this specific section of PSYC 360 (not Prof. O’Flinn’s or Prof. George’s section). If you don’t do this (and we have to fix it for you by hand at the end of the semester), you’ll only receive credit for 50% of the SONA studies that you completed. More information on registering for SONA and signing up for studies will be posted to Blackboard.

If you would like to complete an alternative written assignment (an additional SciComm piece written on one of the other articles posted to Blackboard) instead of participating in research, you must make this choice (and email me/and CC the TA to let us know) by September 4th.

SYLLABUS QUIZ

This syllabus is your friend! If you have a logistical question about this class (or even about all the campus resources available to you), the answer is very likely somewhere in this document. (I know it’s a lot, but I wrote it all to help you, I promise.)

So, to preemptively reward all of you for your excellent syllabus-reading habits, each of you have the opportunity to earn one percentage point of extra credit (added to your overall grade at the end of the semester) by taking a very quick and laughably easy syllabus quiz on Blackboard (due by the start of class on August 25th.) But here’s the catch: Every time you email with a specific question that you have already answered for yourself by taking that quiz (e.g., “How many quiz grades get dropped?”), you will lose a quarter of that point.

Of course, the TA and I are more than happy to answer other (non-syllabus) questions via email and any/all questions “in-person,” so you can absolutely ask us things! Just please also try to do your part to make sure the question hasn’t already been answered for you before sending an email. (Pro-tip: You can always return to this syllabus quiz on Blackboard, and this document is also fully searchable 😊)

GRADING POLICIES

Final percentage scores will be rounded up/down to the nearest whole number from .50 and letter grades will be assigned according to the table below:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93-100	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	<60

We will not entertain individual appeals for “personalized rounding schemes” nor will we create “extra assignments” for anyone to attempt to raise their grade in the final weeks of the course. (Each such request will be subject to a deduction from the “it’s in the syllabus” extra credit point described above.)

PRO-TIP: There is absolutely no shame in needing or seeking help. If you become concerned about (or would simply like to improve) your performance in the class at any point, please reach out as soon as you can.

TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS

Unless otherwise specified, assignments (e.g., online quizzes, writing assignment components, exam responses) should be completed or submitted through Blackboard by the start of the class period (4:00 PM LA local time) listed on the course calendar. To provide as much flexibility as possible (with respect to time zones and just in general), you can continue to submit assignments for full credit up to 24 hours after each listed due date/time. (And there's no need to let me or the TA know; the 24-hour window is an automatic blanket extension.)

LATE/MISSED WORK POLICY

Needless to say, there's a lot going on. If you find that you're having trouble keeping up with this class, please let me or the TA know as soon as you are able so that we can do what we can to help.

Due dates are important insofar as they help you spread out your workload and help us keep all the behind-the-scenes aspects of the course as organized as possible, so we trust that you'll all keep up with them to the extent that you are able. Late work will be accepted on a case-by-case basis (including for all religious holidays), so please do reach out if you know you'll need more time or are having trouble keeping up. (Please note: You do not need to perform trauma in asking for an extension; you just need to let one of us know (very broadly) that you need help and we will help.)

Otherwise, late assignments that have not been granted an extension will incur a penalty of 20% off of the maximum score for every day (or portion thereof) late, including non-class days and weekends.

THE MORE YOU KNOW: If life ever happens in such a way that you find yourself struggling to stay afloat in all of your classes, you can reach out to [Campus Support & Intervention](#) at (213) 821-4710. Among other services, they can send official notifications to your professors informing us (very broadly) that you're in need of support and flexibility.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

CAMPUS OFFICE	SERVICES	PHONE	EMAIL
Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity	General help with college coursework, including study skill tips, test-taking strategies, and stress management	(213) 740-7884	kortschakcenter@usc.edu
The Writing Center	Specific help with writing, including free one-on-one consultations	(213) 740-3691	writing@usc.edu
American Language Institute	Credit-granting courses, one-on-one tutoring, and free informal conversation groups for English language learners	(213) 740-0079	askali@usc.edu
Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice	Lifestyle Redesign program to help foster time management, decrease procrastination, manage stress and anxiety, etc.	(323) 442-3340	otfp@med.usc.edu

A NOTE ON COMMUNITY AND WELLNESS

It is my goal to foster an environment of mutual respect in which everyone can feel comfortable voicing their opinions, sharing their stories, and learning about potentially heavy or personally relevant material. If, at any point, you feel like information covered in this class triggers thoughts, feelings, or concerns that you would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, the TA, Student Counseling Services, or the (free and anonymous) National Suicide Prevention Hotline.

Student Counseling Services

Consultations: (213) 740-7711
24/7 support: (213) 740-9355

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

1-800-273-8255

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

As an instructor, I strive to create an environment in which every student is given an equal opportunity to excel. If you are in need of certain accommodations (e.g., extra time on assessments, adaptive technology, class note-taker, etc.) due to any physical or mental health condition, please contact Disability Services and Programs (and let me know you have done so) as soon as possible. Remember that any information you share regarding accommodations is confidential and will not be shared with other students.

Disability Services and Programs

Hours: M-F, 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM
(213) 740-0776
dspfrontdesk@usc.edu

Once you provide me with an official accommodations letter from DSP, we can work together to ensure that your needs are met from that point forward. Please note that academic accommodations cannot be granted retroactively or by “working something out” personally with a professor without an approved accommodations letter.

THE MORE YOU KNOW

Mental illnesses "count" for disability accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Of course, if there is anything that I can do to make my teaching more accessible and inclusive, please don't hesitate to let me know at any time.

Please reach out to DSP if you feel you could benefit from accommodations.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY: THE GOLDEN RULE

There's no way that I or any of your peers can know what you're doing behind your screen while we're having Q&A/discussion time. That being said, if you're voicing your opinion or sharing your story with a group of people, you'd probably want them to pay full attention to you. Please just be kind.

Because technology is critical to an online class, please let me know if you face difficulties accessing the material, “coming” to class, or keeping up with the requirements so I can do what I can to help.

ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE, IDENTITY-BASED HARM, AND OTHER PERSONAL CRISES

If you ask me, this is the single most important part of the syllabus and I need to know that people are aware of this information, so let's try something. If you have read this far, please email me (Dr. Leslie Berntsen) your favorite GIF of Olivia Benson (the fictional sex crimes detective from Law & Order: SVU). This is not a joke, and I am 100% serious. (You will lose half of a point from the aforementioned "syllabus quiz" extra credit point if you do not do this.) Now, the important information...

If you experience sexual violence, identity-based harm, or any other personal crisis at any point during the semester, please don't hesitate to reach out so I can (1) help you get caught up in class, (2) put you in contact with the appropriate resources and services, and (3) answer questions to the extent that I am qualified to do so. But, if you'd rather not talk to your professor about these issues, I completely understand. Here are some of those resources (all hyperlinked) that I would have ended up telling you about.

[Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention & Services](#)

[Student Counseling Services](#)

[Campus Support & Intervention](#)

[Title IX Office](#)

[Office of Equity & Diversity](#)

[Department of Public Safety](#)

[Asian Pacific American Student Services](#)

[Center for Black Cultural & Student Affairs](#)

[La CASA](#)

[LGBT Resource Center](#)

[Office of Religious Life](#)

And finally, for information about your legal rights under Title IX: [Know Your IX](#)

THE MORE YOU KNOW: Faculty and TAs are required by both university policy and federal law to report all disclosures of sexual violence to the appropriate campus authorities. But please know that I am qualified and more than willing to support survivors throughout the process. If you have general questions, please ask any time.

ON BASIC NEEDS

If you ever find yourself struggling to afford food and/or secure a safe and stable place to live and feel like such circumstances are impacting your performance in this class, please speak to me (if you feel comfortable) so that I can provide whatever resources and support I can. For additional information and support, you can also contact [Student Basic Needs](#) at basicneeds@usc.edu or [Campus Support & Intervention](#) at (213) 821-4710.

THE MORE YOU KNOW: There is an [emergency food and toiletry pantry](#) located in Parkside Apartments #135.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICIES

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment that fosters general principles of academic honesty. These include respecting the intellectual property of others, submitting your own individual work unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and protecting your own academic work from misuse by others. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles and be aware of the possible sanctions, which are summarized in [Part B of SCampus](#).

For this class, specific examples of academic dishonesty include: Submitting any graded material that has been written by another person (including yourself for a previous class) or lifted from the internet, either in part or in full. Remember that you are more than welcome to use your notes and collaborate with friends for pretty much every aspect of this course; you just need to make sure that the writing you ultimately submit (e.g., your exam responses and writing assignments) is entirely your own.

If you have any questions about these policies or academic dishonesty in general, I would be more than happy to answer them, so please do ask.

PRO-TIP: If any part of you feels even slightly tempted to engage in academic dishonesty for the sake of a better grade, come talk to me and I'll give you all sorts of tips and tricks to earn that grade you're hoping for.

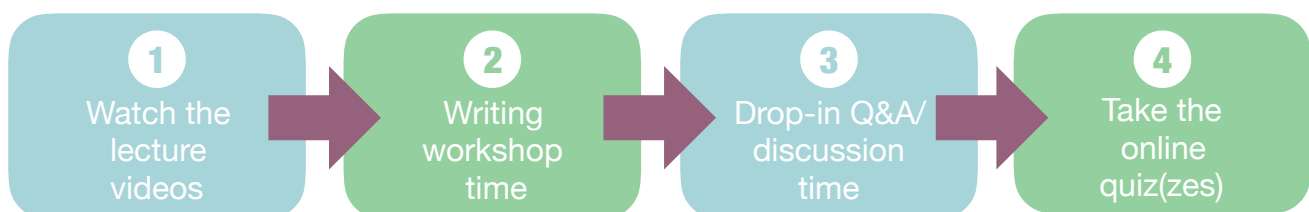
If you cheat, you could be putting your entire degree in jeopardy. You are also guaranteed to lose all of my trust and make me very, very grumpy that I have to deal with it/you.

Do not cheat. That's all I got.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The course calendar on the next page details what you can expect during each scheduled class session (whether a writing workshop, drop-in Q&A/discussion time, or time to work on each exam), as well as the due dates for all of your assignments.

The flow chart below summarizes what our average (non-exam) week will look like. Ideally, you'll watch each week's lecture videos (linked in the Live Class Calendar on Blackboard) prior to each Thursday's Q&A/discussion session (so that you'll be able to pop in if you have any questions or would like to chat) and then complete the online quizzes by the (Tuesday) due dates listed on the next page. Then, you can use each Tuesday's class session as dedicated time to make progress on your writing assignments.



PRE-THURSDAY — TUESDAY — THURSDAY — POST-THURSDAY

DAY	DATE	COME TO CLASS FOR:	WHAT'S DUE?
			Quizzes Writing
T	August 18 th	Writing Workshop: Overview of Science Communication (SC #1 & SC #2)	
R	August 20 th	Q&A/Discussion: 1: Introduction to Abnormal Psychology	SC #1
T	August 25 th	Writing Workshop: Deconstructing Scientific Articles (SC #2)	XC, #1
R	August 27 th	Q&A/Discussion: 2: Clinical Research Methods; 3: History of Abnormality	SC #2
T	September 1 st	Writing Workshop: Deconstructing Scientific Articles (SC #2) & Drafting an Accessible Article Summary (SC #3)	#2, #3
R	September 3 rd	Q&A/Discussion: 4: Causal Factors & Viewpoints	
T	September 8 th	Writing Workshop: Drafting an Accessible Article Summary (SC #3)	#4
R	September 10 th	Q&A/Discussion: 5: Assessment & Diagnosis; 6: Treatment Approaches	SC #3
T	September 15 th	Writing Workshop: Revising & Finalizing Your Work (SC #4 & SC #5)	#5, #6
R	September 17 th	Exam #1: Units 1-6 (due by 4:00 PM on September 18th)	SC #4
T	September 22 nd	Writing Workshop: Revising & Finalizing Your Work (SC #5)	
R	September 24 th	Q&A/Discussion: 7: Stress, Trauma, & Mind-Body Interactions; 8: Panic, Anxiety, & Obsessions	SC #5
T	September 29 th	Writing Workshop: An Overview of Scientific Opinion Pieces (OE #1 & OE #2)	#7, #8,
R	October 1 st	Q&A/Discussion: 9: Mood Disorders, Suicide, & Self-Harm	OE #1
T	October 6 th	Writing Workshop: Developing an Argument & Claims (OE #2 & OE #3)	#9
R	October 8 th	Q&A/Discussion: 10: Somatic & Dissociative Disorders; 11: Substance Use Disorders	OE #2
T	October 13 th	Writing Workshop: Identifying & Summarizing Evidence (OE #3)	#10, #11
R	October 15 th	Exam #2: Units 7-11 (due by 4:00 PM on October 16th)	OE #3
T	October 20 th	Writing Workshop: Drafting a Scientific Opinion Piece (OE #4)	
R	October 22 nd	Q&A/Discussion: 12: Eating Disorders & Obesity; 13: Schizophrenia & Psychotic Disorders	
T	October 27 th	Writing Workshop: Drafting a Scientific Opinion Piece (OE #4)	#12, #13
R	October 29 th	Q&A/Discussion: 14: Pediatric Mental Illnesses; 15: Neurocognitive Disorders	OE #4
T	November 3 rd	Writing Workshop: Revising & Finalizing Your Work (OE #5 & OE #6)	#14, #15
R	November 5 th	Q&A/Discussion: 16: Personality Disorders; 17: Law, Society, & Practice	OE #5
T	November 10 th	Writing Workshop: Revising & Finalizing Your Work (OE #6)	#16, #17
R	November 12 th	Exam #3: Units 12-17 (due by 4:00 PM on November 13th)	OE #6
T	November 17 th	FINAL EXAM (due by 4:30 PM on November 18th)	

Reminder: Online quizzes and writing assignments are due (to Blackboard) by the start of class (4:00 PM LA local time), with an automatic 24-hour blanket extension added to the quiz/writing assignment due dates listed above.