

ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY

Tuesday/Thursday | 4:00-5:50 PM | Zoom University + (eventually) MRF 340

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: 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, being a student with a disability

E-mail: (expect a response within 24-48 hours, except weekends)

Virtual office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays: 5:00-6:00 PM

Make an appointment at: leslie-bern.youcanbook.me

Office: My living room (Zoom. I mean Zoom.)



TA: Wani (she/her)

How do you pronounce that? First name rhymes with the English word “want;” last name sounds like the syllable “cho”

Ask her about: Writing assignments (including your grades), applying to graduate school

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

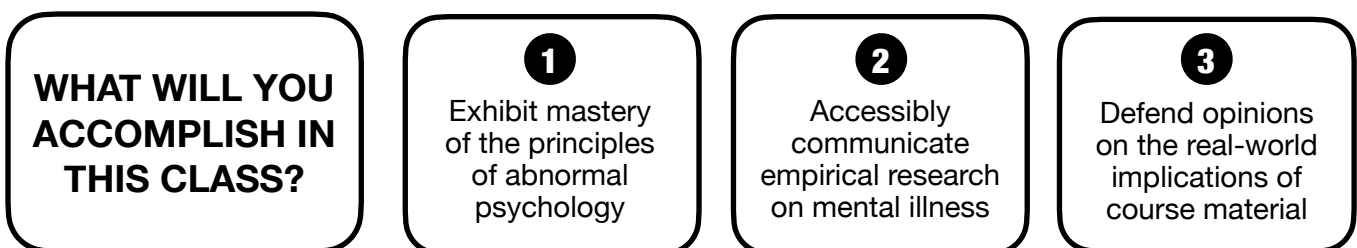
It's going to be quite an adventure to make it through our (good lord) fifth ~unprecedented~ semester, but here's the plan to (hopefully) make things as accessible, organized, and manageable as possible.

In-person lectures will be livestreamed via Zoom, so you'll always have the option to show up, watch in real-time from home, or watch the recording after the fact. The end of each in-person class period will be devoted to a mini writing workshop, where you'll have time to make progress on/get help with your assignment.

Whenever classes have been moved online, you'll have pre-recorded lecture videos that you're free to watch on your own time. When classes are online, I'll be hanging out on Zoom during "lecture" for extended office hours/writing workshop time, so you can pop in if you have any questions about the material or would like help with the writing assignments, but I won't be lecturing in real time.

Everything you need to know about how class is being conducted on a given day and exactly what was covered, along with links to the videos, can be found in the Live Class Calendar Google doc posted to Blackboard under "Lectures & Quizzes."

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT



How will your success be measured?



COURSE REQUIREMENTS

ONLINE QUIZZES

One non-cumulative online quiz at the end of each week 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 each Friday 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 score for each quiz and there are no penalties for additional attempts.

EXAMS

This course will have four equally weighted exams: **three non-cumulative midterms and one cumulative final exam.** More specific details about the format of the exams will be forthcoming, depending on what this semester has in store for all of us.

No matter what, 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:

February 10th
March 24th
April 26th
May 5th

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. (You'll have time during each class period to work on and/or get help with these assignments.) 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. (You can complete any combination of online/in-person studies that you like.)

To receive these points at the end of the semester, you must tell SONA to allocate your credits to my specific section of PSYC 360 (not another professor'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 to let me know) by January 28th.

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-checking habits, you can earn one percentage point of extra credit (which will be added to your overall grade for the course at the end of the semester) by taking a very quick and laughably easy syllabus quiz on Blackboard (due the first week of class). But here's the catch: Every time you email with one of the specific questions 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 just like you might on any other quiz.

Of course, we are more than happy to answer other (non-syllabus) questions via email and any/all questions in real time during class time or office hours, so you can absolutely ask us things! Just please also try to meet us halfway and 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 and Piazza are both fully searchable 😊)

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

CAMPUS OFFICE	SERVICES
<u>Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity</u>	General help with college coursework, including study skill tips, test-taking strategies, and stress management
<u>The Writing Center</u>	Specific help with writing, including free one-on-one consultations
<u>American Language Institute</u>	Credit-granting courses, one-on-one tutoring, and free informal conversation groups for English language learners
<u>Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice</u>	Lifestyle Redesign program to help foster time management, decrease procrastination, manage stress and anxiety, etc.

LATE/MISSED WORK POLICY

Needless to say, there’s (still) a lot going on. In addition to all of the free drops and the overall choose-your-own-adventure style of the class, we've got different, progressively larger safety nets that will hopefully catch you if it ever becomes necessary.

1. Automatic 24-hour blanket extension: For maximum flexibility, you can continue to submit assignments for full credit up to 24 hours after each due date/time listed on the course calendar on the last page, no questions asked and no permission necessary. For this to be as helpful as possible, I recommend doing everything in your power to stick to the "official" listed due dates and then use the blanket extension only when you really *need* it. Otherwise, if you just treat the extension as the new due date for every assignment, you lose the whole “safety net” aspect of the arrangement.

2. Emergency button: If the 24-hour blanket extension doesn't take care of you, this is the next option. Everyone starts off the semester with one (1) emergency button that you can use to submit late work for credit after the 24-hour extension period has passed. Whether your emergency button actually gets used up depends on whether the nature/timing of your request creates extra work for us as a teaching team. If you think you'd like to use your emergency button, just fill out the Google form posted to Blackboard under "Course Logistics" and it will walk you through the details/your options.

3. "Life happened and I need help:" If you experience any kind of life-altering emergency that impacts your ability to stay afloat in all your classes, this is for you. All you need to do is email me or the TA with those words (that's it!) and we will put you in touch with Campus Support & Intervention so they can help you however you need. Once the dust has settled, we'll work with you to get you caught up and through the finish line in one piece. Please note: You do not need to perform trauma to get our attention; you just need to let us know (very broadly) that you need help and we will make sure you get it.

THE MORE YOU KNOW: If you (or a friend) would ever like to reach out to Campus Support & Intervention on your own, their phone number is (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.

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. (Because it is a question on the syllabus quiz, each such request will be subject to the deduction 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.

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 let me know (and contact the Office of Student Accessibility Services) as soon as possible. Remember that any information you share regarding accommodations is confidential and will not be shared with other students.

Office of Student Accessibility Services

Hours: M-F, 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM
Location: GFS 120
Phone: (213) 740-0776

This class is designed in such a way that many common accommodations are already built in, but an official letter from OSAS can help ensure that your needs will be met in all of your classes. According to university policy, professors are not obligated to grant individual accommodations without an approved accommodations letter.

THE MORE YOU KNOW

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

For purposes of this class, 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 OSAS if you feel you could benefit from accommodations.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY: THE GOLDEN RULE

You are more than welcome to bring laptops, tablets, or any other assistive technology to class if it will help you take notes to the best of your ability. (Laptops can be borrowed from the Information Commons on the bottom floor of Leavey Library for up to four hours at a time.)

At certain points, I may ask that non-essential technology be set aside to allow for full engagement. Please also note that I reserve the right to revoke your individual technology privileges at any time if you appear excessively/inappropriately distracted or if your technology use appears to be distracting those around you. If you were speaking to a group of people about something you genuinely care about, you'd probably want them to pay full attention to you. Please just be kind.

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.

ON TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER

Here's the thing. Wearing some material over your face is (truly) one of the lowest effort/highest impact things you can do out of care for other people. It is quite literally one of the easiest things I have done in my life. I believe in your ability to do this very easy/impactful thing in accordance with university policy.



Me looking out
for my students'
well-being

If you are unwilling to keep both your nose and your mouth (this is how masks work!) covered during any in-person learning, this is not the class for you. Please do not behave in a manner that will lead you to become personally aware of what I mean when I say that. Do this one (1) simple thing and we will have a great time.

ON EXTRACURRICULAR FAVORS AND REQUESTS

THE MORE YOU KNOW: Research shows that faculty members who are perceived as approachable and dedicated to teaching receive significantly more extra requests from students and colleagues than those who might give off “other” impressions. Although I love to help, please know that if I happen to say “no” to a particular request, it’s likely because I’ve already committed myself to as many things as I (one person) can physically handle. In addition to asking as early as humanly possible, here are some tips to ensure that I can help as many people as meaningfully as possible, depending on what you’re asking me:

To write a letter of recommendation: Having served on many selection/review committees, I can promise that letters read much differently when they’re written by someone who can effectively advocate for you because they genuinely know you as a person (vs. someone who has just taught you in a large lecture class). Because I teach 1000 students a year and want to ensure that you receive a letter that meaningfully strengthens your application, please know that I am only able to provide letters for students with whom I have already formed a mutual, two-way mentor/mentee relationship.

Whoever you ask for your letter(s), ask at least four weeks in advance of your earliest deadline and provide all the information you can (e.g., your application materials, detailed submission instructions) to make the process as easy as possible for your letter writers. For more tips on securing strong letters of recommendation, check out [this resource](#).

To give an interview for a class paper, article, podcast, etc: Email me or chat with me first to see if I’m (1) the best person to provide the kinds of comments you’re looking for and (2) able to field the request within your desired timeframe.

To speak on a panel or at another event: My schedule and accessibility needs are going to be the limiting factors for these kinds of requests, which is all the more reason to ask as early as you can.

To supervise a research project: There’s no way you would know this without someone telling you, but there are actually two kinds of professors at a school like USC: those of us who focus primarily on teaching and have up to 1000 students a year (hi!) and then those who focus primarily on research, run their own labs, and maybe teach a class every now and then. Because I’m in that first group, I don’t have the resources to be able to effectively supervise undergraduate research. But, I am always more than happy to help you think through your research interests and figure out which labs in the department might be a good fit; just pop into office hours.

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 or your TA and we'll give you all sorts of tips and tricks to earn that grade you're hoping for. If you need more time to complete an assignment, we will work with you, so just let your TA know.

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 aggravated that I have to deal with it/you.

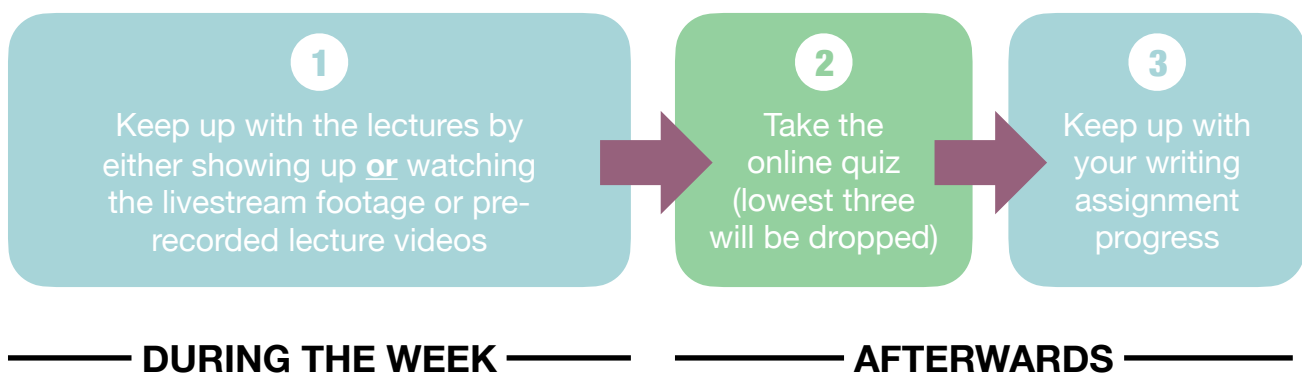
Do not cheat. That's really all there is to it.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule on the next page details the planned topic scheduled for each day of lecture, as well as the due dates for all of your assignments.

Remember that you can find updates of exactly what was covered each day, along with links to the lecture recordings (for when classes are held in-person) and pre-recorded lecture videos (for when classes are online), in the Live Class Calendar Google doc posted to Blackboard under "Lectures & Quizzes."

For a visual summary of what you'll generally be responsible for each week, check the flow chart below:



DAY	DATE	WHAT'S DUE?		WHAT ARE WE DOING IN CLASS?	
		Quizzes	Writing	Lecture Topics	Writing Workshops
T	January 11 th			1: Introduction to Abnormal Psychology	Overview of Science Communication
R	January 13 th		SC #1	2: Clinical Research Methods	
T	January 18 th	XC, #1		3: History of Abnormality	Deconstructing Scientific Articles
R	January 20 th		SC #2	4: Causal Factors & Viewpoints	
T	January 25 th	#2		5: Assessment & Diagnosis	Drafting an Accessible Article Summary
R	January 27 th				
T	February 1 st	#3		6: Overview of Treatment Approaches	
R	February 3 rd		SC #3		
T	February 8 th	#4		Flex Day: Plans TBD	
R	February 10 th		SC #4	EXAM #1 (Units 1-6)	
T	February 15 th	#5		7: Stress, Trauma, & Mind-Body Interactions	Revising & Finalizing Your Work
R	February 17 th		SC #5	8: Panic, Anxiety, & Obsessions	
T	February 22 nd	#6			
R	February 24 th		OE #1	9: Mood Disorders, Suicide, & Self-Harm	Overview of Scientific Opinion Pieces
T	March 1 st	#7			
R	March 3 rd		OE #2		
T	March 8 th	#8		10: Somatic & Dissociative Disorders	Developing an Argument & Claims
R	March 10 th			11: Substance Use Disorders	
T	March 15 th			NO CLASS: Spring Break 🤪	
R	March 17 th			NO CLASS: Spring Break 🤪	
T	March 22 nd			Flex Day: Plans TBD	
R	March 24 th		OE #3	EXAM #2 (Units 7-11)	
T	March 29 th	#9		12: Eating Disorders & Obesity	Drafting a Scientific Opinion Piece
R	March 31 st				
T	April 5 th	#10		13: Schizophrenia & Psychotic Disorders	
R	April 7 th		OE #4	14: Pediatric Mental Illnesses	Revising & Finalizing Your Work
T	April 12 th	#11			
R	April 14 th		OE #5	15: Neurocognitive Disorders	
T	April 19 th	#12		16: Personality Disorders	
R	April 21 st			17: Law, Society, & Practice	
T	April 26 th	#13		EXAM #3 (Units 12-17)	
R	April 28 th		OE #6	Flex Day: Plans TBD	
R	May 5 th			FINAL EXAM (4:30-6:30 PM)	

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