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University of Toronto at Scarborough
Division of Life Sciences

ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY

PSYB32H3 Section S

Thursday 7-10pm in lecture hall S 309

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Office Hours: Thursday 2-6pm
(or by appointment)

Teaching Assistant: TBA

Overview of Course

Throughout history, whether a person's behavior is labeled abnormal often has depended on the cultural norms for appropriate behavior and the gender and ethnicity of the person. Current definitions of abnormality focus on the person's ability to function in daily life and his or her level of distress and grasp of reality. Many biological and psychological tests are used to assess people's functioning and well-being. The information gathered in these tests is compared to criteria for diagnosing psychological disorders provided in guidebooks such as the DSM. Several modern biological and psychological theories provide different ways of understanding and treating people with psychological disorders. Most disorders appear to be influenced both by biological and

psychosocial factors, and theories integrating these factors have proven most useful in understanding and treating abnormality.

The disorders that we will look at in detail involve maladaptive and distressing emotions, thoughts, cognitive deficits and behaviors, that are often chronic and pervade every aspect of people's lives. For example, people with anxiety disorders and mood disorders frequently experience extreme emotional distress that severely interferes with their ability to function in life. Biology, stressful experiences, and maladaptive ways of thinking all appear to contribute to the anxiety and mood disorders. Fortunately, there are several effective biological and psychosocial treatments for these disorders. In addition, psychosis is a loss of touch with reality, and is the hallmark of the disorder called schizophrenia. Schizophrenia probably has strong biological roots, but can be influenced by environmental stress. Moreover, people with personality disorders maintain a consistent personality style, but it is a highly maladaptive style for them and for people around them. Substance use disorders similarly involve specific maladaptive behaviors and can have negative effects in many domains of life. Finally, cognitive disorders that are progressive in nature (e.g., Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal dementia, progressive aphasia, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, progressive supranuclear palsy, and multiple sclerosis) can have crippling effects and are becoming ever more prevalent given the burgeoning elderly population.

After reviewing the aforementioned disorders and understanding the nature of assessment, diagnosis, and treatment, it is hoped that this course will better able the student to answer the question "what is abnormality?"

Important Dates

- Jan. 14 last day to add PSYB32
- Feb. 14-18 reading week
- Mar. 3 last day to drop PSYB32

Readings

Abnormal Psychology

By Susan Nolen-Hoeksema

*note: there is a study guide available, but it is not required.

Evaluation

Two 100 question multiple choice examinations each contributing 50% to overall grade. Absolutely no deferred examinations unless accompanied by a medical note.

Lecture Dates

January 6: Looking at Abnormality
(Readings: Chapter 1)

January 13: Assessing and Diagnosing Abnormality
Approaching and Treating Abnormality
(Readings: Chapter 2 and 3)

January 20: Anxiety Disorders
(Readings: Chapter 4)

January 27: Mood Disorders
(Readings: Chapter 5)

February 3: Mid-Term Exam
(Chapters 1-5)

February 10: No formal lecture Scheduled (INS Meeting).

February 17: No Class Scheduled (Reading Week)

February 24: Schizophrenia
(Readings: Chapter 6 and assigned readings)

March 2: Personality Disorders
(Readings: Chapter 8)

March 9: Substance Use Disorders
(Readings: Chapter 12)

March 16: The Cognitive Disorders: Dementia and Amnesia
(Readings: Chapter 14)

March 23: The Cognitive Disorders: Dementia and Amnesia Continued

March 30: Eating Disorders and Sexual Disorders
(Readings: Chapter 10 and 11)

FINAL EXAMINATION: DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED
(Chapters 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 14)