



EAST TEXAS A&M

PSY 503 ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY COURSE SYLLABUS: Spring 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Kendra V. Saunders, Ph.D., NCSP, Assistant Professor, Licensed Psychologist

Office Location: Henderson 213

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:00am – 1:30pm (online), or by appointment.

University Email Address: Kendra.Saunders@etamu.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: University e-mail

Communication Response Time: 24 to 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays

Class Meeting: Online

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook(s) Required:

Scott, D.A., & Scott, M. G. (2024). Psychopathology: A case-based approach. Revised first edition. Cognella Academic Publishing. ISBN-13: 979-8823310802. Book available as an Inclusive Access text for this course.

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed., text rev.). <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425787>

Note: The DSM-5 TR is available to access online for free from the ETAMU Velma K. Waters library.

Software Required: myLeo Online, D2L, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Google Drive

Optional Texts and/or Materials: N/A

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is oriented to the social-biological origins and dynamics of psychopathology in adults and children, including developmental disorders.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this course, students will examine the various factors that influence the development and presentation of disorders, including genetic predispositions, family dynamics, and social contexts. The course includes training in using the DSM-5 for diagnosis and case conceptualization. In addition, students will enhance their professional communication skills through written assignments and a final presentation. Treatment approaches and interventions will also be discussed.

Links to the NASP 2020 Domains of Practice

Domain 1: Data-Based Decision Making-- School psychologists understand and utilize assessment methods for identifying strengths and needs; developing effective interventions, services, and programs; and measuring progress and outcomes within a multitiered system of supports. School psychologists use a problem-solving framework as the basis for all professional activities. School psychologists systematically collect data from multiple sources as a foundation for decision-making at the individual, group, and systems levels, and they consider ecological factors (e.g., classroom, family, and community characteristics) as a context for assessment and intervention.

Domain 4: Mental and Behavioral Health Services and Interventions-- School psychologists understand the biological, cultural, developmental, and social influences on mental and behavioral health, behavioral and emotional impacts on learning, and evidence-based strategies to promote social-emotional functioning. School psychologists, in collaboration with others, design, implement, and evaluate services that promote resilience and positive behavior, support socialization and adaptive skills, and enhance mental and behavioral health.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Using the learning management system. Additionally, using Microsoft Word/Excel/PowerPoint or another word/number/presentation processor.

Instructional Methods

A variety of teaching methods will be utilized to help students achieve the learning goals, including quizzes, case studies, reaction posts, and a final project.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

Students are responsible for logging in to the course each week and completing the assigned

readings and activities. Students should also attend the following:

1. Contact the instructor immediately by email if there is a personal emergency that will prevent logging in to the course or completing assignments.
2. Complete all assigned readings and activities.
3. Utilize writing resources provided by the university to enhance writing as needed.
4. Make notes as you read.
5. Actively and respectfully participate in the discussions.
6. Ensure assignments are submitted on time.
7. Demonstrate respect for the views of each peer.
8. Ask for assistance.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

Assignment	Points
Quizzes	105
Case Conceptualization Paper #1	30
Case Conceptualization Paper #2	30
Case Conceptualization Paper #3	30
Reaction Paper and Reflection	30
Final Project	75
Total Points Possible	300

A = 90%-100%

B = 80%-89%

C = 70%-79%

D = 60%-69%

F = 59% or Below

Assessments

Quizzes

There will be graded quizzes to assess your understanding of the main topics covered in the weekly readings, presentations, and other course materials. Students are required to complete each quiz independently but may use any course materials within the allotted time limit. The quizzes may consist of multiple-choice, short-answer, matching, fill-in-the-blank, and true/false questions. All quizzes must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on Sundays during the weeks they are

due. You may refer to your readings as you take your quiz, but it is best to have read and taken notes on the assigned readings prior to starting your quiz.

Case Conceptualization Papers: Students will write three short papers during this course. Students will read a case vignette and then write a 3-4-page paper including presenting problem(s), proposed diagnosis(es), differential diagnosis(es), case conceptualization (which should include cultural/social considerations), risk/protective factors, and brief treatment options. Additional details will be provided.

Memoir Reaction Paper & Reflection: Students will select a memoir to read or a documentary to watch, reflecting on the person's lived experiences with mental health challenges. Students will provide a "reaction paper" (approximately 750-1,000 words) on a discussion board in D2L. Students should be prepared to address written comments from the class after posting their reaction paper/discussion post. Additionally, you must reply to *two* of your peers' posts. Students will then write a 2-page reflection essay regarding their selected memoir.

Final Project: Based on your preference, the final project can be submitted as a comprehensive paper, a presentation, or a website. You will select a topic related to mental health (e.g., common comorbidities of Autism Spectrum Disorder [ASD]). The final project should demonstrate depth, substance, and critical and analytical thinking about the topic that you choose, related to diagnosis and psychopathology. Your final product should include a two-page executive summary/handout, written in a style suitable for families, clinicians, and/or other mental health providers, and formatted according to APA style. **School psychology students must select a topic related to child/adolescent psychopathology.**

The executive summary should clearly address the following:

- a) a definition of the population, need, and/or issue;
- b) why it is relevant to the topic of psychopathology
- c) current empirical and theoretical information summarized in a way that is easily understood by a non-academic audience;
- d) how addressing this issue is aligned with the mission of the American Psychological Association;
- e) and specific resources/roadmap in supporting a person/patient in the chosen topical area.

The final project will be evaluated based on:

- a. depth and quality of analysis - your project should reveal a critical, analytical understanding of the topic you're addressing. You may use web-based sources, but be sure to critically evaluate their quality. ETAMU provides support to help you conduct and locate information in the research literature about your topic.
- b. grounding in the research evidence or theoretical perspective relevant to your topic.
- c. clarity of how families, clinicians, and/or other mental health providers can use this product/resource.

Potential options for the final project:

- A paper/packet on suggested "best practices" for symptom management for specific types of mental health problems: For example, what symptom management practices are recommended for a person with Acute Stress Disorder or Schizophrenia? You should thoroughly review the research literature on this topic and generate one of two types of products: (1) a 6-8-page scholarly literature review in APA style or (2) a packet of materials for a person with the disorder and their families (i.e. parents/caregivers) including everything they would need to implement at least 5 specific evidence-based practices (e.g., a brief description of the practice) and a rationale for why you recommend it (i.e., what is the evidence-base upon which you recommend it), directions on how to implement it, any forms that might be necessary, and a plan for how you will evaluate how it is working.
- A treatment plan for a psychological condition: For example, as a clinician, how would you treat a patient with social anxiety disorder? Include a discussion of why you have chosen certain treatment elements and propose a plan that includes at least 5 aspects of symptom management (for example, psychoeducation about de-escalation strategies, medication considerations, etc.). Be sure to provide a rationale for why you propose what you do using "best practices" based on class or other readings.
- A paper/packet on suggested "best practices" for assessment for a clinical diagnosis of one type of mental health issue: For example, what are best practices for assessing and identifying Neurodevelopmental Disorders in children? You should thoroughly review the research literature on this topic and generate one of two types of products: (1) a 6–8-page scholarly literature review in APA style or (2) a packet of materials for clinicians including everything they would need to administer and consider in order to diagnose the disorder (e.g., a brief description of the diagnostic criteria, etiology, and a description of cultural considerations).
- A PowerPoint presentation including a video of you presenting information about a psychological condition covered in the course (this presentation should be geared toward family members): For example, you could delve into OCD and describe to a “parent” what symptoms their child may present with, how they can manage these symptoms in the home, the trajectory/prognosis of those with this disorder, etc. The presentation should last 10-15 minutes.

You may propose a different project idea if it is not listed above. However, this proposed format will need to be approved by the instructor before it can be implemented.

PLEASE NOTE - Your project should focus on mental health issues with a specific problem focus, including aspects of the psychological condition/disorder itself. These should focus on (a) identification of a specific psychiatric disorder and/or (b) enhancing the adaptation to the home and/or school/work environment using evidence-based practices; you may also choose to focus on individual or family-based therapeutic strategies.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a East Texas A&M University campus open computer lab, etc.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Interaction with Instructor Statement

All students should activate and regularly check their Leo Mail (e-mail account) and myLEOonline (D2L Brightspace) accounts associated with this class. All assignments will be

turned in on myLEOonline (D2L Brightspace) (when applicable) unless otherwise instructed to do something differently by the instructor of this course. All class communication will be done through Leo Mail/myLEOonline (D2L Brightspace). All communication about the class must be completed with your university email, and will not be completed with personal email accounts. When emailing please put the Course Number in the Subject Line of the Email, for example PSY 691: Question about assignment. As noted above, all emails will be returned in 24-48 hours, with

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Late Assignments: Late assignments/work will NOT be accepted without prior written notice and arrangements made with the instructor. If a student requires additional time to submit an assignment, this must be communicated to the instructor in writing before the due date so that a new due date can be established. Without prior notice, the student must provide adequate documentation allowing late work to be excused (a doctor's note in case of illness). In the event your absence/work is excused due to extenuating issues, the missing assignment or exam must be completed within 1 week of your return to class or the student will receive a grade of "F" for the assignment. Please note it is the student's responsibility to obtain information on any missed assignments. Semester grades of incomplete (I) will be given only under special circumstances (e.g., medical emergencies) and are provided at the instructor's discretion.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may necessitate the instructor's modification of the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://www.etamu.edu/student-code-of-conduct/>.

If you believe someone has engaged in behaviors that do not align with the Code of Student Conduct or you have other concerns, please visit the File a Report page at <https://www.etamu.edu/office-of-student-rights-and-responsibilities/concerns-incident-reporting/>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

Undergraduate student academic dishonesty policy
[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

Undergraduate student academic dishonesty policy
[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

Graduate student academic dishonesty policy:
<https://inside.tamuc.edu/aboutus/policiesproceduresstandardsstatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10.pdf>

Graduate student academic dishonesty form:
<https://inside.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

East Texas A&M University Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy, please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage.

Artificial Intelligence

East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, Chatbots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that

provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Services
Velma K. Waters Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5930

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Website: <http://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/campusServices/StudentDisabilityServices/default.aspx>

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.



East Texas A&M University Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M University, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.etamu.edu/counsel

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement

officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and East Texas A&M University Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M University campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

Department or Accrediting Agency Required Content

Tentative COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR