

San José State University
College of Social Sciences / Psychology Department
PSYC 110-82, Adult Psychopathology, Fall 2026

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Alen Yaghoubi, Ph.D.
Office Location:	Online - via Virtual Platform
Telephone:	None, email preferred
Email:	alen.yaghoubi@sjsu.edu (respond within 24-48 hours)
Office Hours:	By appointment
Class Days/Time:	Online Only - Asynchronous
Classroom:	Online Only - Asynchronous
Prerequisites:	PSYC 001

Canvas: SJSU Course Management

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, and assignment instructions can be found on Canvas learningmanagement system course website. You are responsible for regularly checking the Canvas course shell to learn of any updates.

Course Description

This course examines the nature, causes, assessment, and treatment of psychological disorders in adulthood, with emphasis on the biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors that shape the expression of mental illness. Students will develop the ability to apply DSM-5-TR diagnostic criteria to real-world presentations, distinguishing clinical pathology from normative human variation and popular misuse of psychiatric language.

Course material draws on contemporary media, including film, podcasts, and current events, to critically examine how psychological disorders are portrayed and often misrepresented in public discourse. Select units also incorporate real-world forensic and legal applications, such as criminal responsibility and competency to stand trial, drawing on the instructor's clinical forensic practice to illustrate how diagnostic concepts operate in high-stakes, real-world settings.

By the end of this course, students will be able to identify and differentiate major categories of adult psychopathology, critically evaluate media and cultural portrayals of mental illness against clinical criteria, and understand key applications of psychopathology in legal and forensic contexts.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to understand and explain:

CLO1 - Historical and Cultural Context: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to explain the historical and cultural context shaping how psychological disorders have been classified and treated over time.

CLO2 - Theoretical Paradigms: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to describe the major paradigms (biological, cognitive, behavioral, psychodynamic, and sociocultural) used to explain the etiology, assessment, classification, and treatment of psychological disorders.

CLO3 - Clinical Science and Research Methods: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to describe the role of scientific methods in distinguishing normal from abnormal behavior, including how research evidence informs diagnostic and clinical judgment.

CLO4 - Diagnostic Classification: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to explain the process of psychiatric classification, its dependence on underlying theoretical paradigms, and its application through the current diagnostic system (DSM-5-TR).

CLO5 - Assessment and Cultural Context: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to identify the purposes and modalities of psychological assessment, and evaluate the influence of contextual variables, including race, gender, ethnicity, culture, and sexual identity, on mental health and clinical presentation.

CLO6 - Evidence-Based Intervention: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to identify psychological, social, and biological interventions used in treating psychological disorders, and evaluate the role of empirical evidence in determining their effectiveness.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of the psychology major requirements:

PLO1 – Knowledge Base of Psychology – Students will be able to identify, describe, and communicate the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.

PLO2 – Research Methods in Psychology – Students will be able to design, implement, and communicate basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretations.

PLO3 – Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology – Students will be able to use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and a scientific approach to address issues related to behavior and mental processes.

PLO4 – Application of Psychology – Students will be able to apply psychological principles to individual, interpersonal, group, and societal issues.

Required Texts/Readings Textbook

Comer, R. J., & Comer, J. S. (2024). Psychopathology: Science and practice (12th ed.). Worth Publishers.
ISBN: 9781319426927 — print/paperback edition (the standard hardcopy)
ISBN: 9781319493745 — digital/eTextbook version

Library Liaison

San José State University Library
(408) 924-2823, <http://library.sjsu.edu>

Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

*****For all assignments:***

- ***More information and detailed grading guidelines are posted on Canvas.***
- ***APA 7th edition formatting is required for all coursework (double spaced, 1" margins, 12 pt Times New Roman font). Outside sources should be scholarly and should be cited in accordance with APA 7th edition requirements.***

Class Participation (20 points)

According to University policy F69-24, "Students should attend all meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to ensure maximum benefit for all members of the class. Attendance per se shall not be used as a criterion for grading."

Throughout the course, students will have to engage in **FOUR Discussions** on Canvas, worth six **(5)** points each. Students are expected to have completed reading and homework assignments before each class to be able to discuss course content.

Quizzes (2 x 7.5 points = 15 points)

You will have two quizzes throughout the semester to test your knowledge on various forensic psychological concepts, principles, and facts. Quizzes will comprise of questions from, but not limited to, lectures, textbook, and the documentary.

Midterm Exam (25 points)

The midterm exam covers material from Chapters 5 through 8, along with the assigned documentaries *The Bridge* and *Paper Tigers*. Questions will draw from the textbook, lecture material, and the concepts, case material, and themes presented in both documentaries, so completing all assigned materials before the exam is essential to your preparation. The exam will assess your ability to identify, differentiate, and apply diagnostic criteria and etiological models covered across this unit, not simply recall isolated facts. Further details on exam format, question types, and timing will be provided closer to the exam date.

Podcast Assignment (2 x 7.5 points = 15 points)

Twice during the semester, students will complete a podcast reflection assignment tied to that week's chapter content. Each assignment pairs an assigned podcast episode with a set of reflection questions asking students to apply diagnostic concepts, critically evaluate how the podcast portrays psychological disorders or symptoms, and connect the episode's content to material from the textbook and lecture. These assignments are designed to build your ability to critically evaluate how psychopathology is discussed in public media, distinguishing accurate clinical framing from popular oversimplification or misrepresentation. Specific episodes, prompts, and due dates will be posted with each corresponding module.

Final Exam (25 points)

The final exam will ***not*** be comprehensive but rather will focus on the last **three** chapters in the textbook.

Assignment	CLOs	Due Dates	Points / Percentage of Grade	Your Points
Discussion/Participation (Canvas)	CLOs 1, 2, 3	8/21, 8/27, 9/24, 10/01	20 / 20%	
Podcast Reflection	CLOs 1, 2, 3	10/08 and 11/05	2 x 7.5 = 15/15%	
Quizzes	CLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	9/18 and 11/13	2 x 7.5 = 15/15%	
Midterm Exam	CLO 4, 5, 6, 7	10/16	25 / 25%	
Final Exam	CLOs, 2, 4, 6, 7	12/04	25 / 25%	
Total			100 / 100%	

Grading Policy:

A+ = 100-97%	A = 96-93%	A- = 92-90%
B+ = 89-87%	B = 86-83%	B- = 82-80%
C+ = 79-77%	C = 76-73%	C- = 72-70%
D+ = 69-67%	D = 66-63%	D- = 62-60%
F = 59-0% Unsatisfactory		

Note: A minimum aggregate 3.0 GPA is required to maintain satisfactory status as a graduate student within the department and university.

Note: “All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades.” See University [Policy F13-1](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf> for more details.

Note: No late assignments will be accepted. Exceptions can be made with instructor approval.

Classroom Protocol

Active participation and positive engagement are essential to the quality of the course. You are expected to review all lectures on time and actively engage in class discussions and exercises relevant to the course content. You are also expected to listen attentively to your classmates' ideas and provide constructive feedback when appropriate.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

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The schedule is subject to change with fair notice, and such changes will be announced via email.

Course Schedule:

Week	Date	Topics	Readings/Lecture	Assignments	Due Date
1	8/17	• Introduction & Review Syllabus	Syllabus	(1) Week 1 Discussion on Canvas	Friday, 8/21
2	8/24	• Psychopathology: Past and Present	Ch. 1 Watch lecture	(2) Week 2 Discussion on Canvas	Thursday, 8/27
3	8/31	• Research in Psychopathology	Ch. 2 Watch lecture	None	None
4	9/7	• Models of Psychopathology	Ch. 3 Watch lecture	None	None
5	9/14	• Clinical Assessment, Diagnosis, and Treatment	Ch. 4 Watch lecture	Quiz 1 (Ch. 1 – 4)	Friday, 9/18
6	9/21	• Anxiety, Obsessive-Compulsive, and Related Disorders	Ch. 5 Watch lecture	(3) Week 6 Discussion on Canvas	Thursday, 9/24
7	9/28	• Disorders of Trauma and Stress	Ch. 6 Watch <i>Paper Tigers</i> Documentary	(4) Week 7 Discussion on Canvas	Thursday, 10/01
8	10/05	• Depressive and Bipolar Disorders	Ch. 7 Watch lecture	Podcast Reflection 1	Thursday, 10/08

Week	Date	Topics	Readings/Lecture	Assignments	Due Date
9	10/12	• Suicide	Ch. 8 Watch <i>The Bridge</i> Documentary	Midterm Exam	Friday, 10/16
10	10/19	• Disorders Featuring Somatic Symptoms	Ch. 9 Watch lecture	None	None
11	10/26	• Eating Disorders	Ch. 10 Watch lecture	None	None
12	11/02	• Substance Use and Addictive Disorders	Ch. 11 Watch lecture	Podcast Reflection 2	Thursday, 11/05
13	11/09	• Sexual Disorders	Ch. 12 Watch lecture	Quiz 2 (Ch. 9 – 12)	Friday, 11/13
14	11/16	• Schizophrenia and Related Disorders	Ch. 13 Watch lecture	None	None
15	11/23	• Treatment for Schizophrenia and Other Severe Mental Disorders	Ch. 14 Watch lecture	None	None
16	11/30	• Personality Disorders	Ch. 15 Watch lecture	Final Exam	Friday, 12/4