



School of Behavioral and Social Sciences/Department of Psychology

Course Number: 3021- Abnormal Psychology✳

3 Units✳

Fall 2026✳

Meeting days and time: Mondays and Wednesdays @ 2:45 p.m. to 3:55 p.m. ✳

Meeting location: Taylor Hall- Room 312 ✳

Final Exam: December 14th and/16th (Pending in-class consensus ✳)

INFORMATION	SPECIFICS FOR THE COURSE
Instructor title and name:	Dr. Jessica Bowers
Phone:	404-993-6494
Email:	Jbowers@pointloma.edu
Office location and hours:	By appointment Meet with Dr. Jess

PLNU Mission✳

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Catalog DescriptionⓈ

Study of etiology, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of various forms of abnormal behavior from various psychological perspectives.

Course Description

This 16-week course is designed as an introductory course to abnormal psychology. This course explores abnormal psychology through a compassionate and evidence-based lens. Students will examine the nature, causes, and treatment of psychological disorders while integrating empathy, ethics, and professional understanding into clinical and applied contexts. Combining scientific inquiry with emotional intelligence, the course emphasizes critical thinking, reflection, and ethical awareness essential to understanding human behavior.

Program and Course Learning OutcomesⓈ

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify and describe the diagnostic criteria and symptomatology of major psychological disorders using the DSM-5-TR.
- Examine biological, psychological, and sociocultural perspectives contributing to abnormal behavior.
- Evaluate current research, theories, and treatment modalities within evidence-based practice frameworks.
- Demonstrate clinical empathy, understanding, knowledge, and ethical reasoning in evaluating case studies across a variety of mental health diagnosis.
- Reflect on mental health stigma and the role of compassion in psychological understanding.

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resources

Students are responsible for having the required course textbooks prior to the first day of class.

All supplemental materials posted on this course site (including articles, book excerpts, or other documents) are provided for your personal academic use. These materials may be protected by copyright law and should not be duplicated or distributed without permission of the copyright owner.

Required Textbook

Comer, R. J. & Comer, R. S. (2022). *Fundamentals of abnormal psychology* (10th ed). New York, Worth. ISBN-13: 978-1-319-24721-8

Recommended Textbook

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Desk reference to the diagnostic criteria from DSM-5-TR*. [American Psychiatric Association Publishing](#).

[https://pointloma.bncollege.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/TBListView?catalogId=10001&storeId=63060&langId=-1&courseXml=<textbookorder xmlns=""><courses><course dept="PSY" num="3021" sect="5" term="F26"></course></courses></textbookorder>](https://pointloma.bncollege.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/TBListView?catalogId=10001&storeId=63060&langId=-1&courseXml=<textbookorder xmlns=)

Course Credit Hour InformationⓈ

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 3-unit class delivered over 16 weeks. It is anticipated that students will spend a minimum of 37.5 participation hours per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated 112.5 total hours meeting the course learning outcomes. The time estimations are provided in the Canvas modules.

Assessment and GradingⓈ

Grades will reflect a sound understanding of course content, thoughtful engagement, and empathetic integration. Late work may be accepted with prior communication. Extra credit may be permitted through various activities throughout this course. You may be permitted to resubmit an assignment or quiz on a maximum of two of your lowest scores, provided you communicate and receive permission from your professor. The final and midterm will not be allowed to be resubmitted or retaken. Should you run into significant indifferences with your group assignments please notify your professor, immediately. If you are absent during a group assignment, it will be your responsibility to promptly communicate the issue or absence with your professor, complete the assignment individually (or the assigned make-up work) and submit it by the due date to receive full credit. All late work will automatically receive a 5-10% (depending on the assignment) point deductions will occur each day an assignment is late. Any assignments that are not submitted within 5 days of the initial due date will not be accepted unless previously discussed with Dr. Bowers. Grades will be based on the following:

Standard Course Grade Scale Based on Percentages

<u>Sample</u> assignment distribution by percentage	Grade Scale	
• Online Discussion (2) 10 x 2 pts = 20 • Reflection Journals (4) 4 x 40 pts = 160 • Participation (semester long) 100 pts total • Quizzes (8) 8 x 20 pts = 160 • Essays (1) 1 x 40 pts = 40 • Multimedia Reviews (4) 4 x 10 pts = 40 • Case Studies/Classroom assignments (14) 14 x 20 pts = 280 • Midterm = 100 pts • Final = 100 pts • Total = 1,000 pts	A = 93-100 73-76	C =
	A = 90-92 70-72	C =
	B = 87-89 67-69	D =
	B = 83-86 63-66	D =
	B = 80-82 60-62	D =
	C = 77-79 0-59	F =

Final Examination PolicyⓈ

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Traditional Undergraduate Records: Final Exam Schedules](#) site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted. If you are absent or miss your final exam no credit will be given. If there is a medical or urgent emergency, please discuss with me as soon as you are aware to determine how you can take your final in order to receive credit.

Course Etiquette and Expectations

- **Attendance and Active Participation:** Students are expected to attend all class sessions and actively participate in discussions, activities, and applied learning experiences. I cannot stress how important participation

is, as it facilitates thought process, memory retention and recall, increases critical thinking, and comprehension. Participation will be a significant part of your grade. **Learning is a shared process, your voice and presence matter!**

- Reading and preparation: Students must complete all assigned readings, multimedia materials, and reflection prompts prior to class. This ensures we can approach complex psychological topics with depth, sensitivity, and intellectual focus.
- Case Studies and Application Assignments: Throughout the semester, students will apply course concepts to case examples, media clips, and simulated clinical scenarios. Assignments will emphasize DSM 5-TR diagnostic application, ethical and cultural considerations, compassion, empathy, and judgment free understating. Moreover, from the first day of class you will begin the practice of viewing individuals as whole, complex, and worthy of dignity.
- Weekly Reflection and Integration Journal: Students will complete short weekly reflections connecting course content, personal insight and thoughts, real-world observation, and ethical and faith-based (optional, but welcomed) perspectives. These are not simply academic exercises or “busy-work”-they are opportunities to reflect and apply learned content, as well as to grow in emotional intelligence, empathy, and discernment.
- Engagement in Experiential Learning Activities: Students will engage in real-world case study discussions, group problem solving, evidence-based psychological tools and assessment exercises, wellness-based learning practices (e.g. grounding, observation, reflective listening, etc.). **The goal of these engagements is understanding not solely memorizing.**
- Midterm assessments: A structured exam or applied project assessing knowledge of foundational abnormal psychology concepts, diagnostic criteria, and theory-to-practice integration. Students **may or may not** have two options, 1.) Traditional written exam or 2.) Applied case-based analysis presentation. The option for choices fosters academic confidence, individual learning strengths, and autonomy.
- Course Final Demonstration of Mastery: Students will complete a capstone project demonstrating an understanding of a specific disorder, treatment frameworks, cultural and ethical reflections, faith-sensitive considerations where appropriate, and scholarly research engagement. Creative formats of this final that are permitted with prior approval may include: recorded presentations, written research analysis, clinical case walkthrough, multiple choice or public-education style awareness campaign. Full details and requirements will be outlined on canvas and in class. **You learn best when you express your voice and perspectives!**

- Professionalism and Respect: Students will maintain professionalism, confidentiality, and respect in class conversations, given the emotions, and sensitive nature of course content.
- We will model compassion, decorum, and grace as we discuss mental health and human experiences.
- Academic Integrity: Honesty, originality, and ethical conduct are expected. Students must complete their own work and cite sources appropriately. **Integrity strengthens both scholarship and character.**
- Communication and Support: Students are encouraged to communicate openly, ask questions, and seek support early. Office hours and scheduled appointments are available for: academic help, mentorship, encouragement, and optional prayer or faith conversations. **You are not expected to navigate the course alone. We will walk this journey together!**

Student Support and Office Hours

I am committed to supporting your growth, learning, and success in this course. You are welcome to schedule meeting times with me to discuss course content, assignments, study strategies, academic questions, or personal encouragement as needed. I also offer space for faith-based support and prayer if you personally request it. Please use my scheduling link at the top of your syllabus to make an appointment. **A minimum of 12 hours' notice is required for cancellations or rescheduling, unless it is an emergency.** If the listed times don't accommodate your schedule, I am happy to work with you—simply email me or speak with me after class, and we will coordinate a suitable time. Effective and wholesome communication is significantly important to me, we are in this TOGETHER! My door—and my heart—are open to supporting your academic success, well-being, and personal development here at PLNU.

Content Warning*

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In Abnormal Psychology, all the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics may include but are not limited to suicide intentionality or ideation, gender, sexuality, various mental health disorders such as, schizophrenia, dementia, developmental disorders, etc. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of

expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of abnormal psychology, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Trigger Warning*

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive several types of information. In Abnormal Psychology, we will cover a variety of topics, some of which you may find triggering. These topics may include but are not limited to, suicide intentionality or ideation, gender, sexuality, substance abuse, etc. Each time these topics appears in a reading or unit; it is marked on the syllabus. The experience of being triggered versus intellectually challenged are different. The main difference is that an individual must have experienced trauma to experience being triggered, whereas an intellectual challenge has nothing to do with trauma. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include leaving class while the topic is discussed or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center. Should you choose to sit out on discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material; but we can discuss if there are other methods for accessing that material, and for assessing your learning on that material. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of abnormal psychology, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Pertinent Contact information

Due to the nature of the content within this course, individuals **may** experience various emotions or sensitivity regarding a certain topic. Should you experience any feelings of discomfort, disturbances, or simply need to talk to someone below you will find a list of contact numbers that you are free to use at your discretion. Of course, I along with PLNU counselors and therapist would be more than happy to assist you during work hours.

PLNU Counseling center (619) 849-3020 located in Taylor Hall. Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; closed 12:15 p.m-12:45 p.m. and for university holidays.

Access & Crisis 24 Hour Hotline (SD County) 1-888-724-7240

National Suicide Prevention Line 1-800-273-8255

211 Resource Line

Sexual Assault Crisis Line & Referral number is 1 (888) 385-4657

In an emergency call 911 or Campus Police 24-Hour Emergency: (619) 849-2525

Spiritual Care*

Please know that PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the [Office of Spiritual Life and Formation](#).

State AuthorizationⓈ

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

PLNU Copyright PolicyⓈ

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.]

PLNU Recording NotificationⓈ

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy★

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality, they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy★

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center, [by email](#) or phone at 619-849-2533. Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines approved accommodations. Professors are able to view a student's approved accommodations through Accommodate.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their approved accommodations in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive; as such, clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability-related need should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. In accordance with ADA, accommodations cannot constitute a fundamental alteration to course outcomes; therefore, planning ahead is vital in establishing appropriate accommodations for equal access to this course. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC eligibility process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any accommodations.

PLNU Academic Behavior PolicyⓈ

Both faculty and students at Point Loma Nazarene University have the right to expect a safe and ordered environment for learning. Students are expected to take the initiative to learn and conduct themselves in a mature and civil manner in the classroom environment. Any student behavior that is disruptive or threatening is a serious affront to Point Loma Nazarene University as a learning community. Students who fail to adhere to these behavioral standards may be subject to disciplinary action, including removal from class or further university sanctions. For a full definition of disruptive behavior, response procedures, and the appeal process, please consult the [Academic Behavior Policy](#) in the [University Catalog](#)

PLNU Artificial Intelligence (AI) PolicyⓈ

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc.) is **prohibited** in this course for any aspect of your work, including idea generation, drafting, editing, or final submissions. This course is designed to assess your independent critical thinking, writing, and research skills without the assistance of AI technologies. Any reliance on AI tools in this course is subject to an academic honesty violation.

Language and belonging*

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced a bias incident regarding language, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination*

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the [Title IX Office](#). Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the [Title IX Office](#).

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact [Counseling Services](#) or [consult the list of campus pastors](#).

If you (or someone you know) has experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources via the [Nondiscrimination and Anti-harassment Policy](#).

PLNU Attendance and Participation PolicyⓈ

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

PLNU Course Modality Definitions*

1. Online Courses: These are courses with class meetings where all instruction and interaction are fully online.
 - a. Synchronous Courses: At least one class meeting takes place at a designated time.
 - b. Asynchronous Courses: All class meetings are asynchronous.
2. Hybrid Courses: These are courses with class meetings that take place both in the classroom and online synchronously and/or asynchronously.
3. In-Person Courses: These are courses that meet in person with the instructor and students in a physical classroom setting. With approval by the area dean, this may include up to 25% of qualified class interactions through a Learning Management System (such as Canvas).

In some courses, a portion of the credit hour content will be delivered asynchronously, and attendance will be determined by submitting the assignments by the posted due dates. See [Academic Policies](#) in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog.

Asynchronous Attendance/Participation Definition

A day of attendance in asynchronous content is determined as contributing a substantive note, assignment, discussion, or submission by the posted due date. Failure to meet these standards will result in an absence for that day. Instructors will determine how many asynchronous attendance days are required each week.

Use of TechnologyⓈ

In order to be successful in the online or hybrid environment, you'll need to meet the minimum technology and system requirements; please refer to the [Technology and System Requirements](#) information. Additionally, students are required to have headphone speakers, microphone, or webcams compatible with their computer available to use. Please note that any course with online proctored exams requires a computer with a camera (tablets are not compatible nor allowable) to complete exams online.

Problems with technology do not relieve you of the responsibility of participating, turning in your assignments, or completing your class work.

Loma Writing Center

Getting feedback from the Loma Writing Center while you're in the process of working on an assignment is a great way to improve the quality of your writing and develop as a writer. You are encouraged to talk with a trained writing consultant about getting started on an assignment, organizing your ideas, finding and citing sources, revising, editing for grammar, and polishing final drafts, and more.

Walk-ins are welcome, but we recommend making an appointment in advance. For information about how to make in-person or online appointments, see [Loma Writing Center webpage](#) or visit the Loma Writer Center on the first floor of the Ryan Library, room 221.

- [Appointment Calendar](#)
- [Website](#)
- [Email](#)

LomaBooks Instructions for StudentsⓈ:

Note: For courses using materials available through LomaBooks

This course is part of our course material delivery program, [LomaBooks](#). The bookstore will provide each student with a convenient package containing all required physical materials; all digitally delivered materials will be integrated into Canvas.

You should have received an email from the bookstore confirming the list of materials that will be provided for each of your courses and asking you to select how you would like to receive any printed components (in-store pick up or home delivery). If you have not done so already, please confirm your fulfillment preference so the bookstore can prepare your [LomaBooks](#) materials.

Assignments At-A-Glance

Below, you will find a tentative course calendar that outlines week by week readings, lectures and discussion topics. Should anything change depending on understanding or class progression you will be notified immediately within Canvas. Additionally, within Canvas you will find the detailed outlines of each week's assignments, discussions, quizzes and information regarding this course's final.

Week	Topic	Comer & Comer (10e)	DSM-5-TR Use	Typical Workload
1	Understanding Abnormal Psychology	Ch. 1 – Abnormal Psychology: Past & Present	Purpose & organization of DSM	Intro, Class expectation, Syllabus, discussion
2	Models of Psychopathology	Ch. 2 – Models of Abnormality	Conceptual (no criteria)	Discussion or short reflection
3	Clinical Assessment & Diagnosis	Ch. 3 – Clinical Assessment, Diagnosis, & Treatment	Navigating diagnostic structure	Quiz or brief applied task
4	Anxiety Disorders	Ch. 4 – Anxiety Disorders	Anxiety disorder criteria	DSM case application OR discussion
5	Obsessive-Compulsive & Related Disorders	Ch. 5 – Obsessive-Compulsive & Related Disorders	Differential diagnosis focus	Applied worksheet or reflection

6	Trauma- & Stressor-Related Disorders	Ch. 6 – Trauma- & Stressor-Related Disorders	PTSD & stressor criteria	Reflection OR applied task
7	Mood Disorders	Ch. 7 – Mood Disorders	Depressive & bipolar criteria	Discussion + midterm preparation
8	MIDTERM WEEK	Review Ch. 1–7	Diagnostic reasoning synthesis	Midterm (case-based or exam)
9	Suicide & Related Concerns	Ch. 8 – Suicide & Related Behaviors	Risk assessment considerations	Short applied assignment
10	Eating Disorders	Ch. 9 – Eating Disorders	Diagnostic thresholds & specifiers	Quiz and case reflection
11	Substance-Related & Addictive Disorders	Ch. 10 – Substance-Related Disorders	Substance use criteria	Applied activity
12	Personality Disorders	Ch. 11 – Personality Disorders	Cluster overview & critique	Discussion OR worksheet
13	Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders	Ch. 12 – Schizophrenia Spectrum	Psychotic disorder criteria	Media analysis or quiz
14	Somatic & Dissociative Disorders	Ch. 13 – Somatic Symptom & Dissociative Disorders	Differential diagnosis	Short applied task
15	Neurodevelopmental Disorders	Ch. 14 – Neurodevelopmental Disorders	ASD & ADHD overview	Final project preparation
16	FINAL ASSESSMENT	—	Integrated application	Final paper / project