

# PSYC 32a - Psychopathology: Disease, Risk, and Resilience

## Brandeis University

Summer 2026

🕒 Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.



Via Zoom:



Course Website:

### Fulfilling Major Requirements

This course fulfills the SS graduation requirement.

### Prerequisites

PSYC 10a – An introductory understanding of psychological research and approaches to studying human behavior is foundational for this course.



#### Instructor Information

- Katie Parisi, Ph.D. (*she/her*)
- [kathrynparisi@brandeis.edu](mailto:kathrynparisi@brandeis.edu)



#### Student Hours

- Tuesdays, after class, 11:15am-12:15pm (and by appointment)
  - Location: over zoom
- I am also always happy to talk after class!



**What to bring to student hours:** Class content and questions; writing/brainstorming; support; psychology as a career/academia; my research or clinical work; your interests in psychology, development, or psychopathology. Happy to just get to know you. I am passionate about helping students talk through career pathways, and more specifically, post-graduate plans, applying to jobs and graduate school, work-life balance as a parent/person who has many interests, etc.

**Who am I?** I am a licensed clinical psychologist in the state of Rhode Island. I obtained my Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the University of Arkansas, my predoctoral clinical internship in Health Service Psychology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, and most recently finished a two-year, postdoctoral fellowship in Early Childhood Psychology at Brown University's Warren Alpert Medical School. I am a mom of two little boys, love the beach,

traveling, live music and dancing, and crafting/sewing costumes for all occasions. I am looking forward to getting to know each of you!

I strive to be as accessible to you as possible this semester. Please see below for some points about reaching me.

- When emailing, please put PSY 32a first in the subject line.
- Please expect a response within 24 hours (weekdays) or 48 hours (weekends). I typically do not respond on weekends or holidays, so responses might be slower at these times.
- **Please make sure you have checked the syllabus before emailing me about assignments.**

## **Course Description**

Psychopathology is the scientific study of the behaviors and the syndromes that are considered to deviate from normative development and functioning. The issue of what constitutes “normal” vs. “abnormal” is one of the core concepts addressed in this course. Additionally, we will explore current theoretical and empirical perspectives related to the diagnostics etiology, phenomenology, and treatment of mental disorders. This course will introduce the complexity of multiple perspectives, and the importance of empirically informed approach to the development of psychopathology, risk, incidence/prevalence, and resilience.

## **Course Objectives**

By the end of the semester, you should be able to...

- Explain why behaviors and traits are categorized as pathological and debate the problems with the existing diagnostic systems.
- Contextualize the inherent complexity of psychopathology, and the need to integrate multiple perspectives in delineating their etiology, course, and treatment.
- Analyze research in psychopathology, and its implications for how we diagnose and treat disorders.
- Critically evaluate the relationship between research and clinical practice.

## **Course Content Approaches**

There are two approaches to interpreting and evaluating empirical studies that you will utilize when reading articles in this course:

### ***1) Levels of Analysis***

To fully understand psychology, we need to draw on three levels of analysis: Brain, Individual, and Group. These different levels of analysis interact with each other. Using a BIG approach will serve you well in future courses and research!



**B (Brain):** What are the neural and physiological correlates of thoughts and behavior? The level of the brain refers to mechanisms of mental processes and behavior (e.g., genetic, biochemical, neural, information processing).



**I (Individual):** What are the contents of our thoughts and behavior? The level of the individual refers to the content of mental processes and behavior (e.g., beliefs, goals, motivations, attitudes).



**G (Group):** How do other people (e.g., communities, culture, friends, family) influence our psychological processes? The level of the group refers to the impact of our social environment.

## 2) **QuALMRI (Question, Alternatives, Logic, Methods, Results, Inferences)**

QuALMRI is a tool used to facilitate the ability to summarize, interpret, and critically evaluate the logic and design of psychological experiments. In this course, you will use this method to think about both research and writing. We will discuss this approach in more detail on the first day of class.

### **Text Resources**

Have you ever bought a required textbook that you barely used? Due to the content of this course, **there is no required textbook!** Instead, readings will be primarily recent empirical research articles and excerpts directly from the DSM-5. This will allow course content to be informed by the most up-to-date information available in the field. In addition, I hope that having no textbook will reduce costs and make this class more accessible.

Brandeis students have access to the DSM-5 online. Here's the permalink to the catalog record which has the access link:

[https://search.library.brandeis.edu/permalink/o1BRAND\\_INST/nmaao4/alma9924180355701921](https://search.library.brandeis.edu/permalink/o1BRAND_INST/nmaao4/alma9924180355701921)

### **Accessibility and Accommodations**

Brandeis seeks to create a learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all students, and I want to support you in your learning. If you think you may require disability accommodations, you will need to work with Student Accessibility Support (SAS) (781-736-3537, [access@brandeis.edu](mailto:access@brandeis.edu)). You can find helpful student FAQs and other resources on the SAS website, including guidance on how to know whether you might be eligible for support from SAS: <https://www.brandeis.edu/accessibility/index.html>. If you already have an accommodation letter from SAS, please provide me with a copy as soon as you can so that I can ensure effective

implementation of accommodations for this class. You should provide the accommodation letter at least 48 hours before an exam.

## **Course Assignments and Grading**

### **Preparation & Participation (40%)**

Success in this 4-credit hour course is based on the expectation that you will **attend all classes**. **Activities completed in class cannot be made up**. Outside of class time, you are expected to spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.). Readings should be done **prior to** class meetings.

- **Weekly Reflections (10%):** Each week after reading, you are required to create a forum post on Perusal where you comment directly on a reading and/or respond to a classmate's comments. Reflections should include **should respond to at least two of the assigned readings**. Reflections should be well-articulated and demonstrate thoughtful consideration to the readings. Reflections should go beyond saying whether you agree or disagree with the authors' findings or providing an emotional reaction (e.g., *I was surprised* or *I didn't like this paper*). A good response should critique a paper or ask a question using any aspect of QuALMRI. Here are some general ideas for discussion starters:
  - Ask a clarifying question about the methods or results of a paper
  - Link a study to another study from the week or earlier in the semester
  - Suggest a future study that builds upon questions left open by the papers
  - Come up with new questions or hypotheses related to the readings
  - Discuss the limitations or significance of the study.
  - Make an inference beyond what the article discussion said, for example, you can
    - a. Apply research findings to patterns you might have observed IRL (*in vivo*)
    - b. Tear it apart! (respectfully and with good reason)
    - c. End with a question for the class and/or start discussion

Submit on Perusal by 5pm **on Sunday before** class. Submission prior to the deadline will receive full credit. Submissions after the deadline but before class will receive partial credit. Any submission after class begins will receive no credit.

### ***Class Participation***

Please arrive on time and ready to learn. Engagement in class means being prepared to make thoughtful contributions to class discussions while being respectful towards others and their ideas. The use of personal devices other than for class activities is not permitted, but we will take a break during class.



***What if I do not feel comfortable participating or speaking in class?*** I understand that some people feel more or less comfortable speaking in front of others. Activities in this class are designed to be opportunities to practice public speaking and develop confidence. If you are feeling anxious or uncomfortable about speaking in class, please meet with me so we can create a personalized plan for your participation in this course.

***Group work – 20% of your grade***

Throughout the semester there will be group activities. *Students who miss group work cannot make up the work individually, so attend class and stay in contact with your group to maintain your participation.*

***Vignettes – 10% of your grade***

We will work on several case studies, usually in class. You will be asked to submit your work individually for credit.

**Fictional Diagnostic Report – 25% of your grade**

Final paper, 6-8 pages long, using 12- point font and one-inch margins, will be due on August 7<sup>th</sup>. This paper will be a diagnostic report for a fictional character. A rubric will be provided.

**Exams –35% of your grade**

There will be two *non-cumulative* exams. These will be administered on Moodle. Your lower score will be worth 15% of your grade and the other will be worth 20%.

Your final grade will be based upon the following percentage-point breakdown:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	E
100-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-65	<64.5

**Course Policies**

**Attendance**

Attendance in this course is expected and required for completion of in-class and group assignments. Much of our learning happens through discussion so, any absence from class impacts your learning. These learning experiences are almost impossible to make up individually.

**Late Policy**

I will not accept late submissions of group work. Individual work will be accepted up to 3 days after they are due with the following deductions: 1 day late, 10% deduction; 2 days late, 20% deduction; 3 days late, 30% deduction.

### **Class Etiquette**

**Respect** We all come to class with an interest in psychology, yet we are all also unique. Just as scholarly discussion and debate will occur in this class, so too must respect for one another's distinct backgrounds and perspectives. Maintaining professionalism is critical. That said, despite our best efforts, sometimes the impact of our words and behaviors may not always match our intent, and in turn may impact others in ways we may not foresee (e.g., using pejorative terms, making assumptions, etc.). Things happen, and no one is perfect. If this does happen, I do encourage you to voice – professionally – that you disagree with something so that we could learn from one another about how we can strive to understand and implement new information and perspectives. Further, I welcome and encourage all of you to share with me any thoughts they may have about potential ways I can improve the inclusiveness of my teaching, or how we can improve the inclusiveness of our classroom discussions.

**Technology** All phones should be muted or silenced and put away before the start of class to allow us to focus. Technology should never be used for outside coursework or for online browsing during our class. This technology policy may be revised during our semester to better align with our learning goals. **We will take a brief break during class during which checking messages is acceptable, as long as your attention can be brought back to the second half of class.**

### **Academic Integrity**

Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student's own effort. Infringement of academic integrity by a student subject that student to serious penalties, which may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University or other sanctions. Please consult [Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities](#) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. *Student work may be submitted to plagiarism software to verify originality.* A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic integrity as they apply to a specific course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards. Citation and research assistance can be found at [Brandeis Library Guides - Citing Sources](#).

Any portion of your work that draws from an outside source must follow APA citation guidelines (7th edition). Please be careful when taking notes such that you are not copying and pasting, but rather paraphrasing main ideas to avoid accidental plagiarism. **Please also remember that poor citation does not have to be intentional to be considered plagiarism—so when in doubt, cite!**

*Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions about what is or is not plagiarism.*

In addition, see below for brief definitions of different forms of plagiarism and what not to do:

- **Plagiarism:** Taking undeserved or unwarranted credit for something which is not yours.
- **Severe plagiarism** (a.k.a., “copying”): Deliberately misrepresenting part of another person’s work as your own.
- **Irresponsible plagiarism** (a.k.a., “omission”): Quoting from or paraphrasing a source without giving credit to the source.
- **Self-plagiarism** (a.k.a., “re-using”): Using previous work from another context (e.g., another class) without citing that this work was used previously.

## Collaboration

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work and our growth as people. For individual assignments in this course, I encourage you to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc.), you must also acknowledge this assistance on a separate page at the end of your document or assignment. This is a practice that you will continue throughout your scientific career.

## A note about AI Generative Tools

Machine learning and AI technologies, like ChatGPT, might be tempting to use for writing and other assignments. \*Please\* be mindful that for the reasons stated above in our academic integrity policy, all writing and other assignments should be prepared by the student. You may not use any AI tools in this course.

## Course Schedule

*\*All dates and assignments are tentative and subject to change.*

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Agenda</u>	<u>Assignments Due</u>
1	6/2	Course Introduction Introduction to Psychopathology	✓ Class survey ✓ Group Check-In
	6/4	Models of Psychopathology	✓ Submit Vignette 1 at end of class
2	6/9	Principles and Practice	✓ Reflection 1 due 6/08 @ 5 p.m. ✓ Submit Vignette 2
	6/11	Diagnosis, Assessment, and Intervention	✓ <i>Read:</i> EBT review before class ✓ Submit Group Activity 1
3	6/16	Neurodevelopmental Disorders I: Autism Spectrum Disorder and Applied Behavior Analysis	✓ Reflection 2 due 6/15 @ 5 p.m. ✓ Submit Group Activity 2

	6/18	Neurodevelopmental Disorders II: ADHD Exam Review	✓ Submit Vignette 3
4	6/23	<b>EXAM 1</b>	Watch: <i>A Beautiful Mind</i>
	6/25	Schizophrenia Spectrum	✓ Group Activity 3
5	6/30	Trauma and Stressor Related Disorders	✓ Reflection 3 due 6/29 @ 5 p.m. ✓ Submit Vignette 4
	7/02	Dissociative Disorders	✓ Group Activity 4
Weekend Watch: <i>Silver Linings Playbook</i>			
6	7/07	<b>Internalizing Disorders</b> Bipolar	✓ Reflection 4 due 7/05 @ 5 p.m. ✓ Vignette 5
	7/09	Depressive Disorders, and Suicide	✓ Infographic Group Activity
7	7/14	Anxiety, OCD,	✓ Reflection 5 due 7/13 @ 5 p.m. ✓ Infographic Group Activity
	7/16	Health/Somatic, Feeding and Eating Disorders, Sleep	✓ Submit Vignette 6- Final Paper Proposal
8	7/21	Substance Use Disorders	✓ Reflection 6 due 7/20 @ 5 p.m. ✓ Infographic Presentations
	7/23	Neurocognitive Disorders	✓ Vignette 7
Weekend Watch: <i>Girl, Interrupted</i>			
9	7/28	Personality Disorders I	✓ Reflection 7 due 7/27 @ 5 p.m. ✓ Group Activity 6
	7/30	Personality Disorders II	✓ Vignette 8
10	8/04	Peer Review Exam Review Session	✓ Full draft of paper for class ✓ Group Activity 7
	8/06	<b>EXAM 2</b>	
<b>Final Paper Due 8/07</b>			