Course Description

This course will provide an introduction to both the scientific and applied aspects of clinical psychology. A central focus will be on the dialectics of science and practice, that is, the dynamic interplay of the basic and the applied, the ways that scientific theorizing and research form the foundation for effective and responsible applied activities, and the ways that applied work provides material to be examined in a scientific fashion. We shall examine the principal paradigms in clinical psychology and allied professions such as psychiatry and social work; the nature and classification of psychopathological conditions; diagnosis and assessment; psychological intervention; ethical issues in research and practice; and emerging subdisciplines such as health psychology and forensic psychology.

A career in clinical psychology makes both intellectual and emotional demands. To my mind there are few professions that require this blend of the cognitive and affective. I hope in this course to help students understand both the challenges and the rewards that serious study in clinical psychology offers. Clinical psychology is not for the faint-hearted or for those who are not prepared to work really hard, but the rewards are many.

There are many career paths available to those with a doctoral degree in clinical psychology. Academic clinical psychology, the path I chose many years ago, is one such option. I will be able to tell students a great deal about this kind of career. I have worked as well in the more applied realm, and here too there are many opportunities I will discuss that are available to clinical psychologists.

There are important moral and political implications in what clinical psychologists do – what they choose to research, what assessment and therapeutic procedures they develop and employ, and what goals they help their clients work towards. Throughout the course, social, political, philosophical, and ethical considerations will provide a broad context for our study.

One of the leitmotifs of the course will be the role of paradigms and personal biases in the conduct of scientific investigations and in clinical work such as psychological assessment and intervention. Increasingly mentioned in the popular press is the aphorism that if the only tool you have is a hammer, the more you tend to treat everything as if it were a nail. This folksy observation actually reflects some important thinking in a branch of philosophy called epistemology, the study of how we know that we know. If that sounds confusing, it will become less so as the semester unfolds.
My lectures, our class discussions, and the readings will complement and, I hope, enrich each other. **I strongly advise against enrolling in this course unless you are prepared to keep up with the readings, attend class faithfully, pay close attention in class, and study hard.** I cannot emphasize this too much. Like other areas of psychology, clinical psychology is intellectually demanding, but you wouldn’t be at this university if you were not capable of meeting these demands. But being smart is not enough. You have to hunker down and take this course seriously. I can promise that you will come away from this course with a deep understanding of the field of clinical psychology, but this can happen only if you commit to it as much as I will. If you want to learn more about me, you can check my Wikipedia page at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerald_Davison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerald_Davison)

**Learning Objectives**

Simply put, I hope students will learn what is going on in clinical psychology as an applied scientific enterprise; that they will come to understand the basics of psychopathology, assessment, and especially intervention; and that they will appreciate the broad social context for the past, present, and future of the field of clinical psychology.

**Prerequisite(s):** PSYC 100.

**Recommended Preparation**

I will assume that students have not forgotten everything they learned in an introductory psychology course. However, especially motivated upper-level students who have not taken an introductory psychology course may enroll in our course after obtaining my approval.

**Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

We will be reading the following textbook in its entirety:


I suggest you go to [www.cengage.com](http://www.cengage.com) and consider the options for having this book available during the semester. One option is renting the book. There may also be used copies available on the web, e.g., Amazon, or in the USC Bookstore. Other options for purchasing the book new are available, including the USC Bookstore but also on Amazon.

The first half week’s reading is posted on Blackboard. It is an excerpt from a high-level textbook that was used in an introductory psychology course recently taught at USC. This selection covers the currently recognized mental disorders per DSM-5, the fifth edition of the official classification system of the American Psychiatric Association, published in 2013. Other assignments (very few in number) other than the Trull-Prinstein textbook will be available on Blackboard.

**Description of Assignments**
The readings are specified below under **Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown.** To help pace yourself, I have indicated in brackets [ ] the approximate number of pages per week.

A word on my lectures and the assigned readings. What we talk about in class will relate to the readings, but by and large, **my lectures will not entail a review of the textbook.** To be sure, I will often refer to the readings during class, enough so that it would behoove you to bring the textbook to every class. And with some of the chapters, I will make specific comments and elaborations, emphasizing some sections that I believe are particularly important or controversial. (For devotees of Bill Maher, this part of my lectures may remind you of his “New Rules.”) But I strongly advise you not to adopt the mindset that I will be going over the textbook to any great extent in class. A corollary of this friendly caution is that, if you want to do well in the course or even just pass it, you should attend all the classes. The three examinations will cover both the readings and the lectures, and it is very unlikely that a satisfactory grade can be earned without both attending class and doing the readings with care and focus.

You will see that I am not following the order of the chapters in the textbook. Briefly stated: I believe that some of the material in the first few chapters of the book will have more meaning for you after we have read and discussed some of the later chapters. For example, the history of clinical psychology will make more sense to you after we have studied what clinical psychologists actually do. I assure you that I will help make the connections and provide the context so that things will make sense.

The weekly reading assignments are not excessive. I see the readings as something to **study,** not just read. There is a difference, and we’ll talk about this during our first class meeting on January 11.

**Exams and Grading Breakdown**

Each of the three examinations will cover about 1/3 of the course. They will be some combination of short answer, essay, and multiple-choice. Each exam will account for 30% of your course grade. The remaining 10% will be based on your class attendance, for which records will be kept. The first two exams will take place during a regular class session and the last exam will take place at the time prescribed by the University. Please attend to the details in the weekly Course Schedule below.

Please do not make any travel plans that interfere with your taking any of the exams. This applies especially for the final, which has been scheduled by the Registrar to take place late in exam period. You will receive a failing grade for any exam you miss without a documented medical excuse.

I do not plan to provide extra credit opportunities. I believe that by not making the three exams cumulative, I am creating the opportunity for conscientious students to do well.

I will be assigning grades according to a predetermined set of cut-offs. I have consulted widely both within USC and outside of USC. The following cut-offs represent a strong consensus and is furthermore what I have myself used in the past:
A: 93-100%
A-: 90-92%
B+: 87-89%
B: 83-86%
B-: 80-82
C+: 77-79%
C: 73-76%
C-: 70-72%
D+: 67-69%
D: 60-66%
F: 59 and below

What this means is that the performance of your fellow students will not affect your own grades. I hope that the resulting distribution of grades will be heavier on the upside than on the downside. It’s up to each of you.

Additional Policies

On the use of computers in class: Many students will want to take notes in class on their computers. Please, as a courtesy to each other and to myself, do not use your computers to email or to surf the Internet (except possibly for material directly related to the class). Thank you.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics/Daily Activities</th>
<th>Readings and Homework</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>January 19, 21</td>
<td>Trull &amp; Prinstein (T/P), Chapter 5. Diagnosis and Classification of Psychological Problems [26]</td>
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| 3    | January 26, 28          | T/P, Chapter 12. Psychotherapy: The Psychodynamic Perspective; [22]; [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTHM2o3dva0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTHM2o3dva0) (6 mins)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0S_L8efaJ-E (4 mins)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ySslRwE3Lk (55 mins) |
| 4    | February 2, 4           | T/P, Chapter 13. Psychotherapy: Phenomenological and Humanistic-Existential Perspectives [24]; Fritz Perls at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=it0j6Flxlog](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=it0j6Flxlog); Carl Rogers at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24d-FEpTyJ8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24d-FEpTyJ8) |
| 5    | February 9, 11          | T/P, Chapter 14. Behavioral and Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives [29]; Albert Ellis at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odn0F8V3g6g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odn0F8V3g6g) |
| 6    | February 16, 18 (First Exam) | First exam, Thursday, February 18, VPD-110, 10:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. Covers material through Behavioral and Cognitive Perspectives, |
| 7    | February 23, 25         | T/P, Chapter 4. Research Methods in Clinical Psychology; and Chapter 11. Psychological Interventions [58] |
### Week 8
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<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>March 1, 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>T/P, Chapter 6. The Assessment Interview; and Chapter 8. Personality Assessment [61]</td>
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### Week 9
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<th>Dates</th>
<th>March 8, 10</th>
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<tr>
<td>T/P, Chapter 7. The Assessment of Intelligence; and Chapter 9. Behavioral Assessment [46]</td>
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### Week 10
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<th>Dates</th>
<th>March 22, 24</th>
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<tr>
<td>T/P Chapter 10. Clinical Judgment; and Chapter 15 Group Therapy, Family Therapy [44]</td>
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### Week 11
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<th>Dates</th>
<th>April 26, 20</th>
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### Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards [https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/]. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/).

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity [http://equity.usc.edu/] or to the Department of Public Safety [http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us]. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/] provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

### Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute [http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali] which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html] provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus unfeasible, USC Emergency Information [http://emergency.usc.edu/](http://emergency.usc.edu/) will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.