Childhood Psychopathology Syllabus

Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

PSYO 3129 Fall 2026

Dalhousie University operates in the unceded territories of the Mi'kmaw, Wolastoqey, and Peskotomuhkati Peoples. These sovereign nations hold inherent rights as the original peoples of these lands, and we each carry collective obligations under the Peace and Friendship Treaties. Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights in Canada.

We recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies, and contributions have enriched the part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

Course Instructor(s)

Name	Email	Office Hours
Instructor Dr. Rebecca Tucker PhD, Clinical Psychology	Rebecca.Tucker@dal.ca	Tuesdays from 2:00pm – 4:00pm Drop-in, Office on 3319
TA Sarah Haggett PhD Student, Clinical Psychology	Sarah.Haggett@dal.ca	By Appointment

Course Description

This class examines a wide range of mental health disorders in children (e.g., autism, ADHD, anxiety). The goal is to gain a better understanding of the nature of these disorders, to learn about evidence-based assessment and treatment, and to review research findings in relation to children's mental health.

Course Prerequisites
PSYO 2000.03 or NESC 2007.03; PSYO 2220 is recommended.

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize symptoms of psychological disorders in children and adolescents
2. Describe and apply key theories relevant to child psychopathology
3. Describe how biopsychosocial factors influence the development and maintenance of childhood disorders
4. Identify evidence-based assessment and intervention practices for these disorders

5. Enhance consideration of personal, professional, and social responsibilities with respect to the mental health of children and adolescents.

Course Structure

Course Delivery
Lectures will be **in-person** and **synchronous**. In addition to some more traditional lecture components, other learning activities will be used as well (e.g., case studies, class discussion, videos, etc.)

Lectures
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:05 – 11:25am in LSC, Room P5260

Note on Lecture Recording:
Personal recording of lectures is not permitted without receiving prior consent. I will be recording all lectures (technology permitting) for those with approved accommodations. Access to the recordings will be provided automatically as I receive accommodations letters. If you do not receive access but believe you should have it, please reach out to me.

Course Materials

Mash, Wolfe, & Nguyen Williams. (2023). Child Psychopathology, 8th Edition

Both digital and paper versions of the textbook are available at Dalhousie bookstore: **PSYO 3129**

All required information and materials for the course can be found on the PSYO 3129 Brightspace page, including lecture slides and assessments. It will be helpful to check the webpage often as that is where I will post all relevant updates, lecture slides, and grades.

Assessment

Component	Weight (% of final grade)	Date(s)
Unit Quizzes	10%	See content schedule
Case Studies	30%	Case 1 – Tuesday October 27 Case 2 – Wednesday December 9
Pseudoscience in Child Psychopathology	15%	Monday December 7
Exams	45%	Midterm – Tuesday October 20 Final Exam – Scheduled by Registrar

Unit Quizzes (10% total; 2.5% each)
Unit quizzes will consist of 8-10 questions from each topic covered within that unit (e.g., if the unit covered 4 topics, then there will be 32-40 questions). The format of the questions may vary, including multiple choice, true/false, multi-select question, and/or matching. The **quizzes will open on Brightspace after the last class of the unit and remain available for 48 hours.** The dates that each quiz opens are marked on the content schedule (page 7).

These are **open-book quizzes**, which means you can use your notes, slides, and/or textbooks. However, you are not permitted to collaborate with your classmates on quizzes, seek out direct answers to specific questions online (e.g., on websites students post class notes/exams to), or use generative AI tools to come up with your answers.

The quizzes are **timed at *approximately* 1 minute per question** (i.e., 40 questions = 40 min). If you have kept up with course content and are ready to use your notes/textbook efficiently, you should be able to answer the questions within this time limit.

Case Studies (30% total; 15% each)
There are *two case studies*, which are assignments that require longer responses and test your ability to apply your learning to a "real-world" context. You will be required to evaluate a written clinical case by answering a series of questions (e.g., identifying potential causal factors, determining a likely diagnosis, identifying a treatment that you may suggest, etc.)

Assignment descriptions, questions, and grading guidelines will be provided on Brightspace on the dates below.

Case 1 is based on content in Units 1 & 2.
- Available: Tuesday September 29
- Due: Tuesday October 27 at 11:59pm

Case 2 is based on content from the whole course.
- Available: Thursday October 29
- Due: Wednesday December 9 at 11:59pm

Pseudoscience in Child Psychopathology (15%)
You will be asked to explore an example of pseudoscience within child psychopathology. A list of broad topics will be available for you to choose from and sign up for on Brightspace. If you have a topic that you are passionate about but is not on the list, reach out and we'll discuss whether it's appropriate.

A rubric, as well a document for completing part 1, will be provided closer to the assignment due date.

There are **two parts to this assignment**:

Part 1: You will need to find a piece of recent(-ish) media that makes a specific claim or provides information related to your selected topic. You will then need to **summarize the piece of media** you selected: how it's related to the broad topic you chose, what it said/claimed, how the information was used/conveyed, etc. You will also briefly **review related research evidence,** including the research it is based on (if any) and evidence that refutes it, making sure you are clear in why you think the evidence against it is more

trustworthy/compelling (i.e., how you know the original claim/information is, in fact, pseudoscientific).

Part 2: Your second job will be to record yourself completing **a brief TED-talk style audio** presentation that will be **shared to Brightspace**. The talk should be **brief, lasting only 4 – 5 minutes**.

The talk should summarize the information from Part 1, focusing primarily on summarizing the research and relating it to the way the original pseudoscientific information/claim is used in the media (and/or how it should/shouldn't be used).

Part 2 is designed specifically to encourage working on science communication skills, assessing how you communicate about topics related to this course outside of the classroom context and with different target audiences.

A few important things to consider when creating the talk:

- identify the key take home message(s) you want the public to know, then include enough key evidence that supports it
- summarize the information using plain language, sharing the research summary in a way that provides clear, engaging information for the general public – how people talk/present during TED-talks or radio/TV spots are good examples of what this might sound like
- you will be graded on things like how engaging your talk is, how accurately you summarize Part 1, whether you came up with a good take-home message that would be clear/understandable, etc.
- you will NOT be graded on things related to speaking quality or characteristics per se (e.g., whether you sound nervous, pronunciation of words, etc.)

Exams (45% total; 22.5% each)
There will be two in-person exams. Both exams will include a variety of question formats: multiple choice, true/false, select all that apply, and/or short answer. More information about the number of questions, question formats, and time allowed for the exams will be available closer to the exams.

The **final exam will be "loosely" cumulative**, in that (1) some topics come up throughout the course (e.g., definitions of abnormality), and (2) I might ask you to compare disorders we cover before the midterm with those we cover after. However, I will not ask detail-oriented questions about specific disorders that were covered before the midterm.

Conversion of numerical grades to final letter grades follows the undergraduate Dalhousie Grade Scale

A+ (90-100)	B+ (77-79)	C+ (65-69)	D (50-54)
A (85-89)	B (73-76)	C (60-64)	F (0-49)
A- (80-84)	B- (70-72)	C- (55-59)	

Course Accessibility

It is important to know that students are eligible for accommodations based on protected characteristics such as religion. If you have religious, cultural, or community-significant observances that conflict with course requirements, reach out to me to collaboratively find alternatives for completing the course requirements.

To begin the process of requesting a formal academic accommodation, contact the Student Accessibility Centre

If you already have formal accommodations, I will take note of those as I receive the letters and send a confirmation email after I complete anything I need to do on my end (e.g., add extra time to Brightspace, provide access to lecture recordings). Please reach out anytime if you have any formal accommodations that you need support to integrate into the structure of the course and/or if you think your accommodations have been missed.

Course Policies on Missed or Late Academic Requirements

Late Penalties for Papers
Papers and assignments are to be submitted in electronic format on Brightspace. Papers and assignments are due by 11:59pm on the date indicated in the schedule. **Late assignments will be assigned a penalty of 2% per day**.

Concern re: mark/grade
If you have a concern with a grade on an assignment, please document your concern(s) in writing and submit to Dr. Tucker. A meeting will be scheduled to address your concerns. All concerns must be raised within three weeks of the time when the mark is provided by the course instructor.

Student Declaration of Absence
Dalhousie University recognizes that students may experience short-term illness, distress, or other extenuating circumstances (such as caregiving duties; immediate family illness, injury or death; involvement in an accident; legal proceedings or being a victim of a crime) that may affect their ability to complete required graded academic requirements. SDA forms are a standardized way to handle student absences that interfere with the completion of graded academic requirements (exams, quizzes, presentations, papers, etc.)

Student declaration of absence forms cannot be used to reschedule assessments for leisure activities (e.g., going to the beach, leaving town on vacation). They also cannot be used to cover up lack of planning/preparation (e.g., forgetting to study, procrastinating on a paper). Using an SDA form for these purposes constitutes academic dishonesty and may make you subject to University discipline.

Here is the procedure you should follow if you experience short-term illness, distress or other extenuating circumstances that affects your ability to complete assessment components:

a) The SDA form or alternate verification of the absence must be submitted through Brightspace within three (3) calendar days following the last day of absence.

b) The SDA may only be used a maximum of 2 times throughout the term and may only cover 3 consecutive days of absence per form.

Here are the specific rules for each assessment component:

Late assignments: If you experience a short-term illness, distress or other extenuating circumstances in the 7 days prior to the paper/assignment deadline, you may submit an SDA. You will receive an extension equal to the number of days lost due to your circumstance, to a maximum of 3 days. You cannot submit 2 forms for a single assignment to get a 6-day extension.

Missed quiz: The SDA form must be **submitted via Brightspace AND you must notify me by email of your intention to use one before the quiz is due.** The notification email can be brief; it's just a precaution to make sure I know about it in time to extend quiz access on Brightspace.

Note, there are unique considerations with extending the availability of quizzes – **it may not always be possible to extend the quiz deadlines even with the SDA** and typically deferring tests works differently than receiving assignment extensions so make sure you reach out to Dr. Tucker ahead of time to discuss potential options.

Course Policies related to Academic Integrity & Artificial Intelligence

While students are allowed to discuss the assignments in this class and ask/answer questions amongst your peers, written assignments should be submitted individually and represent your own work.

Due to the nature of the assignments and the skills/knowledge they are assessing, **students may not use AI tools (e.g., Grammarly, ChatGPT) to assist with their coursework**. **Use of AI when it has been prohibited will be considered a violation of academic integrity.** Please contact me if you have any questions about this policy.

Course Content

Date	General Topic	Readings	Assessments
Sept 8	Getting Acquainted – Welcome to PSYO 3129!		
Sept 10	Introduction to Child Psychopathology	Chapter 1	
Sept 15	Theories and Causes	Chapter 2	
Sept 17	Research	Chapter 3	
Sept 22	Assessment & Diagnosis	Chapter 4	
Sept 24	Conceptualization & Treatment		**Unit Quiz 1 Opens**
Sept 29	Intellectual Developmental Disorder	Chapter 5	Case 1 Available
Oct 1	Autism Spectrum Disorders & Childhood Onset Schizophrenia	Chapter 6	
Oct 6	Communication and Learning Disorders	Chapter 7	
Oct 8	ADHD + Motor Disorders	Chapter 8	**Unit Quiz 2 Opens**
Oct 13	Open Class (Q&A re: Unit 2 content, case studies, etc.)		
Oct 15	**No Class**		
Oct 20	**In-class Midterm**		
Oct 22	Conduct Problems.	Chapter 9	
Oct 27	Depressive Disorders	Chapter 10	**Case 1 Due**
Oct 29	Bipolar Disorders		Case 2 Available
Nov 3	Anxiety Disorders	Chapter 11	
Nov 5	OCD and Related Disorders		
Nov 9	**Fall Break**		
Nov 11			
Nov 17	Trauma and Stress-Related Disorders	Chapter 12	**Unit Quiz 3 Opens**
Nov 19	Open Class (Q&A re: Unit 3 content, case studies, etc.)		
Nov 24	Eating and Feeding Disorders	Chapter 14	
Nov 26	Substance Use Disorders	Chapter 13	
Dec 1	Health-Related Disorders		**Unit Quiz 4 Opens**
Dec 3	Open Class (Q&A re: Unit 3 content, case studies, etc.)		
Dec 7	**No Class**		**Pseudoscience Assignment Due**
Dec 9	**No Class**		**Case 2 Due**

Notes. **Some dates and some topics may change**

Syllabus Appendix

(Formerly University Policies and Statements)

Below is a link to the new “Syllabus Appendix”, which can help direct you towards up-to-date supports, university policies, and guidelines.

Syllabus Appendix: Student Supports & University Statements, Policies, and Guidelines