PSY 9900 Assessment: Theory and Practice

Fall/Winter Meeting Time: Mondays 1:00PM-4:00PM
Meeting Location: WIRB 1110 (Fall); Westminster Hall, Room 20 (Winter)

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Course Description: The goal of this class is to introduce the major principles of, and approaches to, psychological assessment. We will focus on the areas of psychopathology, personality, and intellectual functioning. The course is designed to familiarize students with the scientific bases of rigorous psychological assessment and evaluation, and promote critical thinking about assessment practice across the lifespan. To this end, the course will highlight the conceptual processes underlying sound assessment, measurement development, as well as the strengths and limitations of current assessment and evaluation procedures. The companion practicum (9901; restricted to clinical stream graduate students) is designed to give students the fundamental applied skills and knowledge needed to administer common psychological assessments. Psychol 9900 has a conceptual focus, grounded in empirical evidence, whereas the practicum is applied, with the goal of providing students with fundamental skills in clinical assessment. Class size is limited to 15 students. In the case that student demand exceeds course capacity, enrolment preference will be given to clinical stream graduate students.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and office hours: You are expected to attend every class. If you are unable to attend, please let Dr. Kaufman and/or Dr. Hayden know in advance. Office hours for professors and teaching assistants are by appointment.

Textbooks

Other Required Readings: Weekly readings will be assigned. There is a lot of material and some
of it will be difficult. However, the readings are the most important part of the course. It is essential that you take the time to absorb the material so that you are prepared to discuss assigned readings every week. Since the readings are unevenly distributed throughout the course, we recommend keeping an eye on what is coming up and reading ahead for the heavier weeks. All readings will be provided to you via Owl.

**Participation:** Consistent, active student involvement is essential for success in this course. You are expected to attend class—having read and reflected on the required readings—and be prepared to discuss them thoughtfully with classmates.

**Weekly Thought Questions:** You are required to prepare 2 to 3 thought questions based on the readings each week. These questions will be used to guide class discussion. Your questions should not be simple factual questions (e.g., What is the definition of reliability? Who wrote the DSM?). Rather, like the thought papers described below, they should reflect critical thinking about assigned topics. Use questions for clarification, highlight what is being left out, identify discrepant perspectives, etc. These questions must be emailed to both instructors by 5pm on Sunday before class, so that we can effectively organize them to inform class discussion.

**Thought Papers (3-5 pages; one due per term; see due dates below):** The purpose of these papers is to encourage you to think critically and actively about the assigned readings and to formulate reactions to them that show deep engagement with the material. Your reactions to the readings could take many forms, including: critiquing or challenging the argument made by an author, discussing some of the assigned readings in relation to other readings assigned in a previous week, integrating ideas across readings, identifying and evaluating unexpressed assumptions in a reading, relating ideas in the readings to your own research, exploring the research implications of particular ideas, identifying the central theme of a reading or set of readings, describing why you think this is especially interesting or important, and so on. Your thought papers should NOT be summaries of the readings. We will be looking for creativity and the ability to develop and support a line of argument.

**Assessment Review and Item-Writing Papers (3-5 pages; one due per term; see due dates below):** The purpose of these papers is to demonstrate your understanding of measure development and validation. The first of these papers will focus on a review of the strengths and weaknesses of existing assessment measures in an area of research interest to you (e.g., existing measures of depression in childhood or adulthood). In this paper, you should consider issues such as (a) which specific measure or measures are mostly widely used in the area of research, (b) how these measures originally were validated (e.g., were measures developed empirically or rationally), (c) research that has accumulated in their support of this measure’s utility, and (d) ways in which assessment with a specific measure (e.g., the Beck Depression Inventories when assessing depression) or set of measures (depression measures) could be improved. Issues that could be discussed regarding how measures could be improved may involve discussion of the degree to which measure items are clearly written, evidence or the lack of evidence supporting construct validity and reliability for measure(s), and clarity and efficiency of administration.

The second of these will focus on the steps you would take to validate a hypothetical measure created to assess a construct of interest to you. You should include (a) a brief description of the
target construct, (b) measures of other constructs for the purposes of establishing convergent and discriminant validity, (c) how you would demonstrate your measure’s reliability, and (d) the most appropriate sample(s) to use to examine item properties and validity. Finally, include examples of items for your measure to show proficiency of item writing.

Exam: We will have an in-class examination at the conclusion of each term at the dates indicated below. Exams will consist of material covered throughout the duration of the course, including material presented in class and in the weekly readings. As with the thought papers, these exams will include items assessing critical thinking skills and the ability to connect concepts discussed in different classes over each term (e.g., how are considerations for developing measures related to basic reliability and validity issues).

Grading (For each term):

- 15% Thought Paper
- 15% Assessment/Item Writing Paper
- 30% Thought Questions, Class Preparation, and Participation
- 40% Exam

FALL TERM SYLLABUS AND READINGS

1. Sept. 9: Introduction to assessment (EK; EPH)


***Focus here on Section 10 on “Assessment and Intervention”

2. Sept. 16: Reliability and validity (EPH)


3. Sept. 23: No class (Instructors away for conference travel)

4. Sept 30: Test construction, calibration, and clinical significance *(EK)*


5. Oct. 7: Diagnosis of child and adult psychopathology *(EPH and EK)*

**Thought paper due by the start of class***


6. Oct. 14: No class (Thanksgiving Holiday)

7. Oct. 21: Clinical versus actuarial prediction; effects of base rates on interpretation of tests; clinical judgment (EPH)


**9. Nov. 4: No Class (Fall Reading Week)**


**10. Nov. 18: Assessment of the early home environment (EPH; Guest Pan Liu)**

TBD

**11. Nov. 25: Dimensional psychopathology assessment (EK)**

**Assessment review paper due by the start of class***


**12. Nov. 30: Course final exam (Final day of classes is Dec. 5th)**
1. Jan. 6: Temperament & personality theory *(EPH)*


3. Jan. 20: Projective and objective personality measures *(EPH and EK)*


Sackett, P. R., & Walmsley, P. T. (2014). Which personality attributes are most important in the workplace? *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 9*, 538-551.
4. Jan. 27: Biomarker assessment (EPH and EK)


5. Feb. 3: Assessment of stressful life events (EPH)


6. Feb. 10: Assessment of suicidality, child abuse, violence (EPH and EK)


7. Feb. 17: No class (Reading week)
8. Feb. 24: IQ/cognitive testing/achievement (EPH)

**Thought paper due by the start of class***


9. March 2: Neuropsychological testing (Guest: Ingrid Johnsrude)

10. March 9: Early assessment of intellectual and social function (Guest: Christina McDonnell)

11. March 16: Connecting assessment to treatment targets (EK)


12. March 23: Diversity issues in assessment (EPH & EK)

***Item writing and measure development paper due by the start of class***


APA’s Cultural Formulation Interview.

13. March 30: Course final exam (Final day of classes is April 3)
PSY 9901 Assessment Practicum

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Course Description: The goal of this practicum is to familiarize you with the major approaches to and instruments used in clinical assessment. It is designed to be taken in conjunction with the parallel course, and will have a more applied and clinical focus than PSY9900, which has a conceptual and empirical orientation. There will not be enough time to provide you with expertise in any particular assessment approach or instrument. However, you should leave this practicum with the fundamental skills necessary to prepare you for more advanced training.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation: You are expected to attend every tutorial and to honor agreed-upon practice sessions with other class members and the TAs. Throughout these sessions, active participation is expected. You will pair up with another classmate for the purposes of preparing to give various tests; such meetings are to be formally documented via email to the GTA. Please be prepared to discuss the readings, ask and answer questions, and participate in all exercises.

Course Preparation and Fulfillment of Monthly Requirements: As outlined below, we have identified training goals and activities to be completed on your own or with the TAs. Within each period identified, all training activities should be completed no later than the final date within that training period. For example, for the first training period spanning September 10th to October 25th, all training activities should be completed by October 25th at the very latest. These activities will include familiarizing yourself with various assessment measures (e.g., the WISC or WAIS) prior to practicing administration of these instruments. Other related activities will include textbook chapters related to practice activities and watching video demonstrations of various assessments. It is expected that you will complete activities prior to meeting times with the TAs so that meeting times devoted to practicing these measures are worthwhile and can serve as “troubleshooting” time for issues that you may run into when practicing an administration versus being spent entirely on providing basic background information.

Please recognize that, as budding clinicians, you bear some responsibility for insuring that you feel reasonably comfortable administering the tests covered in this practicum. Developing an awareness of areas in which you need further instruction or practice is an important skill for program students. If you are confused about test administration procedures after completing the assigned training, you should review the relevant webinars, practice additional administrations either alone or with a peer, and/or approach the GTA for help.
Textbooks

Assessment report: At the end of the year, you will submit one integrated psychological assessment report to the teaching assistants. See the syllabus below for due date.

**Grading:** The practicum will be graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis. To earn a grade of Satisfactory, attend class, demonstrate that you have read the readings, actively participate, and complete your assessment and the report in a timely fashion.

**FALL TERM SYLLABUS**

**Sept. 10 to Oct. 25: Orientation, Review of Monthly Goals, and WAIS Practice**
(1) Read or view the following:

- Read material on the WAIS in Groth-Marnat & Jordan Wright (*Handbook of Psychological Assessment*), Chapter 5, pages 139-196.


- View WAIS-IV Webinar from Pearson Testing Website: http://downloads.pearsonassessments.com/videos/WAIS-IV_Administration_Scoring_and_Basic_Interpr/lib/playback.html

(2) Review the WAIS with the TA during a mutually agreed-upon time. This will include the TA conducting demonstrations, and the TA observing you administering a WAIS.

(3) Administer and score **three** practice WAISs with a classmate during mutually agreed-upon times. Submit your scored tests to the TA for their review, providing the dates and times of the tests.

(4) Administer and score a practice WAIS with an undergraduate volunteer. You will be responsible for scheduling the assessment. Submit your scored test to the TA for their review.

**Oct. 21 to Nov. 25: WISC and Adaptive Functioning Skills Development**
(1) Read or view the following:
• Read material on the WISC from Groth-Marnat & Jordan Wright (Handbook of Psychological Assessment), Chapter 5, pages 139-196.


• OPTIONAL: View Sattler (Assessment of Children: Cognitive Foundations and Applications) Chapters on other intelligence measures (e.g., the WPPSI, Stanford Binet, etc).

• Sattler (Foundations of Behavioral, Social, and Clinical Assessment of Children and Resource Guide), Chapter 11 on Adaptive Behavior

• OPTIONAL: Read Sattler (Assessment of Children: Cognitive Foundations and Applications) Chapter 5 on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children

(2) Review the WISC with the TA during a mutually agreed-upon time. This will include the TA conducting demonstrations, and the TA observing you administering a WISC.

(3) Administer and score three practice WISCs administrations with a classmate during mutually agreed-upon times. Submit your scored tests to the TA for their review, providing the dates and times of the tests.

(4) Administer and score a practice WISC with a child volunteer. You will be responsible for scheduling the assessments. Submit your scored tests to the TA for their review.

WINTER TERM SYLLABUS AND READINGS

1. Jan. 6 to Feb. 3: Basic Clinical Interviewing Skills

(1) Read or view the following:

• Groth-Marnat & Jordan Wright (Handbook of Psychological Assessment), Chapter 3 on the Assessment Interview

• Sattler (Foundations of Behavioral, Social, and Clinical Assessment of Children and Resource Guide), Chapter 5 on General Interviewing Techniques and Chapter 7 on Other Interview Considerations

2. Feb. 3 to March 2: Psychiatric Diagnostic Assessment Skill Building

(1) Read or view the following:
• Sattler (Foundations of Behavioral, Social, and Clinical Assessment of Children and Resource Guide), Chapter 6 on Interviewing Children, Parents, Teachers, and Families

• SCID training DVDs

• Material on the KSADS

(2) Check out the SCID [can be accessed in the Clinical Test Library], and complete a mock administration with a partner while observed by the one of the TAs.

3. March 2 to April 6: Personality and Behavioral Assessment Skill Building

(1) Read or view the following:

• Groth-Marnat & Jordan Wright (Handbook of Psychological Assessment), Chapter 7 on the MMPI-2 and MMPI-2-RF.

• Sattler (Foundations of Behavioral, Social, and Clinical Assessment of Children and Resource Guide), Chapter 10 on Broad Measures of Behavioral, Social, and Emotional Functioning and of Parenting and Family Variables

• Dr. Dustin Wygant’s Overview of the MMPI-2-RF (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCartDkFDNM)

• Dr. Gloria Macow’s Overview of the MCMI: https://www.brainshark.com/pearsonassessments/vu?pi=zGAzQMBEuzC5WMz0&nodesktopflash=1

(2) Checkout an MMPI-2 [Can be accessed in the Clinical Test Library], and complete and score your or a partner’s MMPI-2 profile with a TA

(3) Integrated assessment report should be submitted to the TAs no later than 12pm on Friday, April 10th.