Research in Affective Science and Abnormal Psychology

Professor: Justin Dainer-Best
"Justin" (he/him)

Spring 2020

Course Number	Time	Location	Office Hours
PSY CL	W 1:30–3:30	Preston 128C	Wednesdays, 10:30–11:30

1 Overview

In this course, students will participate in laboratory research related to clinical psychology. Specifically, students will work on projects relevant to understanding the relationship between mood and cognition. There will be a weekly lab meeting in which we will discuss progress on ongoing projects, and students will take turns presenting relevant empirical articles. In addition to rotating weekly presentations, students will be required to complete two short papers and have the opportunity to participate in all levels of the research process. Students will learn to conduct basic clinical interviews and to program experiments. The course is open to any students with consent of the instructor, with a preference for students who are not in their final year at Bard.

We will divide our time between classroom discussions of relevant literature in the areas of depression, mood, and anxiety; discussion of the ethics and methodologies vital to research with clinical populations; and hands-on experience designing and running studies.

The research discussed in this course may cover topics that are sensitive or personal for many students. If something comes up that results in your feeling upset, please speak to a trusted person about your experience. Further, if you find that you are struggling to cope with some of the topics discussed in class, you may contact Bard Counseling Services.

2 Objectives

1. Become familiar with the terminology, methodology, and past research relating to mood and anxiety in clinical research

2. Develop an awareness of the ethics surrounding clinical interviewing, and learn the basics of structured interviews

3. Learn to create, run, and analyze experiments relating to mental health

4. Learn to communicate the results of a research question

5. Effectively participate in team-based psychological science

3   Readings and Materials

We will read several articles over the course of the semester, some of which are described in the schedule below. You should come to each lab meeting having closely read the article for that week.

4   Clinical interviewing

Conducting a structured clinical interview is a skill that will serve you well if you are interested in pursuing a career in clinical research or one of the helping professions. Doing so on sensitive matters, while being both ethical and respectful, takes patience and practice. You will practice with one another and, ultimately, with other students. You will also learn to do so confidentially.

We will practice clinical interviews using the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview (M.I.N.I.; Sheehan et al., 1998).

5   Grading

All told, you can earn 200 points in this course.

Points	Assignment
50	Literature critique
100	Experiment design
50	Poster
200	(Total)

5.1   Literature Critique

Before the day for which you are assigned a critique, you will choose an empirical article (published after 2012; no longer than 15 pages in article format) on a particular area relating to adult mood, depression, or anxiety. This article may be specific to the cognitive symptoms of depression and anxiety, including relating to rumination, worthlessness, or hopelessness; it may also related to self-schema or the cognitive biases of depression. The article should come from a peer-reviewed academic journal, and I would suggest one of the following: *Cognition and Emotion*; *Behaviour Research and Therapy*; *Psychological Science*; *Clinical Psychological Science*; *Biological Psychiatry*; *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*; *Perspectives on Psychological Science*; *Behavior Therapy*; and *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. You may also find articles by searching through Pubmed or Google Scholar. Your goal is

to find an article that interests you and is relevant to the topics we have been discussing; finding articles that cite other articles we've read might be a good idea!

Your goal is to critique the methods in this article, and make suggestions for how they could address problems or improve their conclusions. You should begin your critique with a brief summary of the article's goals, describe the methods and potential problems, and then describe how you would resolve the issues. Your essay should be no longer than 6 pages (not including references).

Your article should be selected a week in advance of the date described on the syllabus; the whole class will read the article and discuss it, *with you leading our discussion.* Your essay is due the week **after** that discussion. You will be scored on preparedness for discussion (20 points). The essay will be scored (30 points) for the introductory summary, organization, critique, and quality of suggestions.

5.2 Experiment

5.2.1 Experiment design

In teams, you will work within an assigned topic area to develop a research question, design a study, and complete a data collection plan including a pre-registration form. You will work with one or two other students.

You can choose to design a *new* task, or to use one that you have read about before. You will work together to create (program) this task, choose questionnaires, and design hypotheses. You can choose to run your study online or in the lab. The task you create (and experiment you design) should be feasible in the Bard context—it cannot involve extensive funding, a large staff, or hundreds of participants. You may use clinical interviews, basic questionnaires, any behavioral tasks, and other manipulations that are feasible.

Due dates for these components are described on the schedule below, including:

1. Research question (10 points)

2. Preregistration (20 points)

3. Literature review (one page [not including references, which must follow]; solo work; 20 points)

4. Working task/questionnaires (25 points)

5. Group proposal (15 points)

6. Preregistration revision based on feedback (10 points)

Except where noted ("solo work"), these tasks are intended to be done in groups.

5.2.2 Experiment analysis and poster

All students in the course will work together to collect pilot data related to one of the experiments proposed in 5.2.1. You will analyze the data in teams, and work to develop

research posters, which will be presented on the final day of class. More information about the research posters will be presented on Google Classroom; the posters should be designed with partners. All posters must include these sections: Introduction; Methods; Results (including a figure); Conclusions; References. You should plan to turn in a PDF and to bring handouts for your classmates.

Posters will be scored on the following criteria: clarity of design, coherence in the above-described sections, how well the figure represents your results.

5.3 Participation

Missing more than one class (which includes arriving more than 15 minutes late) will be reflected in your grade. Students who miss a class are responsible for catching up on that materials with the help of their colleagues. Part of participating in this course is taking initiative and working independently to extend learning.

6 Class Policies

6.1 Accommodations, Accessibility & Inclusion

Bard College is committed to providing equal access to all students. If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please contact me so that we can arrange to discuss. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. Together we can plan how best to support your learning and coordinate your accommodations. Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations through disability services should share their accommodation letter with me and make arrangements to meet as soon as possible.

If you have a learning difference or disability that may relate to your ability to fully participate in this class, but have not yet met with the Disability Support Coordinator at Bard, you can contact their office by emailing disabilityservices@bard.edu; the Coordinator will confidentially discuss the process to establish reasonable accommodations. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and thus you should begin this process at the beginning of the semester if you believe you will need them. Additionally, as my office in Preston Hall may be physically difficult to access, you may always request to meet with me in another location.

It is important to me that we have an open, inclusive, and supportive learning environment for all students in this course. Please speak with me if you have any concerns or questions regarding issues of diversity, equity, or inclusion in the classroom.

6.2 Attendance

Please be on time to class. I expect you to attend class and participate in discussions. If you must miss a class, please let me know by sending me an email explaining your absence.

6.3 Plagiarism

You are required to be familiar with what plagiarism is and is not. You may not present someone else's work as your own without proper citation. You may not copy someone else's work. You may not simply reword text from another source without giving credit. Please cite others' work where relevant, and use your own writing. If you are not sure about the definition of plagiarism, or whether something constitutes plagiarism, please consult with me or with someone at Bard's Learning Commons.

6.4 Late Assignments

Late assignments will immediately lose 10% of their grade, and another 10% for each additional day late. (e.g., a 20-point assignment will lose 2 points after the deadline, and an additional 2 points if turned in more than 24 hours after the deadline.) No work may be turned in after the end of the semester.

6.5 Research Focus

The Affective Science Lab uses clinical research methods to identify the factors behind mood disorders. We ask questions about how people who are depressed describe themselves— and how to make self-description more positive. In past work, we have found that adults with low mood will learn to describe themselves more positively after imagining future positive social situations. Work in the lab uses samples of adults, online and in person, across the range of depressive symptoms.

The research we will be conducting this semester is grounded in **empirical research**— that is, in the idea of identifying hypotheses that can be tested and collecting data to test them. The research questions that you develop should be grounded in these principles, as well as in the principles of ethical research and of beneficence. Although some individuals have personal experiences related to the mental health system, especially relating to depression and anxiety—and although these experiences may provide the impetus for working in this lab—the research we conduct here should be focused on generalizable research, not on sharing personal experiences. The same is true during clinical interviews—disclosure of personal information is never appropriate in those contexts.

7 Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Jan 29	Affective Science Lab		
Feb 5	Cognitive vulnerability and depression; clinical interview skills; choose groups	Beevers (2005); Morrison (2008) Introduction & Chapter 1	

Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Feb 12	Reproducible science; Pre-registration	Munafò et al. (2017); Andersen and Hepburn (2016)	
Feb 19	Positive imagery training	Dainer-Best, Shumake, and Beevers (2018); Morrison Chapter 3	Research question
Feb 26	Cognitive theory of depression; whole-class discussion about research questions	Beck (2008)	
Mar 4		Student paper 1	Measures
Mar 11		Student paper 2	
Mar 18		Student paper 3	Preregistration; literature review
(Mar 25)	*No class: Spring Break*		
Apr 1		Student paper 4	Task and questionnaires
Apr 8		Student paper 5	Group proposal
Apr 15		Student paper 6	Preregistration revision
Apr 22		Student paper 7	
Apr 29	Poster session		Poster PDFs and handouts
(May 6)	*No psychology classes for Boards*		
(May 13)			

References

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Beevers, C. G. (2005). Cognitive vulnerability to depression: A dual process model. *Clinical Psychology Review*, *25*(7), 975–1002. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2005.03.003

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