

ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY

Tuesday/Thursday | 12:00-1:50 PM | Zoom University

Prerequisite: PSYC 100: Introduction to Psychology

Recommended preparation: Previous experience reading scientific journal articles (in any field)

why might some people feel, think, and act in ways that are different from the norm?

what does it mean for someone to be "normal," anyway?

what can clinical science tell me about effectively caring and advocating for myself and those around me?

how can I use that knowledge to contribute to a kinder, healthier, more inclusive society?

If these questions (especially the last two) keep you up at night, this is the perfect section of Abnormal Psych for you. Over the course of the semester, you'll grapple with these questions and learn the basics of science communication and advocacy—skills that will benefit you through college and beyond, regardless of your major or ultimate career path.

As an overview of the scientific study of mental illness, we will cover everything from the neuroscience behind antidepressants to the current state of the mental healthcare system, as well as the scientific methods that help clinical researchers make discoveries related to the causes and treatment of a variety of mental illnesses. (See the course calendar on the last page for a full listing of topics.) Throughout the semester, you will be highly encouraged to apply your knowledge of the material to your own lives, as well as the world around you.

INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM



Professor: Leslie Berntsen, Ph.D.

Please call me: Leslie or Dr./Prof. Berntsen (she/her)

How do you pronounce that? Like the English words "burnt" and "sin"

Ask me about: Real-world applications of psychology, becoming a psych major, getting involved in research, graduate school and other psych-based careers, being a first-generation college student, being a student with a disability

E-mail: _____ (expect a response within 24-48 hours, except weekends)

Virtual office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays: 5:00-6:00 PM

Make an appointment at: _____

Office: My living room (Zoom. I mean Zoom.)



TA: Kale

How do you pronounce that? Like "Cali," as in short for "California"

Ask him about: Writing assignments (including your grades), applying to graduate school

E-mail: _____

Office hours: Available on Blackboard

COURSE MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Blackboard (accessible through myUSC) is where you'll be able to find all the materials for this class: lecture slides and videos, a Google doc with all of the optional extra links from lectures, online quizzes, assignment descriptions and rubrics, etc. There is no textbook for this class.

Piazza (linked on Blackboard under "Course Logistics") is a Wiki-style website that the TA and I will use to send announcements and reminders (via email blast). As a bonus, you can also use Piazza to crowdsource answers to any questions you may have about the class.

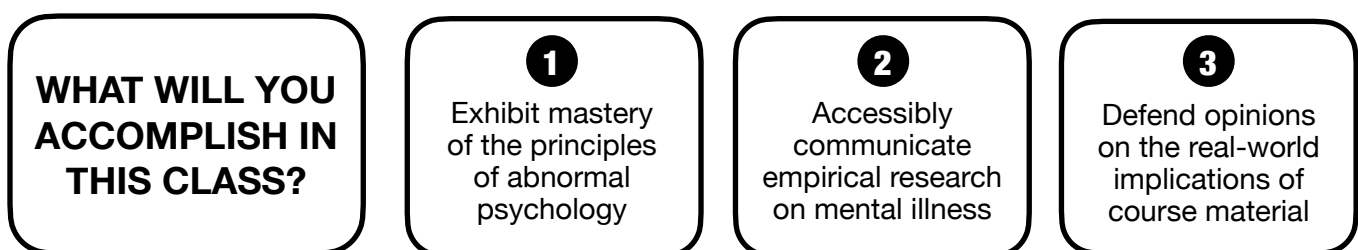
COURSE FORMAT AND ORGANIZATION

For our time together, we'll be using a flipped class format, in which I'll give you pre-recorded lecture videos for you to watch on your own time. (Think of it like mental health podcast time.) Just make sure you watch them in advance of the Q&A/discussion date if you'd have questions or would like to chat about the material, and definitely before the respective quiz is due. (You can find all of those dates are listed on the course calendar on the last page.) As a result, our scheduled class meetings (see below) can be as interactive as possible since I won't be spending that precious time just talking at you.

Tuesdays will serve as **writing workshops** so that you have dedicated time to work towards the final drafts of your two short writing assignments with built-in support from each other and from me. On **Thursdays**, you can drop in for **Q&A/discussion** about the material covered in the videos you've watched so far. Attendance during these flipped sessions is not required, but I'll always be available during those times to help you get as much out of the class as you'd like.

It's going to be quite an adventure to fit the entire education you deserve into our (good lord) sixth ~unprecedented~ semester, but hopefully this flipped class format will help you demonstrate all your newfound knowledge with as much support, flexibility, and one-on-one interaction as possible.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT



How will your success be measured?



COURSE REQUIREMENTS

QUIZZES

One non-cumulative online quiz will accompany each unit to help you check your understanding as we progress through the course. Quiz questions will be multiple-choice and your three lowest quiz grades will be dropped before computing your final grade at the end of the term. Quizzes will be made available on Blackboard 48 hours prior to the Thursday session devoted to Q&A/discussion on those topics, and should be completed by the start of class (12:00 PM LA local time) the following Tuesday. (See the course calendar on the last page for a full list of due dates.)

For these quizzes, you are free to use your notes and/or work together with a classmate. However, I highly recommend taking each one for the first time without any outside assistance to see how much (and what kinds of) information you retained from that unit. Then, when taking the quiz again, use your resources to help you answer the questions you got incorrect (and take note of the topics these questions addressed to help yourself identify areas of improvement). You may re-take each quiz as many times as you'd like. I will only count your highest score for each quiz and there are no penalties for additional attempts.

EXAMS

This course will have four, online, fill-in-the-blank exams: **three non-cumulative midterms and one cumulative final exam**. You're welcome to use your notes, but you will have 90 seconds to respond to each question. For all the logistical details you'd ever want, check the Exam Instructions doc on Blackboard.

Out of the 50% of your overall grade allotted for exams, your best exam will be weighted at 25%, your second best at 15%, and your third best at 10%. Your lowest exam grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.

SAVE THE DATES:

September 22nd
October 27th
December 1st
December 8th

WRITING

This course will have two brief writing assignments (750-1000 words each). The first will be focused on summarizing original empirical research for a general audience (a science communication, or SciComm, piece) and will be worth 18% of your final grade. For the second, you'll use multiple empirical studies to support a well-developed argument related to mental health/illness (an op-ed piece), which will be worth 22% of your final grade.

Each of these assignments will be broken up into smaller components over the course of the semester to help you work your way towards your final draft. (You'll have time during class to work on and/or get help with these assignments.) More details about each of them are available in separate documents posted to Blackboard.

PRO-TIP: The style of writing required for these assignments is likely very different from what's been expected of you in other PSYC classes.

Guidance will be provided every step of the way, but many students have found The Writing Center invaluable in this process.

EXTRA CREDIT

RESEARCH HOURS

For this class, each SONA research credit you earn will add 0.25 percentage points to your final grade, and you can complete a maximum of five credits for a total of 1.25 extra points. (You can complete any combination of online/in-person studies that you like.)

To receive these points at the end of the semester, you must tell SONA to allocate your credits to my specific section of PSYC 360 (not another professor's section). If you don't do this (and we have to fix it for you by hand at the end of the semester), you'll only receive credit for 50% of the SONA studies that you completed. More information on registering for SONA and signing up for studies is available on Blackboard.

If you would like to complete an alternative written assignment (an additional SciComm piece written on one of the other articles posted to Blackboard) instead of participating in research, you must make this choice (and email me to let me know) by September 9th.

SYLLABUS QUIZ

This syllabus is your friend! If you have a logistical question about this class (or even about all the campus resources available to you), the answer is very likely somewhere in this document. (I know it's a lot, but I wrote it all to help you, I promise.)

So, to preemptively reward all of you for your excellent syllabus-checking habits, you can earn one percentage point of extra credit (which will be added to your overall grade for the course at the end of the semester) by taking a quick little syllabus quiz on Blackboard (due the first week of class). But here's the catch: Every time you email with one of the specific questions that you have already answered for yourself by taking that quiz (e.g., "How many quiz grades get dropped?"), you will lose a quarter of that point, just like you might on any other quiz.

Of course, we are more than happy to answer other (non-syllabus) questions via email and any/all questions in real time during class time or office hours, so you can absolutely ask us things! Just please try to meet us halfway and make sure the question hasn't already been answered for you before sending an email. (Pro-tip: You can always return to this syllabus quiz on Blackboard, and this document and Piazza are both fully searchable 😊)

TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS

Unless otherwise specified, assignments should be completed and submitted through Blackboard by the start of the lecture period listed on the course calendar. To provide as much flexibility as possible (more details below), you can continue to submit assignments for full credit up to 24 hours after each listed due date/time. (And there's no need to let me or the TA know; the 24-hour window is an automatic blanket extension.)

PRO-TIP: Double-checking whether your assignments have been properly submitted is a great habit to develop for all of your classes. For anything submitted directly through Blackboard (like our quizzes or writing assignments), you can check your Grades page to see whether that assignment has been received on our end.

LATE/MISSED WORK POLICY

Needless to say, there's (still) a lot going on. In addition to all of the free drops, we've got different, progressively larger safety nets that will hopefully catch you if it ever becomes necessary.

1. Automatic 24-hour blanket extension: For maximum flexibility, you can continue to submit assignments for full credit up to 24 hours after each due date/time listed on the course calendar on the last page, no questions asked and no permission necessary. For this to be as helpful as possible, I recommend doing everything in your power to stick to the "official" listed due dates and then use the blanket extension only when you really *need* it. Otherwise, if you just treat the extension as the new due date for every assignment, you lose the whole "safety net" aspect of the arrangement.

2. Emergency button: If the 24-hour blanket extension doesn't take care of you, this is the next option. Everyone starts off the semester with one (1) emergency button that you can use to submit late work for credit after the 24-hour extension period has passed. Whether your emergency button actually gets used up depends on whether the nature/timing of your request creates extra work for us as a teaching team. If you think you'd like to use your emergency button, just fill out the Google form posted to Blackboard in the lefthand sidebar and also under "Course Logistics" and it will walk you through all the details.

3. "Life happened and I need help:" If you experience any kind of life-altering emergency that impacts your ability to stay afloat in all your classes, this is for you. All you need to do is email me or the TA with those words (that's it!) and we will put you in touch with Campus Support & Intervention so they can help you however you need. Once the dust has settled, we'll work with you to get you caught up and through the finish line in one piece. Please note: You do not need to perform trauma to get our attention; you just need to let us know (very broadly) that you need help and we will make sure you get it.

GRADING POLICIES

Final percentage scores will be rounded up/down to the nearest whole number from .50 and letter grades will be assigned according to the table below:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93-100	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	<60

We will not entertain individual appeals for "personalized rounding schemes" nor will we create "extra assignments" for anyone to attempt to raise their grade in the final weeks of the course. (Because it is a question on the syllabus quiz, each such request will be subject to the deduction described above.)

THE MORE YOU KNOW: Because of the "choose your own adventure" exam weights, it is functionally impossible for me to provide everyone with an up-to-date overall grade in Blackboard while the class is still in progress. You'll always have access to your grades on individual assignments if you'd like to do some math and work out hypotheticals for yourself, but I will only be able to provide you with an overall grade at the very end of the semester.

PRO-TIP: There is absolutely no shame in needing or seeking help. If you become concerned about (or would simply like to improve) your performance in the class at any point, please reach out as soon as you can.

A NOTE ON COMMUNITY AND WELLNESS

It is my goal to foster an environment of mutual respect in which everyone can feel comfortable voicing their opinions, sharing their stories, and learning about potentially heavy or personally relevant material. If, at any point, you feel like information covered in this class triggers thoughts, feelings, or concerns that you would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, the TA, Student Counseling Services, or the (free and anonymous) National Suicide Prevention Hotline.

Student Counseling Services

Consultations: (213) 740-7711
24/7 support: (213) 740-9355

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

988

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

As an instructor, I strive to create an environment in which every student is given an equal opportunity to excel. If you are in need of certain accommodations (e.g., extra time on assessments, adaptive technology, class note-taker, etc.) due to any (physical or mental) health condition, please let me know (and contact the Office of Student Accessibility Services) as soon as possible. Remember that any information you share regarding accommodations is confidential and will not be shared with other students.

This class is designed in such a way that many common accommodations are already built in, but an official letter from OSAS can help ensure that your needs will be met in all of your classes. According to university policy, professors are not obligated to grant individual accommodations without an approved accommodations letter.

For purposes of this class, if there is anything that I can do to make my teaching more accessible and inclusive, please don't hesitate to let me know at any time.

Office of Student Accessibility Services

Hours: M-F, 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM
Location: GFS 120
Phone: (213) 740-0776

THE MORE YOU KNOW

Mental illnesses "count" for disability accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Please reach out to OSAS if you feel you could benefit from accommodations.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY: THE GOLDEN RULE

You are more than welcome to bring laptops, tablets, or any other assistive technology to class if it will help you take notes to the best of your ability. (Laptops can be borrowed from the Information Commons on the bottom floor of Leavey Library for up to four hours at a time.)

At certain points, I may ask that non-essential technology be set aside to allow for full engagement. Please also note that I reserve the right to revoke your individual technology privileges at any time if you appear excessively/inappropriately distracted or if your technology use appears to be distracting those around you. If you were speaking to a group of people about something you genuinely care about, you'd probably want them to pay full attention to you. Please just be kind.

ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE, IDENTITY-BASED HARM, AND OTHER PERSONAL CRISES

If you ask me, this is the single most important part of the syllabus and I need to know that people are aware of this information, so let's try something. If you have read this far, please email me (Dr. Leslie Berntsen) your favorite GIF of Olivia Benson (the fictional sex crimes detective from *Law & Order: SVU*). This is not a joke, and I am 100% serious. (You will lose half of a point from the aforementioned "syllabus quiz" extra credit point if you do not do this.) Now, the important information:

If you experience sexual violence, identity-based harm, or any other personal crisis at any point during the semester, please don't hesitate to reach out so I can (1) help you get caught up in class, (2) put you in contact with the appropriate resources and services, and (3) answer questions to the extent that I am qualified to do so. (Remember the magic words are "Life happened and I need help.") But, if you'd rather not talk to your professor about these issues, I completely understand. Check the box to the right for some of those (hyperlinked) resources that I would have ended up telling you about:

[Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention & Services](#)

[Student Counseling Services](#)

[Campus Support & Intervention](#)

[Title IX Office](#)

[Office of Equity & Diversity](#)

[Department of Public Safety](#)

[Asian Pacific American Student Services](#)

[Center for Black Cultural & Student Affairs](#)

[La CASA](#)

[LGBT Resource Center](#)

[Office of Religious Life](#)

And finally, for information about your legal rights under Title IX: [Know Your IX](#)

THE MORE YOU KNOW: Faculty and TAs are required by university policy to report all disclosures of sexual violence to the appropriate campus authorities. But, please know that I am qualified and more than willing to support survivors throughout the process. If you have general, procedural questions (that do not reference a specific event), please ask any time.

ON BASIC NEEDS

If you ever find yourself struggling to afford food and/or secure a safe and stable place to live and feel like such circumstances are impacting your performance in this class, please speak to me (if you feel comfortable) so that I can provide whatever resources and support I can. For additional information and support, you can also contact [Student Basic Needs](#) at basicneeds@usc.edu or [Campus Support & Intervention](#) at (213) 821-4710.

THE MORE YOU KNOW: There is an [emergency food and toiletry pantry](#) located in Parkside Apartments #135.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

CAMPUS OFFICE	SERVICES	PHONE	EMAIL
<u>Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity</u>	General help with college coursework, including study skill tips, test-taking strategies, and stress management	(213) 740-7884	kortschakcenter@usc.edu
<u>The Writing Center</u>	Specific help with writing, including free one-on-one consultations	(213) 740-3691	writing@usc.edu
<u>American Language Institute</u>	Credit-granting courses, one-on-one tutoring, and free informal conversation groups for English language learners	(213) 740-0079	askali@usc.edu
<u>Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice</u>	Lifestyle Redesign program to help foster time management, decrease procrastination, manage stress and anxiety, etc.	(323) 442-3340	otfp@med.usc.edu

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICIES

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment that fosters general principles of academic honesty. These include respecting the intellectual property of others, submitting your own individual work unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and protecting your own academic work from misuse by others. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles and be aware of the possible sanctions, which are summarized in [Part B of SCampus](#).

For this class, specific examples of academic dishonesty include: Submitting any graded material that has been written by another person (including yourself for a previous class) or lifted from the internet, either in part or in full. Remember that you are more than welcome to use your notes and collaborate with friends for pretty much every aspect of this course; you just need to make sure that the writing you ultimately submit (e.g., your exam responses and writing assignments) is entirely your own.

If you have any questions about these policies or academic dishonesty in general, I would be more than happy to answer them, so please do ask.

PRO-TIP: If any part of you feels even slightly tempted to engage in academic dishonesty for the sake of a better grade, come talk to me or your TA and we'll give you all sorts of tips and tricks to earn that grade you're hoping for. If you need more time to complete an assignment, we will work with you, so just let your TA know.

If you cheat, you could be putting your entire degree in jeopardy. You are also guaranteed to lose all of my trust and make me very, very aggravated that I have to deal with it/you.

Do not cheat. That's really all there is to it.

ON EXTRACURRICULAR FAVORS AND REQUESTS

THE MORE YOU KNOW: Research shows that faculty members who are perceived as approachable and dedicated to teaching receive significantly more extra requests from students and colleagues than those who might give off “other” impressions. When you’re one of these faculty members (with thousands of current/former students and a disability to boot), it becomes critical to set some boundaries up front. (This is not because any individual request is too much to ask or because there’s anything “undeserving” about the person asking. Rather, it’s simply because I—one person—cannot possibly do or be everything for everyone.)

So, for the sake of my health, and to ensure that I can effectively do the greatest good for the greatest number of people, here are the boundaries pertaining to my most common requests:

To give advice about graduate school, possible career paths, and the like: Yes, of course, I would love to. Just [click here](#) to make an appointment for office hours and feel free to bring a friend or two.

To connect you with campus resources, including Student Counseling: If you need help getting help, I can absolutely facilitate that process. Remember you can always email me with the words “Life happened and I need help,” and I’ll put you in touch with Campus Support and Intervention, a one-stop shop for support for complex situations. I can also help you get a same-day appointment with Student Counseling if that becomes necessary. However, please know it is not okay to force me to LARP as your therapist, even for two minutes, and even though my classes touch on mental health. As your professor, I can serve as a first responder, get you connected with someone who is qualified to help, and help you make a plan to get through the class in one piece. But, I cannot (for so many reasons!) be the person any student chooses to lean on for non-academic, emotional, or therapeutic support.

To write a letter of recommendation or serve as a professional reference: I am no longer able to write letters or serve as a professional reference for undergraduate students who just take one (or more) of my classes, and I will explain why. Having served on many selection/review committees, I can promise these evaluations land much differently when they come from someone who can effectively advocate for you because they genuinely know you as a person (vs. someone who has just taught you in a large lecture class). Because there are simply so many of you (1000 per year!) and I want to ensure that anyone I recommend receives a reference that meaningfully strengthens their application, please know that I am only able to serve as a referee for graduate students directly under my teaching mentorship.

To give an interview for a podcast, newspaper article, news segment, etc: Just email me or chat with me first to see if I’m (1) the best person to provide the kinds of comments you’re looking for and (2) able to field the request within your desired timeframe.

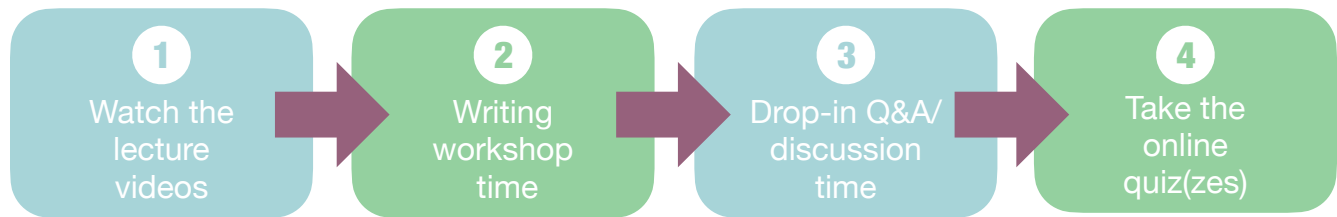
To speak on a panel or at another live event: My schedule and accessibility needs are going to be the limiting factors for these kinds of requests, which is all the more reason to ask as early as you can.

To supervise a research project: There’s no way you would know this without someone telling you, but there are actually two kinds of professors at a school like USC: those of us who focus primarily on teaching (hi!) and then those who focus primarily on research, run their own labs, and maybe teach a class every now and then. Because I’m in that first group, I don’t have the resources to be able to effectively supervise undergraduate research. But, I am always more than happy to help you think through your research interests and figure out which labs in the department might be a good fit and/or serve as a secondary reader for honors theses.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The course calendar on the next page details what you can expect during each scheduled class session (whether a writing workshop, drop-in Q&A/discussion time, or time to work on each exam), as well as the due dates for all of your assignments.

The flow chart below summarizes what our average (non-exam) week will look like. Ideally, you'll watch each week's lecture videos (linked in the Live Class Calendar on Blackboard) prior to each Thursday's Q&A/discussion session (so that you'll be able to pop in if you have any questions or would like to chat) and then complete the online quizzes by the (Tuesday) due dates listed on the next page. Then, you can use each Tuesday's class session as dedicated time to make progress on your writing assignments.



PRE-THURSDAY — TUESDAY — THURSDAY — POST-THURSDAY

DAY	DATE	COME TO CLASS FOR:	WHAT'S DUE?	
			Quizzes	Writing
T	August 23 rd	Writing Workshop: Overview of Science Communication (SC #1 & SC #2)		
R	August 25 th	Q&A/Discussion: 1: Introduction to Abnormal Psychology		SC #1
T	August 30 th	Writing Workshop: Deconstructing Scientific Articles (SC #2)	XC, #1	
R	September 1 st	Q&A/Discussion: 2: Clinical Research Methods; 3: History of Abnormality		SC #2
T	September 6 th	Writing Workshop: Drafting an Accessible Article Summary (SC #3)	#2, #3	
R	September 8 th	Q&A/Discussion: 4: Causal Factors & Viewpoints		
T	September 13 th	Writing Workshop: Drafting an Accessible Article Summary (SC #3)	#4	
R	September 15 th	Q&A/Discussion: 5: Assessment & Diagnosis; 6: Treatment Approaches		SC #3
T	September 20 th	Writing Workshop: Revising & Finalizing Your Work (SC #4 & SC #5)	#5, #6	
R	September 22 nd	Exam #1: Units 1-6 (due by 12:00 PM on September 23rd)		SC #4
T	September 27 th	Writing Workshop: Revising & Finalizing Your Work (SC #5)		
R	September 29 th	Q&A/Discussion: 7: Stress, Trauma, & Mind-Body; 8: Panic, Anxiety, & Obsessions		SC #5
T	October 4 th	Writing Workshop: An Overview of Scientific Opinion Pieces (OE #1 & OE #2)	#7, #8	
R	October 6 th	Q&A/Discussion: 9: Mood Disorders, Suicide, & Self-Harm		OE #1
T	October 11 th	NO CLASS: Mental Health Day 🤪		
R	October 13 th	NO CLASS: Fall Break		
T	October 18 th	Writing Workshop: Developing an Argument & Claims (OE #2 & OE #3)	#9	
R	October 20 th	Q&A/Discussion: 10: Somatic & Dissociative Disorders; 11: Substance Use Disorders		OE #2
T	October 25 th	Writing Workshop: Identifying & Summarizing Evidence (OE #3)	#10, #11	
R	October 27 th	Exam #2: Units 7-11 (due by 12:00 PM on October 28th)		OE #3
T	November 1 st	Writing Workshop: Drafting a Scientific Opinion Piece (OE #4)		
R	November 3 rd	Q&A/Discussion: 12: Eating Disorders & Obesity; 13: Schizophrenia & Psychosis		
T	November 8 th	Writing Workshop: Drafting a Scientific Opinion Piece (OE #4)	#12, #13	
R	November 10 th	Q&A/Discussion: 14: Pediatric Mental Illnesses; 15: Neurocognitive Disorders		OE #4
T	November 15 th	Writing Workshop: Revising & Finalizing Your Work (OE #5 & OE #6)	#14, #15	
R	November 17 th	Q&A/Discussion: 16: Personality Disorders; 17: Law, Society, & Practice		OE #5
T	November 22 nd	NO CLASS: Mental Health Day 🤪		
R	November 24 th	NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break		
T	November 29 th	Writing Workshop: Revising & Finalizing Your Work (OE #6)	#16, #17	
R	December 1 st	Exam #3: Units 12-17 (due by 12:00 PM on December 2nd)		OE #6
T	December 13 th	FINAL EXAM (goes live at 11:00 AM; due by 11:00 AM on December 14th)		

Reminder: Online quizzes, writing assignments, and exams are due (to Blackboard) by the start of class (12:00 PM LA local time), with an automatic 24-hour blanket extension added to all due dates listed above.