

Assessment

Spring 2025 // PSY 376

Justin Dainer-Best

2025-01-30

Course Number	Time	Location	Office Hours
PSY 376	Th, 12:30-14:50	RKC 200	M/Th or by appointment

[Make an appointment to come to my office hours.](#) The instructor's office hours are as follows (or by appointment):

- Mondays, 3–4:30pm
- Thursdays, 11am–12pm

Prerequisites: Moderated, ideally in psychology, and a course in Cluster A, or permission of instructor.

Wherever possible, I hope to work to make this course accessible and approachable for all students. For more information on accessibility for this course, please view [the section on that subject](#) below.

Overview

Psychological evaluations and assessments may be used for diagnosis, identifying cognitive dis/abilities, school placement, or any of a number of other goals. This course provides a foundation in theories of assessment, with a focus on empirical support and clinical utility. We will explore how research is conducted on assessments and develop mock interviewing and assessment skills. We will also discuss interpretation of assessment results from clinical and research perspectives. Students will be expected to make oral presentations of material in class and to write a substantial research paper, as well as to write reports of mock assessments presented in class.

This course will frequently discuss topics that are sensitive or personal for many students. If something discussed in class leaves you 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](#), and [make an appointment](#); you may also email counselingservice@bard.edu or call 845-758-7433.

In the spirit of truth and equity, it is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that this class will take place on the sacred homelands of the Munsee and Muhheaconneok people, who are the original stewards of this land. Today, due to forced removal, the community resides in Northeast Wisconsin and is known as the [Stockbridge-Munsee Community](#). We honor and pay respect to their ancestors past and present, as well as to future generations and we recognize their continuing presence in their homelands. We understand that our acknowledgment requires those of us who are settlers to recognize our own place in and responsibilities towards addressing inequity, and that this ongoing and challenging work requires that we commit to real engagement with the Munsee and Mohican communities to build an inclusive and equitable space for all.

Such anticolonialist and antigenocidal work extends beyond Bard's campus and the classroom.

Objectives

By the end of the semester you should be able to . . .

- explain different modes of psychological assessment
- understand communication of clinical psychological science
- analyze empirical articles and assessment manuals
- explain how psychological assessments are conducted—and conduct some yourself
- understand—and have experience conducting—clinical research from an empirical and hands-on perspective

You are expected to come to each class prepared to discuss the assigned reading. Laptops are not generally expected during class discussions. Instead, you should plan to bring paper or a notebook. (Digital copies of readings are appropriate; you need not print readings if you do not choose to.)

Instructor

The instructor for this course is Associate Professor of Psychology Justin Dainer-Best. In person or via email, you can refer to me as Justin or as Professor Dainer-Best (or Dr. Dainer-Best); I use he/him pronouns.

Materials

There is no individual textbook used in this course. Readings will be posted on [Brightspace](#). All readings uploaded to Brightspace should work with a screen reader; if you find a reading that is not processed correctly, please let me know and I will convert it or work with you to find an alternative. You should complete each reading *in preparation for class*, as listed below on the [schedule](#).

Students may also choose to purchase the texts from which readings are drawn, especially *The Cambridge Handbook of Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis* (Eds. Sellbom & Suhr), ISBN [9781108415910](#) / <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108235433>

Class Policies

Attendance

We will move at a rapid pace; material that is missed due to absence will not be repeated in class or office hours. Our classes are designed around conversation, and your absence will impact both your own understanding and the class or your group. Because this class meets once a week and part of your grade will come from participation, absences should be avoided wherever possible.

However, this is a college class and you are an adult; your attendance is your decision. Late arrivals can be disruptive to the class. Consistent patterns of lateness are unfair to other students. Please be on time.

If you are not feeling well, please do not come to class. If you have recently been ill, please wear a mask when you attend; masks are effective at reducing spread of many respiratory illnesses. Each of us shares responsibility for the health and safety of all in the classroom.

Accommodations & Accessibility

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 through <https://www.bard.edu/accessibility/students/>; 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 as soon as possible 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. I am available for meetings online as well as those in person.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

It is important to me that this course provides an open and supportive learning environment for all students. I invite you to speak with me if you have concerns or questions regarding issues of belonging, safety, or equity in the classroom. I want our discussions to be respectful of all students. If I am not helping the classroom to feel like an inclusive environment, I invite you to provide me with [anonymous] feedback. Different forms of knowledge can be valuable in a psychology classroom. In this class, we will engage with complex topics of mental health and illness and, as such, respect for experiential and other viewpoints is extremely important.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

I expect you to be familiar with what plagiarism is and is not. You may not present someone else's work as your own without proper citation. Using AI-generated text is not a replacement for your own writing, and automated tools to edit grammar and spelling should be used sparingly. You may not copy someone else's work. You may not simply reword text from another source without giving credit, or ask generative textbots to do so. 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](#). Students caught plagiarizing will be reported to the Academic Judiciary Board, will get no credit for the assignment, and may fail the course.

I operate from the standpoint that you are interested in learning this material, and are doing your best to operate with integrity. Using text generators like chatGPT take away your ability to learn from the process of writing, while also increasing your likelihood of generating "slop" (see, e.g., [Willison, 2024](#); [OUP, 2024](#)). Do your best to learn from the assignments in this class.

I expect you to cite sources that you use, including tools that reword your writing like Grammarly, tutors who help you rework a paper, or if you use chatGPT or similar tools to understand a complex topic.

Cell phones and laptops 📱 🖥️

Before class, you should silence your cell phone, and you should not be on your phone during class unless you are asked to be (e.g., to respond to a poll). I do not recommend taking notes on your phone. Instead, I recommend taking notes on paper wherever possible. If you text or access materials unrelated to class during our class time, you are mentally absent from class.

When using a laptop, I encourage you to turn off notifications / turn on Do Not Disturb whenever possible. Browsing unrelated materials is distracting to you and also to your classmates.

Late Assignments ⏴

Most assignments can be turned in **within two days** of their due dates without penalty. For example, if an assignment is due before class, it may be turned in by Wednesday at midnight without penalty. However, please note that some assignments are intended to develop into conversations; even if you have not turned in a final document to me, you should be prepared to discuss your work in class. Discussion questions will receive no credit if completed late.

Assignments including drafts may still be turned in after their late date. However, such assignments are considered “missing” (see section “[Grading](#)” below). If your work is consistently turned in late, this also may impact your grade unless you discuss this lateness with me. All assignments are due by the last day of the semester.

Assignments

Class participation

This is a discussion-based seminar. You should expect to talk during each class, and ideally multiple times per class. You will earn a meaningful portion of your grade from being an active class participant. In class discussions, you should plan to listen thoughtfully to your classmates and respond to them as well as adding your own viewpoints, connections to outside material, and so forth. If you are someone who finds it difficult to speak in a small class discussion, you should speak with me early in the semester to develop a plan.

Additionally, we will be conducting assessments together in class—mostly in pairs or small groups. You should come to class prepared for both assessor and evaluatee roles, and should plan to participate in both roles throughout the semester.

Discussion questions

Before **five** of the semester's classes, you should also publish **two** discussion questions on the Brightspace discussion board. These questions will be used during class to help stimulate discussion, as described below. You will receive full credit for your discussion questions if they are novel (i.e., not repeating someone else's previously-submitted questions) and add something or extend beyond the questions raised by that week's readings. Rather than factual questions like "is this assessment tool used in X population?" which you could ask in class, prioritize questions about how or why, or questions that connect between topics.

Questions are due by 10pm the night before class. Questions turned in the day of class, but before class begins, will receive partial credit. Questions turned in after class begins will receive no credit. (They may not be turned in late.)

Leading class exercise

On weeks marked with a "+ ex." on the schedule, two students will work together to develop an exercise to help stimulate discussion. (You are permitted but not required to also write your [discussion questions](#) when you create an exercise.) You will be able to sign up for exercise days in the first week of class. On weeks in which you lead a class exercise, you should plan to meet with your partner in advance to discuss the readings and identify a relevant exercise. In class, likely midway through the day, I will ask you to lead your exercise.

You will lead class exercises once over the course of the semester. Exercises may be playful (or game-based), but should be focused on stimulating discussion and integrating content/readings.

Research design

You will design a research study using multiple types of assessment on a psychological disorder or dysfunction of your choosing that relates to the assessments we use this semester. The study will be in two parts: an intro draft, due early in the semester, and a section including methods and hypotheses, responding to feedback on the earlier draft, due later in the semester.

The intro should include six or more scholarly sources, and be approximately two single-spaced pages; it should end with hypotheses. The methods, an additional 1-2 pages due later, should use at least two types of assessment, whether they be those we discussed in class or not, and should cite those assessments. The methods should also be feasible—i.e., with time and some funding, a college student supported by a clinician could conduct them. Results and discussion sections are *not* required.

Process notes

During classes where we conduct mock interviews or assessments, you should take notes on both the characters you play, the experience of playing both roles (assessor and evaluatee—and occasionally observer), and insights you gain as you learn some of these skills. You may want to add notes or ideas at the end of class, or prior to class. These notes, both contemporaneous and post-hoc, should be kept in a single Google Doc that you share with me so that I can check in and track your progress.

At the end of the semester, a **Process Summary** of two single-spaced pages should review and summarize your notes, and include citations to readings and scales used during the semester. Answer the following questions, adding additional insights or notes: what did you learn about assessment, interviewing, and evaluation? Which assessments felt most familiar, or easiest to administer? How was the practice of writing these evaluations?

Assessment reports

Over the course of the semester, you will write composite reports combining the interviews you and your classmates conduct. You will create a client to write these reports on, who may bear similarities to your own persona or the partners you interview in class. Your reports will evaluate one composite client, with a pseudonym you choose. Over the course of the semester, you will thus develop a report about this client. At the end, you will add recommendations to the integrated assessment report you will turn in.

There are four reports—one on your own experience with self-assessment using self-report instruments, two describing additional information from a case and IQ assessments, and one combining the other three forms of information for an integrated report. The integrated report may use only brief elements of the self assessment, since it will not focus on yourself.

- The self-assessment
- The case description
- The IQ assessment
- The integrated assessment report

Grades

Assignment	Points
Class participation	15
Discussion questions	10
Leading exercise	8
Design intro	10

Design final	15
Process notes	7
Process summary	10
Assessment reports	25
Total	100

Grade	Range
A-range	90-100
B-range	80-89
C-range	70-79
D-range	60-69
F	below 60

Many assignments (not including discussion questions or exercises) may be turned in **up to two days late *without penalty***. Assignments turned in later than that will not receive full points—at maximum a point off for each day late. “Missing” assignments are those which are not turned in by the late deadline, and which you have not contacted me about. If you miss assignments, you should always plan to be in touch with me as soon as possible to discuss when they will be turned in.

Schedule

The schedule may change over the course of the semester. Changes to assignment dates will be announced via email and also changed on the course website / Brightspace. You are responsible for keeping up with the readings, showing up to class prepared, and turning in assignments on-time.

Readings are listed by author last name; **PDFs can be found [on Brightspace](#)**.

Day	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Thursday	Jan 30	Assessment and interviewing	Syllabus	
Thursday	Feb 6	Interview skills and considerations	Interview basics (Sommers-Flanagan et al., 2020); thinking about multicultural interviewing (Leong et al., 2020); writing reports (Bagby & Solomon-Krakus, 2020)	

Day	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Thursday	Feb 13	Using questionnaires or self-reports + ex.	Self-report scales in clinical settings (Sunderland et al., 2020); AUDIT; CAPS-5; IDS-C; EDE-Q	
Thursday	Feb 20	Clinical interviewing: DIAMOND	Introduction to the DIAMOND instrument (Tolin et al., 2018); a chapter about assessing depression and suicidality (Holden & Fekken, 2020)	Self assessment
Thursday	Feb 27	Clinical interviewing: Other structured interviews + ex.	A reading about the original SCID (Spitzer et al., 1992); concerns about the SCID (Chasson et al., 2017); excerpts from the SCID-5 (First, 2015); a study using AI instead (Weisenburger et al., 2024)	
Thursday	Mar 6	WAIS-V	Intellectual assessments (Drozdzick & Puig, 2020); administering the WAIS (Lichtenberger & Kaufman, 2013a); interpreting the WAIS (Lichtenberger & Kaufman, 2013b)	Case description
Thursday	Mar 13	WISC-V	WISC-V overview (Schneider et al., 2017); interpreting the WISC (Kaufman et al., 2015); use of the WISC (D'Angiulli & Siegel, 2003)	Research design intro
Thursday	Mar 20	No class: Spring Break		
Thursday	Mar 27	Critiques of IQ and cultural bias + ex.	Definitions of intelligence (Sternberg, 1997); selections from Gould (1996); and concerns about bias (Reynolds et al., 2021; Williams, 1971)	IQ assessment
Thursday	Apr 3	Autism testing (with a visit from Prof. Dunphy-Lelii) + ex.	Introductory info on ASDs (Hodges et al., 2020); information on the ADOS (Lord et al., 2000); an article using the ADOS (McIntyre et al., 2017)	Integrated assessment report
Thursday	Apr 10	ADHD testing (with a visit from Erin Braselmann)	Assessing ADHD (Barry et al., 2020); assessing in children (Ledet & Hansen, 2023); assessing in adults (Canu et al., 2023); review of the D-KEFS (J. Swanson, 2005)	

Day	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Thursday	Apr 17	Vocational assessment + ex.	Info on vocational tests (J. L. Swanson, 2020); an article on the ASVAB (Roberts et al., 2000)	
Thursday	Apr 24	Projective tests + ex.	Introductory info on the Rohrschach (Groth-Marnat & Wright, 2016); its use in suicide assessment (Palmieri et al., 2019); guidelines on suicide assessment (APA Work Group on Psychiatric Evaluation, 2016)	
Thursday	May 1	MMPI-2 + ex.	Basic info on the MMPI (Ben-Porath et al., 2020); studies using the MMPI to think about personality (Kamphuis et al., 2008) and psychopathy (Sellbom et al., 2005)	Research design
Thursday	May 8	No class: board week		
Thursday	May 15	No class: completion week		Process Summary

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Note

Please note that all readings are available on Brightspace.

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