Psychology 623, Assessment 2: Personality
COURSE SYLLABUS, Winter 2008

Class Times: Wednesday, 9:00 – 11:30
Class Place: Taylor Building, room 154
Instructor: Bruce Carpenter
Office: Taylor Building, room 287
Telephone: 422-6478
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 1:00 - 2:00; or by appointment

Additional readings as assigned in class.
Manuals for MMPI-2, MMPI-A, NEO-PI-R, and MCMI-III.

General Course Considerations: This course is intended as an advanced introductory course in the theories and techniques of assessment within applied psychology setting, with particular emphasis on structured measures of personality and psychopathology. It is advanced in that we will assume a working knowledge of basic principles of psychology and will work quickly through material; it is introductory in that we will not assume that students have had previous experience with psychometric theory, statistics, or use of the particular tests covered. The course will be approximately equally balanced between theory and practical skill; however, class time might be used slightly more to discuss theory, whereas individual student time will be more on developing skills and applying principles. The following topic areas are introduced:

1. Test construction strategies, additional topics on classical test theory and psychometrics
2. Prediction models and research
3. Dispositional theories of personality
4. Clinical assessment strategies and techniques
5. Ethics and standards in assessment
6. Report writing and case presentation
7. Knowledge of psychometric properties, appropriate uses, administration, scoring, and basic interpretation of major tests (MMPI-2, MMPI-A, MCMI-III, and NEO-PI-R)
8. Introduction to additional structured tests and structured interviews
9. Introduction to specialty tests (for specific age groups and for specific psychopathologies)
10. Gender and ethnic concerns

Professional Standards: This course, in and of itself, does not qualify one to use structured measures independently. Full qualification entails practica, internship, advanced degrees, further supervision, and meeting legal and licensing requirements of the state.

Because you are in training for a profession, as well as a science, professional standards will be expected of you. Your manner and dress when dealing with volunteer assessment subjects should reflect professional standards. Put behind you any resistance to the professional role, including the
power and responsibility that goes with it. Although assessment results obtained from volunteer subjects is considered practice, you should treat all assessment material as privileged information. Unlike a typical clinical setting, you will probably carry completed assessment materials with you, meaning they could be seen by others or lost. Thus, you are asked to use pseudonyms and to clearly mark materials as practice materials. Similarly, you will be given several tests booklets, and will at various times have test manuals. Under no circumstances should subjects be allowed to take these booklets home or out of the administration area. Administration of tests is always under appropriate supervision by you. Those not in training for clinical psychology (meaning everyone except your classmates) are not to have access to testing materials, which are strictly controlled by ethical agreements of use to which your instructor has agreed. This means you don't let friends, relatives, etc. see test booklets or manuals.

**Responsibilities:** You should attend all classes, be on time, and be prepared to answer questions on the reading material assigned for that period. Academic honesty requires individual effort, not group effort, in the preparation of reports and assigned study questions. Because hand scoring and interpret tests promotes deep understanding, use of computerized scoring/interpretation programs is considered cheating unless you’re asked to use the computer. Be familiar with sections in the student handbook and graduate bulletin on academic honesty, and realize that infractions will result in a lowered grade.

**Grading:** Grading will consist of three parts. *First*, there is a final during the usual final examination time (30%); this will be a significant examination covering the entire course (including readings and lecture, but not test interpretation). *Second*, you complete a number of test interpretations and reports (individual reports will be graded on a “+ -” system) (40%). *Third*, your in-class participation is evaluated. This includes participation in class discussion, demonstration that you are keeping up on material and mastering concepts, in-class presentations, and trivia bowl (30%).

**Article Presentation:** Each student will summarize and present one article.

**Case Presentation:** Each student presents a case during the last three weeks. Typically, these at least include history, clinical interview, ability measure, and omnibus test of personality/psychopathology.

**Test Review:** Each class member is responsible to provide a review of one test not otherwise covered in class. The presentations should last about 15-20 minutes and should overview what the literature has to say about the quality of the test/procedure. At a minimum you should include material from Buros' *Mental Measures Yearbook* or *Tests in Print*, although I encourage you to also consult assessment textbooks and critiques in major journals. We will choose these the second week of class.

**Trivia Bowl:** To help us learn the facts of tests and testing we hold trivia bowl several times during the semester. We divide into two teams; you write trivia questions which we use in an in-class competition.

**Assessments:** As before, you will administer tests and write reports on your results. Professional standards apply to these as well. Reports should be completely accurate, well written, and typed. Good grammar and spelling are required. In a few cases you will need volunteers to whom you can administer tests. To help keep the need for volunteers modest, I will provide completed answer sheets for a fair number of the assignments, along with modest personal information and history. In clinical settings, a late report often has no impact upon the patient other than increasing the bill. Therefore, all written reports should be turned in at the assigned time. Late reports cannot receive a “+” grade.

**Obtaining and giving feedback to Volunteers:** In a few instances, you will be required to interview and test volunteers. Be sure to obtain informed consent first (a form is posted on Blackboard). Do not use the same volunteer for more than one assessment. For most assessments you should treat materials as practice, with no feedback to volunteers. However, two cases are specifically designed to require you to obtain practice giving feedback to the volunteer. Before giving feedback you must have your feedback plan approved.
Required Supplemental Readings


Reading for Individual Reports


**Optional Readings You May Find Useful**

(if you want to read any, I have a copy of most)


American Psychological Association (2002). Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct. *American Psychologist, 57*.


Assessment of Normal Personality

January 9 – Basic personality theory; NEO-PI-R Introduction; Learning from the 1970’s personality debate

January 16 – Practicing with the NEO-PI-R

Psychometrics Part I – Statistical principles for using tests

January 23 – Psychometric theory: norms, distributions, reliability, classical test theory
Read: Pope (1992); Dudeck (1979); Meehl (1956).
Summary: Vaidya et al. (2002).
Optional reading is Crocker & Algina, chapters 6, 11 & 14.
Due: NEO-PI-R #1 interpretation (answer sheet provided).

January 30 – Prediction models; Clinical judgment; Challenges to prediction and common errors
Summary: Brammer (2002); Paunonen (2001).
Due: NEO-PI-R #2 report (answer sheet provided).

February 6 – Common errors (cont.); Using test evidence to draw conclusions; Challenges to the NEO
Read: Meehl (1973); Ben-Porath & Waller (1992a, 1992b); Costa & McCrae (1992a, 1992b)
Class exercise: What do we learn from readings on prediction and decision-making?
Due: NEO-PI-R #3 report (your volunteer; plus feedback plan); NEO trivia cards.

Assessment of Abnormal Personality Part I – the MMPI

February 13 – Introduction to the MMPI-2
Read: Graham, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.
Summary: Baer & Miller (2002).
Trivia Bowl #1: NEO and 5-factor personality theory.
Due: Psychometrics and prediction trivia cards.

February 20 – Practice with the MMPI-2; Content and other scales; Interpretive strategies
Read: Graham, chapters 6, 7, and 10; Vincent (1990); Finn & Kamphuis (2006).
Summary: Wrobel & Lachar (1982); Aribisi, Ben-Porath, & McNulty (2002)
Trivia Bowl #2: Psychometrics and prediction.

February 27 – Practicing with the MMPI-2; The MMPI-A
Read: Graham, chapters 8 and 12; Archer (2005); Ben-Porath, McCully, & Almagor (1993); Keiller & Graham (1993).
Summary: Osbert (2002).
Due: MMPI-2 #1 interpretation (answer sheet provided).
March 5 – *The MMPI makeover; Strengths and weaknesses*
    Read: Graham, ch. 11; Helms & Reddon (1993).
    Summary: McGrath, Pogge, & Stokes (2002).
    **Due:** MMPI-2 #2 report (answer sheet provided); MMPI-2 and MMPI-A trivia cards.

**Assessment of Abnormal Personality Part I – other approaches**

March 12 – *Introduction to the MCMI; Scoring and interpretation; Student test reviews*
    Read: Millon (1985, 1986); Widiger et al. (1986); McCann (1990); Streiner, Goldberg, & Miller (1993); Miller, Goldberg, & Streiner (1993).
    Trivia Bowl #3: MMPI-2 and MMPI-A.
    **Due:** MMPI-2 #3 report (your volunteer; plus feedback plan); MMPI-A #1 interpretation (answer sheet provided).

March 19 – *MCMI strengths and weaknesses; Behavior checklists; Student test reviews*
    Read: Retzlaff (1996); Chick et al. (1993); Davis & Hays (1997).
    Summary: Rogers, Salekin, & Sewell (1999); Haddy et al. (2005).
    **Due:** MCMI-III #1 interpretation (answer sheet provided).

**Psychometrics Part II – Test construction**

March 26 – *Models of test construction; Item writing and item selection; Influences of gender and ethnicity; Student case presentations*
    Read: Burisch (1984); Feingold (1994); Timbrook & Graham (1994).
    **Due:** MCMI-III #2 report (your volunteer); MCMI and test construction trivia cards.

April 2 – *Student case presentations*
    Trivia Bowl #4: MCMI and test construction
    **Due:** Child behavior checklist interpretation (provided); SCL-90 interpretation (provided).

April 9 – *Student case presentations; catch up*
    Read: Wood et al. (2002).
    Class exercise: Choosing instruments and assessment strategies.
Summary of Assessment Assignments, Winter 2008
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Reports

Full report—This is a report as you would provide for a paying client, written to a mental health professional (non-psychologist). It always includes referral, history, background, validity statements, interpretation, recommendations, and signature (see examples). Stick to the data (no fictitious elements except name).

Interpretation in list format—This is a bulleted list of points you would make in a report. It includes validity, interpretations (related to history and presenting problems), and recommendations.

Feedback plan—This is a bulleted list of what you would actually say to the client about the results. It is generally simpler, more practical, and more tactful that the written report. Practice “turning a phrase” to help clients accept and understand their problems. (I hope you take the opportunity to give feedback, and then discuss it with me if you would like, but I do not actually check to see that you do.)

NEO-PI-R

Jan 23 #1, Hand score answer sheet provided, give interpretation only in list format
Jan 30 #2, Hand score answer sheet provided, write full report
Feb 6 #3, Interview and test your volunteer, computer score and write full report, write feedback plan

MMPI-2

Feb 27 #1, Hand Score answer sheet provided, give interpretation only in list format
Mar 5 #2, Computer score answer sheet provided, write full report
Mar 12 #3, Interview and test your volunteer, computer score and write full report, write feedback plan

MMPI-A

Mar 12 #1, Computer score answer sheet provided, give interpretation only in list format

MCMI-III

Mar 19 #1, Computer score answer sheet provided, give interpretation only in list format
Mar 26 #2, Interview and test your volunteer, computer score and write full report (no feedback plan)

BASC-2

Apr 2 #1, Computer or hand score answer sheet provided, give interpretation only in list format

SCL-90

Apr 2 #2, Computer or hand score answer sheet provided, give interpretation only in list format

Note the following points:

- Always turn in the profile sheets with your interpretation or report
- Obtain and turn in signed consent forms when testing volunteers (NEO-PI-R #3, MMPI-2 #3, MCMI-III #2)
- Always integrate history and presenting behavior with test data, including when only listing interpretation
- Do not write a full report when only an interpretation is requested (save your time)

Trivia Bowl (questions are due at least two days before we play (syllabus lists them due the week before)):

Feb 13 NEO-PI-R
Feb 20 Psychometrics and prediction
Mar 12 MMPI-2 and MMPI-A
Apr 2 MCMI-III and test construction