COURSE TITLE: Abnormal Psychology

COURSE NUMBER: PSY 305

I: RATIONALE:
This course is a study of the causes, characteristics, and management of abnormal behavior. The course is divided into three general areas: major theoretical perspectives of abnormal behavior; major disorders following the categories of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-V); and causes, treatment, and impact of abnormal behavior.

As Psychology professionals, we recognize that reactions to trauma come in many forms. The content of this course, and discussions about trauma from different perspectives, may bring about unexpected and unsettling reactions. Responses to trauma are often strategies that survivors have developed to keep themselves safe, and therefore really reflect strength and resiliency. Recognizing how trauma impacts anyone is an important part of skill building for creating trauma-informed services and systems. Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor at any time during the course if you would like to discuss, privately, your reactions to the content we are reviewing and/or the discussions we are having.

Prerequisite(s): PSY 101

II. MAJOR INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS:

GOAL A:
Evaluate major theoretical perspectives of abnormal behavior (Biological, Psycho-dynamic, Cognitive, Sociocultural and Humanistic).

Learning Outcomes: The student will:

A-1 Demonstrate understanding of the key concepts and individuals associated with each theory.
A-2 Compare different theories’ explanations for the causes of abnormal behavior.
A-3 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses associated with each theory.

GOAL B:
Demonstrate understanding of stress, coping and vulnerability and their impact on a person's behavior and environment.
Learning Outcomes: The student will:

B-1 Identify the relationship between psychosocial stressors and onset of abnormal behavior.
B-2 Analyze why people respond differently to the same psychosocial events.
B-3 Predict when different risk and resiliency factors will lead to the development of abnormal behavior.

GOAL C:
Demonstrate understanding of DSM-V and its use in categorizing abnormal behavior, with a special emphasis on variation due to multicultural variables.

Learning Outcomes: The student will:

C-1 Describe the DSM-V and its purpose in classifying abnormal behavior.
C-2 Assess the strengths and weaknesses of diagnosing abnormal behavior.
C-3 Identify cultural differences in what is considered abnormal behavior.
C-4 Propose explanations for the variation in prevalence rates among different cultures.

GOAL D:
Evaluate the cause of maladaptive behavior on current research and theoretical perspectives.

Learning Outcomes: The student will:

D-1 Differentiate between genetic, environmental, and psychological causes of abnormal behavior.
D-2 Propose explanations for the etiology of different types of abnormal behavior.
D-3 Critique current research findings on the various theoretical perspectives.

GOAL E:
Evaluate appropriate treatment for the various types of abnormal behavior.

Learning Outcomes: The student will:

E-1 Assess the effectiveness of biological interventions.
E-2 Assess the effectiveness of non-biological interventions.
E-3 Predict which intervention methods would be most effective in treating different types of abnormal behavior.

GOAL F:
Understand the impact of abnormal behavior on the other family members.

Learning Outcomes: The student will:

F-1 Examine different prevention methods.
F-2 Explain and provide examples of how a client’s abnormal behavior affects their social supports.
F-3 Recognize the challenges that family members of clients face in treating abnormal behavior.
F-4 Propose appropriate coping and support mechanisms based on the type of abnormal behavior present.

GOAL G:
Understand the rights and responsibilities of the clients as well as the clinician.

Learning Outcomes: The student will:

G-1 Explain the importance of maintaining respect for all clients.
G-2 Identify the legal and ethical responsibilities of all mental health professionals.
G-3 Recognize potential legal and ethical dilemmas that frequently occur when interacting with clients.
G-4 Propose solutions to different dilemmas mental health professionals face.

Goal H:
Understand the link between trauma, especially in early life, and psychological distress, which leads to a diagnosis of a mental illness, and the impact of delivering trauma-informed interventions when trauma is part of a person’s experience.

Learning Outcomes: The student will:

H-1 Define psychological trauma in terms of the brain’s response to stress and danger.
H-2 Explain how trauma increases the risk of developing psychological symptoms associated with diagnosed mental disorders and how having a mental illness increases the risk of experiencing trauma.
H-3 Evaluate the impact of a trauma-informed approach to mental illness as a fundamental shift in thinking from the idea that people who have experienced psychological trauma are “sick” and in need of clinical treatment to the idea that they are “injured” and in need of healing.

GOAL I:
Write and speak in a professional manner.

Learning Outcomes: The student will:

I-1 Present written information in a logical and grammatical manner.
I-2 Present written information using standard APA style.