Psychological Assessment I (PSYC 810-001)
Fall 2012, Section 001  9:00 - 11:40 am Wednesdays at Center for Psychological Services

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Phone: 703-993-1368   Office Hours: 1:45 - 2:45 Tuesdays & Thursdays
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Teaching Assistants: Sarah Erb serb@gmu.edu  Diane Wagner dwagner1@gmu.edu
Lab:  Mondays 10:30 - 12:20, Center for Psychological Services

This is the first semester of a two-semester sequence on psychological assessment. The goal of the course is to give students a foundation in theories, strategies, techniques, and issues in psychological assessment, focusing on empirical support and clinical utility. Students will gain the skills to: (1) conduct a semi-structured clinical interview; (2) choose appropriate assessment techniques to learn about clients’ concerns and difficulties; (3) provide accurate, clear and effective interpretation of assessment results; (4) develop recommendations tailored to the needs of clients, and (5) provide helpful feedback to clients in person and through written reports. The topics are:

Basic Concepts and Issues
  1  Principles of intellectual and cognitive psychological assessment
  2  Purpose and goals of assessment
  3  Principles of test construction and psychometrics
  4  Errors and biases in clinical judgment
  5  Limitations of psychological assessment
  6  Diversity issues
  7  Ethical issues

The Clinical Assessment Interview
  8  Fundamental concepts and techniques (therapeutic listening skills, information-gathering interview, clarification of reason for referral, explanation of the assessment process, informed consent, and risk assessment)

Report Writing & Feedback
  9  Writing integrated reports that combine information from interviews, behavioral observations, and test results.
  10  Providing feedback regarding testing results to individuals and their families

Assessment of Adults and Children
  11  Intellectual and educational assessment
  12  Specific instruments: WAIS, WISC; Woodcock-Johnson Cognitive and Achievement; VMI.
  13  Introduction to LD and ADHD assessment

Course Requirements:

Interviews/Assessments:
  • 2 clinical and 2 parent interviews (these will be completed as part of the assessments below)
  • 2 WAIS-IV administrations/scorings
  • 2 WISC-IV administration/scorings
  • 1 WJ Cognitive administrations/scoring
  • 1 WJ Achievement administration/scoring
  • 1 VMI administration/scoring (as part of a child or adolescent assessment)
Written Assignments/Reports:
- 1 WAIS interpretative report (with clinical interview)
- 1 integrated WAIS + WJ Cognitive (selected subtests) + WJ Achievement (selected subtests) report (with clinical interview)
- 1 WISC interpretive report (with parent interview)
- 1 integrated WISC + VMI report (with parent interview)

(You should turn in reports first to the Lab TAs at least a week before they are due.)

In-class Presentation: There are 15-minute presentations of your first testing cases for the WAIS and WISC. Presentations should include information regarding the interview, behavioral observations, test results, and your thoughts about integration and interpretation of all of this data.

Grading. I will base your final grade on your percentage as defined below.
A+ = 97% or more   A = 93 – 96%   A- = 90 - 92%   B+ = 87 - 89%   B = 83 - 86%   C = 75 - 85%   F = below 75%

Grade for Lecture: (75 % of total grade)
4 Reports
Class Participation (includes class presentation)

Grade for Lab: (25% of total grade)
Timely and thorough completion of all test protocols and tapes
Completion of interviews in a professional manner
Lab test administration practicals
Protocol scoring accuracy and effort; learning from corrections
Test administration and scoring

Lab Instructors will provide feedback on your interviewing, administration and scoring, report writing, and general professional interaction skills. You will turn in your protocols and videotaped interviews to your Lab Instructors for review and feedback. They will grade your work and you will re-submit unsatisfactory work until it is satisfactory. You will make copies of lab materials at your own expense.

Prior to administering any testing instrument to a volunteer, you will: practice administering the instrument in lab; thoroughly read the manual and essentials book; and practice administering the instrument outside of lab/class (with a classmate); and for the WAIS and WISC pass a lab practical competency exam administered by your lab instructor. A “passing” grade is 90% or above.

Volunteers: You will recruit adult volunteers through the GMU research participant pool and child volunteers from the community. At all times, you must behave with the volunteers in the same manner that you would with actual clients. Thus, you cannot assess volunteers with whom you have any type of outside relationship (i.e., a student in one of your labs; a co-worker; a relative; etc.). You are to conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times (e.g., arrive on time to appointments; contact volunteer if appointment must be changed or cancelled; and dress and conduct yourself professionally).
**Official Communications via GMU E-mail:** Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

**Honor Code:** Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. Information about Honor Code policies is available at [http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/](http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/) All students must follow the American Psychological Association 2002 Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Last day to add course: September 4  Last day to drop course: September 28

**Required Books**

**Lecture & Lab Sequence:**
**Aug. 27 Lab** Orientation to Assessment Procedures. WAIS-IV Administration.

**Aug. 29** Introduction to Intellectual Assessment

Sept. 3 No Lab, Labor Day Holiday

Sept. 5 WAIS-IV Indices, subtests, profile analysis, interpretation

Sept. 10 Lab WAIS-IV administration and scoring

Sept. 12 Cultural Diversity and Intelligence


Sept. 17 Lab WAIS-IV administration and scoring

Sept. 19 Report Writing


Sept. 24 Lab WAIS-IV Lab Practicals
Bring whatever supplies you need for a real administration

Sept. 26 Risk Assessment and Report Feedback


Oct. 1 Lab Practice risk assessment

Oct. 3 Woodcock-Johnson Cognitive Abilities interpretation


Oct. 9 (Tuesday) Lab: Woodcock Johnson Cognitive Abilities administration and scoring

Oct. 10 *WAIS-IV student presentations *** First WAIS Report Due***
Oct. 15 Lab  Woodcock Johnson Achievement administration and scoring

Oct. 17  Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement

October 22 Lab  WISC-IV Administration and scoring
Additional Readings: WISC-IV Manual; Essentials of WISC-IV Chapters 2 & 3

Oct. 24 WISC-IV Indices, subtests, profile analysis and report writing

Oct. 29 Lab  WISC-IV Administration and scoring

Oct. 31 *** WAIS/WJ-Ach/WJ-Cog Report Due***
WISC-IV interpretation; strengths and weaknesses

Nov. 5 Lab  WISC-IV Lab practicals
Bring supplies you need for a real administration

Nov. 7 Limitations of Psychological Assessment


Nov. 12 Lab  Beery VMI  Additional Readings: Beery VMI Manual

Nov. 14 Assessment of Learning Disabilities and ADHD

Nov. 19 Lab  Introduction to other tests

Nov. 21 * Thanksgiving Holiday *
Nov. 26 Lab  Introduction to other tests

Nov. 28 *WISC-IV student presentations *** First WISC Report Due ***

Dec. 3 Lab:  Integrating Tests, Providing Client Feedback, & Wrap-up

Dec. 5  Professional and Ethical Issues

Dec. 12 *** WISC/VMI Report Due ***