

MENTAL DISORDER PAPER GUIDELINES

If you choose to write the Mental Disorder Paper as partial satisfaction of your Project requirements for Psych 1000, and most students do, please follow the following recommendations to secure the best possible grade.

Don't copy the DSM! – The first thing to avoid is copying the DSM criteria. You must put the criteria in your own words. Simply transcribing the DSM, word for word, will result in a zero for this portion of the assignment – virtually a 20% penalty. Some disorders have long, complicated DSM criteria – the Depressive Disorders, for example. Unless you plan to put in the time and energy to translate these difficult phrases and concepts, pick another disorder. Some disorders have very simple and short criteria. Examples include Kleptomania, Pyromania, and many others.

Don't skip criteria. – Make sure you list, again in your own words, all the necessary criteria. Many diagnoses require a duration threshold (often six months), certain behaviors, or certain emotional states. Others mandate that the patient has reached a certain age. Yet others require that other disorders have been ruled out first.

Make sure that the *causes* (and, accordingly, *treatments*) are sufficiently distinct. You are required to list two possible causes for the selected disorder. All too often students fail to pick different types of causes. This most frequently arises from use of the Biological Perspective as a cause. While this is completely appropriate and often conclusive, following up the selection of Biological roots (say through neurotransmitter irregularities), by selecting Genetics as the second cause is redundant. That's the same answer. Problems from faulty genetics cause neurotransmitter deficits. Instead, look to Sigmund Freud's Psychodynamic theory or some explanation from the Cognitive, Humanistic or Behavioral Perspectives.

Give each element its proper due. Occasionally students do superb work on two or three of the four elements but neglect the remaining one or two. Each is graded equally. Try to devote a page to each of the four. Also, make sure to separate the two causes or treatments into their own paragraphs for better style and comprehension.

Don't over use quotes. The main purpose of this paper is that you are *putting in your own words* basic aspects of a mental disorder. Accordingly, it is essential that *you* write the paper. In other words, the paper should not be a collection of quotes strung together in response to the 4 criteria. Quotations should be limited to no more than 2, with neither to exceed 15 words. If this guideline is ignored, your grade will suffer drastically, including a failing grade.

AND, ABOVE ALL, DON'T PLAGIARIZE! – One, minor, instance of plagiarism will result in a zero for that section of the paper, a 19% deduction. Two instances will result in a zero for the entire paper. If the paper shows extensive plagiarism (more than 50%) the student will have an additional 5% deduction from their semester grade (on a 100% scale) and the paper shall be submitted to the Dean for further action.