



Differential Diagnosis for Mental Disorders
NURS 5363.P061 and NURS 5363.060
Fall 2025

Scheduled Class Days and Times:

Instructor's Name: Tracy Hicks DNP, APRN, MBA, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC, CARN-AP, FIAAN, FAANP

Office: Virtual

Phone: 903-812-8480 contact via email utilizing your University email

Email: thicks@uttyler.edu

Office Hours: Virtual Office Hours: By appointment for phone call or video conference. Days and times may be arranged upon request. Please email faculty to make arrangements/obtain Zoom/Teams link.

Course Description: Using a case-based approach, students develop advanced skills for the differential diagnosis of mental disorders, including observation and interviewing skills, and the use and interpretation of screening tools, laboratory tests, and behavioral assessments. Case studies will utilize the most current edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed., text rev.)* and other appropriate methodologies for diagnosing mental disorders.

Prerequisites: NURS 5350; NURS 5352; NURS 5354

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Identify and develop a working knowledge of the DSM-5 categories within a monoaxial system that recognizes social and physical diagnoses have an impact upon the mental health of the whole individual.
2. Discuss and determine an appropriate diagnosis while analyzing to rule out differential diagnoses based upon an evaluation of symptoms.
3. Describe how DSM-5 diagnoses contribute to ethical and efficacious assessment for treatment planning for both pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions.
4. Explain and compare the assumptions of the medical model, psychosocial models, and developmental models as related to human behavior and the improvement of whole person health.

Required Textbooks and Readings:

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed., text revision.). (DSM-5-TR). ISBN 978-0-89042-576-3

*Boland, R., & Verduin, M. (2021). *Kaplan & Sadock's concise textbook of clinical psychiatry*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. ISBN: 978-1-975167486. This text is available through Muntz Library and you may access the resource [here](#).

Carlat, D. J. (2017). *The psychiatric interview* (4th ed.). Walters Kluwer. ISBN: 978-1-49632-771-0

Additional literature is presented for reading within each module.

*If you are in a clinical course, all students are required to have an active InPlace subscription.

Recommended Textbooks and Readings:

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2021). *The essentials: Core competencies for professional nursing education*. <https://www.aacnnursing.org/Portals/42/AcademicNursing/pdf/Essentials-2021.pdf>

American Nurses Association (2021). *Nursing: Scope and standards of practice* (4th ed.). Nursingbooks.org. ISBN: 978- 0999308868

American Psychiatric Nurses Association, International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses, American Nurses Association (2015). *Psychiatric-mental health nursing: Scope and standards of practice* (2nd ed.). Silver Spring, MD: ISBN: 978-1558105553

Jameson, J., Fauci, A., Kasper, D., Hauser, S., Longo, D., & Loscalzo, J. (2018). *Harrison's principles of internal medicine* (20th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Johnson, K., & Vanderhof, D. (2020). *Psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner: Nursing certification review manual continuing education resource clinical practice resource* (4th ed.). American Nurses Credentialing Center. ISBN: 9781935213796

Sadock, B., Sadock, V., & Ruiz, P. (2014). *Kaplan and Sadock's synopsis of psychiatry: behavioral sciences/ clinical psychiatry* (11th ed.). Philadelphia: Lippincott William & Wilkins. ISBN: 978-1451194340

Stahl, S. (2020). *The prescriber's guide* (7th ed.). Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-1108926010

Required Course Equipment:

Web Cam and microphone for your computer or contact the instructor.

Special Course Notes:

- 1) Proctoring Notice: Four Exams will be given ONLINE, using a proctored service called Respondus LockDown Browser. You must sign up with Respondus LockDown Browser at the beginning of the semester.
- 2) The content exams in this course will be proctored using the Respondus Monitor proctoring service. There is no cost to the student for utilizing the proctoring service however, students are required to have an internal webcam, external webcam and a microphone on their computer. The

microphone is not required to be external and can be the one embedded within your computer or laptop.

The external webcam should be a high definition (1080p) webcam with a tripod. An external webcam with a tripod is required to allow you to meet the requirements of the video monitoring for each test. An external webcam is one which is separate from your computer or laptop. Logitech tends to be a good brand, but any high-definition external webcam is acceptable. Retail cost: \$30.00 to \$160.00.

If you are not able to provide these items, you must contact faculty as soon as possible of the course so we can arrange for you to take your exam on campus. Details on utilizing the proctoring service and setting up your webcam can be found in the Canvas course.

- 3) Exams must be taken during the time specifically designated. If you are unable to take the exam, notify the instructor and the instructor will determine if a makeup exam is warranted. Any potential make-up exam will be done during finals week only, with special permission.
- 4) Exam dates are listed in the Course Calendar
- 5) Students must achieve an AVERAGE of 80 on all four exams to pass the course. Even though you may have enough percentage in other areas to raise your overall grade, you still will not pass the course without an 80 overall AVERAGE on all exams.
- 6) Each exam may be opened during the designated hours listed within Canvas, but you will only have 100-minutes to complete the exam—including the verified time with Respondus LockDown Browser. You must finish the exam by the end time established for the exam. Please pay strict attention to this time limit!
- 7) The module objectives and assigned readings will guide the selection of items for the tests. Emphasis will be on application and synthesis of knowledge.
 - Exam 1 will cover Modules 1, 2, 3, 4
 - Exam 2 will cover Modules 5, 6, 7
 - Exam 3 will cover Modules 8, 9, 10
 - Exam 4 will cover Modules 11, 12, 13
- 8) Absolute integrity is expected from every student in all aspects of the course and students may be dismissed from the program for violations. Cheating on exams will not be tolerated. All persons involved in Academic Dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University Regulations and Procedures. You are responsible for reading and following the student guidelines on academic integrity in the Handbook of Operating Procedures for UT Tyler.
- 9) Exams are Not open book. No notes, books, papers, or other aids are to be used during any exam. Students are to work individually and submit the test within the allotted time.
- 10) When your test is completed, you must disconnect from the test in Canvas PRIOR TO disconnecting from Respondus LockDown Browser for test security purposes. Any attempts to copy the examination will be viewed as cheating.
- 11) If necessary, opportunities for individual review regarding the exam will be allowed within 1 week of the administration of the exam. After that timeframe, the exam will no longer be reviewed. This is not a question review, however it is a time to clarify or ask content questions.
- 12) Any adjustment to exam grades will be at the discretion of the faculty. Grades will be posted on Canvas but should not be considered the official grade for the course until all exams have been taken and final grades have been posted.

Assignments and Weights/Percentage/Point Values

1. Exams (four exams at 15% each) **60%**
The average of your exams must be greater than or equal to 80 to pass the course. Even if you have enough points to pass otherwise, you will not pass the course without making an 80 average on the four exams. This is to prepare you to sit for state boards.

2. Assigned Projects and Papers

40%

- a. **Co-Facilitating Seminar:** Two to three students are responsible for cofacilitating each class discussion. Seminar dates will be assigned to each student who leads the discussion on the readings for that week. The students are welcome to meet with faculty the week before class to determine which part of the readings to focus on. In preparing for the discussions, the student will write a brief summary of the articles/chapters and present this to the class. **NO POWERPOINTS PLEASE. Write the summary as if you are educating a patient about their diagnosis.** After presenting the summary, ask questions of the class formulating questions on the reading that generate discussion. The majority of the class should be discussion so develop at least three (3) to five (5) discussion questions. Do not ask questions whose answers must be looked up on a particular page. Instead, let your questions point us to the major points or memorable arguments the author makes or questions that were raised for you during the readings and extend the readings. The focus should be on learning how to briefly educate patients about their diagnosis, which will require you to determine what is the most salient information to provide. **(10%)**
- b. **Case Studies (2):** These case studies include the skills for differential diagnosing and treatment. The rubric for assessment of the Case Study is provided in Canvas; please read and follow the rubric exactly to ensure you are learning all parts of the process and complete the assignment correctly. These are to be written with clarity in a logical process in APA style. **(20%)**
- c. **Mental Status Exam:** Students will review a video of a standardized patient and complete a mental status exam using information provided by the patient during the interview. For areas of the exam in which the interviewer did not ask the client directly or client did not provide information, students are to include the questions that would be asked to illicit the needed information. **(10%)**

Classroom Engagement: There will be 4-5 Seminars via Zoom meetings held in the evening to process course information, for seminar presentations, and for knowledge development. Class engagement is required. Please prepare for this engagement so you will gain the most from our time together. **Cameras must be turned on during Zoom sessions.** Proper engagement and adherence to these guidelines ensure that everyone can benefit from a productive and respectful virtual classroom experience. Interpersonal interaction supports the skills necessary for a professional PMHNP and this engagement is paramount for balancing an online process within a relational profession. You will be asked to self-evaluate your level of participation at the end of the semester. Recordings are not guaranteed.

Grading Scale:

Specific guidelines and grading criteria for all assignments are in the Modules. Final grades for the course will be determined based upon the following point assignments:

- A - 90-100
- B - 80-89
- C - 70-79
- D - 60-69
- F - Below 60

Grades will not be rounded when calculating the average (79.5 is not rounded to 80, and 89.5 is not rounded to 90). The simple average of all unit exam grades, including a final must be at or above 80% to pass the course. Once the student has achieved a simple unit exam average of 80% or higher, course

grades will be determined based on the weighted calculation of exams and other required course work. Students are required to achieve an average of 80% (B) to complete the course successfully.

Although the university policy allows 60 days for grade appeals, the School of Nursing follows a stricter timeline of 10 days to facilitate students' timely progression through the curriculum. In the case of extenuating circumstances, please consult the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for guidance.

University of Texas at Tyler School of Nursing Policy on Graduate Examinations

Committing to graduate school is a significant responsibility that requires careful balancing of both academic and personal schedules during these rigorous years. The SON faculty want to partner with you to ensure your success with course examinations. Please review the policy on the graduate examinations below to understand the expectations of the SON and to ensure your academic success.

The UT Tyler School of Nursing faculty are committed to...

- Posting a full syllabi including a course calendars ahead of the semester for each course to allow ample time for student life planning. You may find the course syllabi for the School of Nursing posted [here](https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/colleges-schools/nursing/syllabi/). (<https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/colleges-schools/nursing/syllabi/>)
- Scheduling exams during a 4-hour time block.
- Immediate access to course instructor [see designated contact] during exams for individual student support.
- Partnering with students to achieve academic success
- Providing SAR recommended accommodations for individualized student needs.

Commitment required from students...

- Review each course syllabus and assignment calendar prior to semester start to make necessary arrangements for specified exam days. You may find the course syllabi for the School of Nursing posted [here](https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/colleges-schools/nursing/syllabi/). (<https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/colleges-schools/nursing/syllabi/>)
- Notify instructors immediately of any emergencies that hinder exam time – discretion to the faculty on a case-by-case basis.
- Request accommodations appropriately through the **Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR)** for any physical or learning needs which will notify the faculty of any requests. (<https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/disability-services>).
- Achievement of a minimum examination average score of 80% to pass each individual course.
- Adherence to the university policy of academic integrity.
- Rationale for examinations timed schedule is expected for licensure students who are sitting for National Exams and exam integrity adherence.

This is a reminder that all exams must be taken during the designated exam window. Committing to graduate school is a significant responsibility that requires careful balancing of both academic and personal schedules during these rigorous years. **Any changes to the exam schedule will only be considered at the discretion of the faculty and only in cases of genuine emergencies.**

We appreciate your understanding and commitment to your academic journey. We are here for you!

Link to UT Tyler Course Syllabi: <https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/colleges-schools/nursing/syllabi/>

Academic Integrity: Cheating of any kind, as defined in Section 8 of the UT Tyler Manual of Policies and Procedures (MOPP) for Student Affairs (<https://www.uttyler.edu/mopp/>), will not be tolerated. Consequences may include:

- Reprimand
- Exam failure
- Course failure
- Expulsion from the Nursing program
- Expulsion from the University
- Other consequences as assigned

Student Concerns: Our goal is to communicate effectively with our students and to establish an optimal learning environment. If you have any concerns, please follow the chain of command.

1. Speak to your faculty member first to try to resolve any concerns.
2. If the response does not address your concern, you are welcome to contact the program director. Please allow a reasonable amount of time to work with your faculty to resolve any concerns.
3. If the response does not address your concern, you are welcome to speak with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

APA Guidelines: Points will be deducted if APA guidelines are not followed, as adherence to these standards is critical for maintaining academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism. Accurate citation and formatting are essential to scholarly work, ensuring that sources are appropriately credited, and the work is presented professionally. Failure to use the updated APA guidelines not only undermines the credibility of the assignment but also constitutes a violation of academic standards. Therefore, it is imperative for students to meticulously apply APA formatting and citation rules to avoid penalties and uphold the quality of their work. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Exam and homework materials, questions, and problems are the intellectual property of faculty, UT Tyler, or publishers.

- These materials may not be distributed without permission.
- Distributing or uploading them to online resources destroys the integrity of the assignment and the course, allowing others an unfair advantage by letting them view the materials.
- Uploading these materials to online resources is a violation of UT Tyler's academic misconduct policies and may result in formal conduct charges.
- Sanctions for uploading or otherwise divulging the contents of these materials can include:
 - Reprimand
 - Assignment or exam failure
 - Course failure

- Expulsion from the Nursing program
- Expulsion from the University

Use of Artificial Intelligence: All assignments in this course are individual assignments. In this class, you will often be discussing course concepts with your classmates and with me, but when you sit down to complete a quiz, write a discussion post, or work on a project, you are expected to do the actual work on your assignments independently.

Use of an AI Generator such as ChatGPT, MidJourney, DALL-E, Open Evidence, etc. is explicitly prohibited unless otherwise noted by the instructor. The information derived from these tools is based on previously published materials. Therefore, using these tools without proper citation constitutes plagiarism. Additionally, be aware that the information derived from these tools is often inaccurate or incomplete. It is imperative that all work submitted should be your own. Any assignment that is found to have been plagiarized or to have used unauthorized AI tools may receive a zero and / or be reported for academic misconduct.

Late Policy: 5% will be deducted each day an assignment is past due unless prior arrangements have been made with your course faculty. Extenuating circumstances may apply.

Repeating a Course: Students repeating this course may not use previously submitted assignments nor utilize the same patients for an assignment. Submitting the same or slightly modified assignments from previous semesters is considered self-plagiarism and is subject to academic discipline, including failing the assignment or the course.

Attendance and Make-up Policy: Attendance/participation is expected. Make-up for exams, quizzes, assignments, and missed clinical time is at the instructor's discretion.

Graded Course Requirements Information:

- Each of the 4 exams covers 3-4 modules and are independently taken with ProctorU. Each exam covers the material presented in Zoom sessions, readings, and videos found in the class modules.
- The co-facilitating seminar will consist of 2-3 students working together to lead the Zoom discussions of the readings related to the topics for the week. The student team will write a brief summary of the articles/chapters and present this to the class. Please also prepare five-10 questions to ask the class as well. NO POWERPOINTS PLEASE. After presenting a brief summary, ask questions of the class formulating questions on the readings that generate discussion. Each seminar should last between 15-20 minutes for each group.
- Two Case Studies include synthesizing of realistic clinical material to prepare the PMHNP for practice of differential diagnosis and treatment in a particular case. The rubric of evaluation looks at the appropriateness of the differential diagnoses and why they are or are not supported, the determination of the correct diagnosis, the level of treatment care required, the diagnostic tools needed to support the diagnosis, noted high risk concerns of 'red flags' with this client, and treatment of the client pharmacologically and non-pharmacologically.
- Mental status exam will consist of students reviewing a video of a standardized patient and completing a mental status exam on the patient based on their observations and the information provided during the patient interview.

Important Course Dates:

Classes Begin: **August 28-29 Course Review**

Census Date (withdraw without penalty): **September 10, 2025**

Last Date to Withdraw: **November 4, 2025**. Students, please notify your course faculty and contact your advisor.

Labor Day: September 1 **no classes**

Thanksgiving Holiday: November 24-28, 2025

Finals Week: December 8-12, 2025

Calendar of Topics, Readings, and Due Dates:

<i>Week #</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Class Topic</i>	<i>Module Readings/Videos</i>	<i>Assignments Due</i>
1	9/2 – 9/7	Module 1 Psychiatric Classifications DSM Psychosociocultural	DSM-5-TR: pp. xxiii-lxix pp. 5-29; 859-879 Begin online discussion. Carlat: pp. 1-84	Course Introduction- Syllabus Review 9/3 4 pm via zoom DUE-9/7: Complete Test Quiz PMHNP Graduate Accountability Statement Due
2	9/8 - 9/14	Module 2 Psychiatric Examination and Diagnosis, MSE, tools, labs	DSM-5-TR: pp. 841-857 Carlat: pp. 86-158 pp. 262-282	DUE 9/15: Co-Facilitating- Meet with your Seminar Group
3	9/15- 9/21	Module 3 Bipolar Disorders	DSM-5-TR: pp. 139-175 Carlat: pp. 159-185	
4	9/22 – 9/28	Module 4 Depressive Disorders, Suicide	DSM-5-TR: pp. 177-214 pp. 920-926	MSE DUE: 9/28
	9/25- 9/28	Texas Nurse Practitioner Conference- Students welcome		
5	9/29- 10/5	Module 5 Anxiety Disorders, Obsessive- Compulsive and Related Disorders	DSM-5-TR: pp. 215-261 pp. 263-294 Carlat: pp. 186-198	DUE Seminar I EXAM #1: 10/6 (5-9PM) Modules 1,2,3,4
6	10/6- 10/12	Module 6 Trauma and Stressor-Related Disorders, Dissociative Disorders, Somatic Symptom and Related Disorders	DSM-5-TR: pp. 295-328 pp. 329-348 pp. 349-370	
7	10/13- 10/19	Module 7	DSM-5-TR: pp. 101-138 pp. 807-819	DUE: 10/12 Case Study #1

		Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders, Medication Induced Movement Disorders, Other	Carlat: pp. 208-227	
8	10/20 – 10/26	Module 8 Neurodevelopmental Disorders, Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorders	DSM-5-TR: pp. 35-99 pp. 521-541 Carlat: pp. 243-248	Seminar 2 DUE EXAM #2: 10/27 (5-9PM) Modules 5,6,7
9	10/27 – 11/2	Module 9 Personality DO, Other Conditions of Focus	DSM-5-TR: pp. 733-778 pp. 821-836 Carlat: pp. 249-260	
	11/2	LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW		
10	11/3- 11/9	Module 10 Feeding and Eating Disorders, Elimination Disorders	DSM-5-TR: pp. 371-397 pp. 399-405 Carlat: pp. 237-242	
11	11/10– 11/16	Module 11 Substance Related and Addictive Disorders	DSM-5-TR: pp. 543-665 Carlat: pp. 199-207	Seminar 3 DUE EXAM #3: 11/16 (5-9PM) Modules 8, 9, 10
12	11/17 – 11/23	Module 12 Sexual Dysfunctions, Gender Dysphoria. Paraphilic Concerns	DSM-5-TR: pp. 779-801 pp. 477-509 pp. 511-520	DUE: 11/23 Case Study #2
	11/24- 28	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY		
13	12/1- 12/7	Module 13 Neurocognitive Disorders, Sleep-Wake Disorders	DSM-5-TR: pp. 667-732 pp. 407-476 Carlat: pp. 228-236	
14	12/8- 12/12	Finals Week NO ZOOM Participation Self-Eval 8/1: Last Day of Classes		Seminar 4 DUE EXAM #4: 8/4 (5-9PM) Modules 11, 12, 13
15		Grades Due 12/16 at 12 noon		

School of Nursing Policies and Additional Information:

https://www.utttyler.edu/nursing/college/student_guide_and_policies.php

Informal Resolution Process (Complaint)

1. Discussion with Respondent. To resolve misunderstandings or concerns, a Complainant must first make every effort to resolve the matter informally by discussing their concerns with the Respondent.
2. Time frame of discussion. Such discussion shall occur within thirty (30) calendar days of the time of the incident.
3. Time frame of response. The Respondent must respond orally or in writing within ten (10) business days after receipt of the Complaint.

Formal Appeal ([Grievance](#))

1. Filing an Appeal. If the Complaint is not resolved to the Complainant's satisfaction by the Respondent, the Complainant may submit a Grievance (using the [Student Non-Grade Appeal Academic Complaint Form](#)) to the Vice President supervising the department where the Complaint originated.
2. Time frame to submit. The Complainant must submit this Grievance within ten (10) business days after the Complainant receives the response from the Division Head.
3. Time frame to respond. The Vice President and/or their designee will provide a written response to the Complainant within ten (10) business days of the receipt of the Grievance.
4. Decision is final. Decisions at the vice-presidential level will be final.

Additional Student Resources and University Policies are provided in Canvas.