

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Department of Psychology
Psychology 9900
Assessment: Theory and Practice
Fall & Winter 2025-2026

Course Information

Instructors:	Dr. Stephanie Dubois, PhD, C. Psych Assistant Professor sdubois@uwo.ca	Dr. Adam T. Newton, PhD Assistant Professor anewton9@uwo.ca
Office Hours:	By appointment	
Time of Classes	Thursdays 9AM to 12PM OR Thursdays 5PM to 8PM	
Location of Classes	WH 20F	

Course Description

The goal of this class is to introduce the major principles of, and approaches to, psychological assessment. We will focus on the areas of psychopathology, personality, and intellectual functioning. The course is designed to familiarize students with the scientific bases of rigorous psychological assessment and evaluation and promote critical thinking about assessment practice across the lifespan. To this end, the course will highlight the conceptual processes underlying sound assessment, measurement development, as well as the strengths and limitations of current assessment and evaluation procedures. The companion practicum (9901; restricted to clinical stream graduate students) is designed to give students the fundamental applied skills and knowledge needed to administer common psychological assessments. Psychol 9900 has a conceptual focus, grounded in empirical evidence, whereas the practicum is applied, with the goal of providing students with fundamental skills in clinical assessment. Class size is limited to 15 students. In the case that student demand exceeds course capacity, enrolment preference will be given to clinical stream graduate students.

Course Format

This course will be delivered in-person, face-to-face.

Course Learning Outcomes/Objectives

The course is designed to provide clinical psychology students with the basic theoretical, professional, and ethical knowledge and practical experience in psychological assessment. The course will include information necessary to critically evaluate various assessment instruments as well as the practical “how-to” of assessment.

During both terms of this course, students will be introduced to professional, ethical, and practical issues in psychological assessment. This includes a focus on the development of skills involved in the administering and scoring of various psychological tests assessing intelligence, personality and other clinically important factors.

Course Materials

Textbooks

1. **Required:** *Handbook of Psychological Assessment* (6th Ed; Groth-Marnat & Jordan Wright; ISBN: 978-1118960646).

*Please note: either the print or e-text are acceptable.

Supplemental/Optional: Wright, A.J (2025). *Essentials of Culture in Psychological Assessment*. John Wiley & Sons P&T, New Jersey

3. Supplemental/Optional: *Assessment of Children: Cognitive Foundations and Applications* (6th Ed; Sattler; ISBN: 978-0970267122)

4. Supplemental/Optional: Schneider, W. J., Lichtenberger, E. O., Mather, N., & Kaufman, N. L. (2018). *Essentials of Assessment Report Writing* (2nd edition). John Wiley & Sons P&T, New Jersey.

5. Optional: Finn, S. E., Fischer, C. T., & Handler, L. (2012). Collaborative/therapeutic assessment: Basic concepts, history, and research. In S. E. Finn, C. T. Fischer, & L. Handler (Eds.), *Collaborative/therapeutic assessment: A casebook and guide* (pp. 1–24). John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Other Required Readings: Weekly readings will be assigned. There is a lot of material and some of it will be difficult. However, the readings are the most important part of the course. It is essential that you take the time to absorb the material so that you are prepared to discuss assigned readings every week. Since the readings are unevenly distributed throughout the course, we recommend keeping an eye on what is coming up and reading ahead for the heavier weeks. All readings will be provided to you via OWL Brightspace.

Methods of Evaluation

Evaluation	Dates/Deadlines	Grading Weight
Participation	Each class	10%
Demonstrated Competency in WAIS or WISC	December 4, 2025	5%
Essay	December 4, 2025	20%
Essay Presentation	February 26 or March 5, 2026	20%
Oral Exam	April 2, 2026	20%
Written Take Home Exam	April 16, 2026	25%

Participation (10%)

Participation should be a natural extension of your preparation for class and demonstrate your knowledge and application of the course material. Each week will have at least one participation component connected to it. These components can include (but are not limited to): discussions of clinical issues, discussions of case studies, informal debates, practice of specific skills, self-care assessment and planning, etc.

Quality participation reflects your mastery of required readings and reflected in thoughtful questioning, raising points/issues you encounter in the reading, and your involvement in the class.

Evaluation: A mark for class participation will be assigned for each class. You will receive feedback at least by the end of the Fall term and again at the end of the course. Class participation will count for 10% of the course grade. You must participate in the week's discussion to receive a participation grade for that week, but attending the lecture alone is not sufficient to receive full participation marks.

Essay on a Current Issue in Psychological Assessment (20%)

You will be required to submit a paper that reviews a topic in Psychological Assessment of your choice (some suggested topics are provided below). The paper should follow an essay format, which means it should contain an introduction with a thesis statement, a main body detailing the research and references to support the statement, and a summarizing conclusion. Your paper can be a maximum of **20** pages long, excluding title page and references (1-inch margins, double spaced, 12-point font). However, the number of pages you write will depend on your topic. We recommend that you discuss your topic with either of the instructors before you begin writing.

You will review empirical research and theory related to your chosen topic. You must cite at least **20** empirical journal articles or book chapters in your paper. However, the number of citations you include will depend on your topic. Format your paper, references, and in text citations according to APA style (7th ed): these guidelines are available online through Western Libraries under "Publication manual of the American Psychological Association." Your paper's overall format should follow the APA style guidelines, but you do not need to include an abstract.

Some suggested essay topics:

Clinical vs. Statistical Prediction
Cost Effectiveness of Psychological Assessment
Ethics and Standards in Assessment
Computerized Interpretation of Psychological Tests
Computer Assisted Testing (CAT)
Imaging Technology and Psychological Assessment
Current Status of Taxometric Methods
Cross-cultural assessment
Projective techniques: A critical analysis
Multi-method assessments
Online assessments
Bias in psychological assessment
Malingering, faking and socially desirable responding.

Some suggested journal sources:

American Psychologist
Annual Review of Clinical Psychology
Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine
British Journal of Clinical Psychology
British Medical Journal
Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy
Clinical Psychology Review
Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice
Development and Psychopathology
Journal of Abnormal Psychology
Journal of Behavioral Medicine
Journal of Child Clinical Psychology
Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry
Journal of Clinical Psychology
Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology
Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Journal of Pediatric Psychology
Journal of the American Medical Association: Psychiatry
Journal of Pediatrics
Psychological Assessment
Psychological Bulletin
Training in Education in Professional Psychology
Journal of Personality Assessment
Professional Psychology: Research and Practice
Journal of Intelligence

A good paper demonstrates evidence of critical thinking and discussion. Therefore, a good paper is not only a summary of the findings and opinions of others. Critical thinking involves comparison and contrast of related points from various sources, or discussion of the strengths and weakness of arguments, evidence, and theory. To incorporate critical discussion in your paper, you may wish to choose a topic in Psychological Assessment where there is conflicting evidence, different theories, or different expert opinions. You should also choose a topic that you can cover in sufficient detail in 20 pages. If you find that your topic of interest is too broad, you may choose a narrower or more specific issue within this topic for your paper. Conversely, if you can find almost nothing in the empirical literature on Psychological Assessment to address your topic of interest, you should choose a different area or expand your focus.

Note: you must upload your written assignments to OWL Brightspace in a format that can be read by others. A *.docx (Microsoft Word format), *.rtf (rich text format) or *.PDF (portable document format) is recommended.

Evaluation.

Papers will be graded based on:

- 1) Accuracy and clear understanding of the research and relevant surrounding issues
- 2) Critical evaluation and discussion of the empirical research
- 3) Organization and logic in the presentation of points and discussion, and overall writing style
- 4) Quality and relevance of references selected for the paper
- 5) Overall quality and sophistication of ideas

Competency in Test Administration – WAIS-IV or WISC-V (5%)

You will be required to demonstrate competency in administering the WAIS-IV or WISC-V by December 4, 2025 (i.e., the end of the Fall term). This component is considered “pass/fail” and is worth 5% of the final grade. Competency in Test Administration is evaluated by the Teaching Assistant (TA). Students will arrange a time to administer the core battery of their choice of the WAIS-IV or WISC-V to a peer (ideally a classmate), while being observed by the TA. Competency in Test Administration must be demonstrated prior to beginning the associated practicum with this course.

The course TA will facilitate building competency in WISC-V and WAIS-IV test administration by demonstrating and facilitating practice of these tests. This teaching will be coordinated with the TA. This component of the course has three phases:

- 1) Administration instruction & demonstration with the TA. The TA provides overviews of the WISC-V and WAIS-IV. Provides instructions on how to administer these assessments. Provides demonstration to students.
- 2) Practice in small groups. Students practice the administration of the WISC-V and WAIS-IV in small groups (i.e., 3-4). Students should take turns in 3 roles: (1) examiner, (2) examinee, (3) observer. The observer will help identify any administration errors.
- 3) Demonstrated Competency in Test Administration. As described above, students will demonstrate competency in WISC-V and WAIS-IV administration to the TA. This component is evaluated.

Competency in Test Administration – Additional Standardized Measure (5%)

You will be required to demonstrate competency in administering one additional standardized measure by April 2, 2026 (i.e., the end of the Winter term). This component is considered “pass/fail” and is worth 5% of the final grade. Competency in Test Administration is evaluated by the Teaching Assistant (TA). Students will arrange a time to administer the core battery of an additional standardized measure, to be determined at the beginning of the winter semester, to a peer (ideally a classmate), while being observed by the TA.

The course TA will facilitate building competency in the additional standardized test by demonstrating and facilitating practice of these tests. This teaching will be coordinated with the TA. This component of the course has three phases:

- 4) Administration instruction & demonstration with the TA. The TA provides overviews of the WISC-V and WAIS-IV. Provides instructions on how to administer these assessments. Provides demonstration to students.
- 5) Practice in small groups. Students practice the administration of the WISC-V and WAIS-IV in small groups (i.e., 3-4). Students should take turns in 3 roles: (1) examiner, (2) examinee, (3) observer. The observer will help identify any administration errors.
- 6) Demonstrated Competency in Test Administration. As described above, students will demonstrate competency in WISC-V and WAIS-IV administration to the TA. This component is evaluated.

Essay Presentation (20%)

You will be required to lead a short, oral presentation on your essay. This present will last 15 minutes, with 5 additional minutes available for questions. It will be scheduled during class time on February 26 or March 5, 2026. You are required to provide a brief overview of your essay and its main arguments, similar to a short conference seminar talk.

Refrain from disclosing personal experiences with mental health problems or other personal health-related information.

The date of your Essay Presentation will be assigned in class prior to Reading Week.

Evaluation. For this Essay Presentation, you will be graded on:

1. The quality of your summary
2. Demonstrated communication skills
3. Clarity of oral communication
4. Demonstrated critical thinking

Oral Exam (25%)

You will complete an Oral Exam during class time on April 2, 2026 (Evening) over 20-30 minutes. The oral exam will assess your ability to demonstrate knowledge and application of the topics discussed in this course. The oral exam will consist of two case studies (one adult-focused and one child-focused). You will be asked to answer a series of questions related to these cases, out loud, such as hypothesis testing, ethical dilemmas, diagnostic considerations, and test selection (among others). Practice case studies will be presented and modelled by the instructors throughout the course.

Written Take Home Exam (25%)

The written take home exam will consist of material covered throughout the duration of the course, including material presented in class and in the weekly readings that are highlighted specifically in the lectures. The exam will include basic knowledge questions (e.g., which differential diagnoses would be considered for a client with a specific presenting problem) and items assessing critical thinking skills and the ability to connect concepts discussed in different classes over each term (e.g., how are considerations for developing measures related to basic reliability and validity issues; ethical issues; cultural considerations). There will also be at least one case study in this exam. Students will be given two weeks to complete the exam once it is assigned.

Consultation with your peers or other students in the clinical program is permitted; however, these consultations must be clearly documented in your responses.

Policy on Missing Coursework

Written Take Home Exam: Late assignments will receive a 5% deduction per 24 hours. Assignments that are more than one week late will not be accepted for partial marks, unless you have contacted the instructors prior to the deadline to request an extension. In specific cases, the student may be required to seek an accommodation/review of documentation from Academic Counselling.

Competency in Test Administration: Students who have a serious conflict impacting their ability to

complete the Competency in Test Administration evaluation must notify the instructors within 48 hours of becoming aware of the conflict, or as soon as possible. Instructors will discuss an alternative. In specific cases, the student may be required to seek an accommodation/review of documentation from Academic Counselling. Students who miss their Competency in Test Administration without a legitimate reason will receive a grade of zero and are at risk of not being able to complete their associated practicum.

Essay Presentation: Students who miss their Facilitated Discussion presentation date are required to contact both instructors within 24 hours of their missed presentation date to discuss an alternative. In specific cases, the student may be required to seek an accommodation/review of documentation from Academic Counselling. Students who miss their facilitated discussion date without a legitimate reason will receive a grade of zero.

Oral Exam: Students who miss the Oral Exam are required to contact both instructors within 24 hours of their missed presentation date to discuss an alternative. In specific cases, the student may be required to seek an accommodation/review of documentation from Academic Counselling. Students who miss the oral exam date without a legitimate reason will receive a grade of zero.

Course Timeline

FALL TERM			
Week	Date	Time	Topics
1	Sep 4, 2025	Evening	Introduction to Course Evidence Based Psychological Assessments Self-Care in Graduate School and Beyond Read Chapter 1 and 2 from the text Assigned Readings
2	Sep 11, 2025	Morning	Reliability & Validity Test Construction and clinical significance The Assessment Interview Assigned Readings + Ch 3
3	Sep 18, 2025	Evening	Clinical vs. actuarial prediction; effects of base rates on interpretation of tests Clinical judgment Decision Making, Unconscious bias (tying back in self-care) Assigned Readings
4	Sep 25, 2025	Morning	Intelligence & Cognitive Assessment Overview & in Children Assigned Readings
5	Oct 2, 2025	Evening	Intelligence & Cognitive Assessment in Adults Assigned Readings + Chapter 5
6	Oct 9, 2025	Morning	ADHD Assessments in Children Assessment of Achievement and Learning Assigned Readings
7	Oct 16, 2025	Evening	ADHD Assessments in Adults Assessment of Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care

			Assigned Readings
8	Oct 23, 2025	Evening	Assessment of Suicide: Zero Suicide Check-in: Self-care Assigned Readings
	Oct 27 - 31, 2025		Fall Reading Week
9	Nov 6, 2025	Morning	Diagnosis of child psychopathology Specific measures for assessment (Child) Assigned Readings
10	Nov 13, 2025	Evening	Diagnosis of adult psychopathology Specific measures for assessment (Adult) Assigned Readings
11	Nov 20, 2025	Evening	Personality – Part I: Overview of Personality Theory Assigned Readings
12	Nov 27, 2025	Evening	Personality Part II: Personality Measures Assigned Readings + Chapters 7-10
13	Dec 4, 2025		No class Essay due – Current Issue in Psychological Assessment Competency in Test Administration due.

WINTER TERM			
Week	Date	Time	Topics
1	Jan 8, 2026	Evening	Personality Part III – Personality Measures Assigned Readings Check-in: Self-care plans
2	Jan 15, 2026	Morning	Assessment of memory
3	Jan 22, 2026	Morning	Autism assessments
4	Jan 29, 2026	Evening	Culture and Diversity in Assessments Assigned Readings
5	Feb 5, 2026	Morning	Outcome/Progress Monitoring
6	Feb 12, 2026	Evening	Writing Good Psychological Reports Giving Feedback Assigned Readings + Chapter 15
7	Feb16-20, 2026		Spring Reading Week
8	Feb 26, 2026	Morning	Essay Presentations
9	Mar 5, 2026	Evening	Essay Presentations
10	Mar 12, 2026	Morning	Neuropsychological Assessments Guest Lecturer: TBD
11	Mar 19, 2026	Morning	Assessments with Older Adults Guest Lecturer: TBD
12	Mar 26, 2026	Morning	Forensic Assessments Guest Lecturer: TBD
13	Apr 2, 2026	Evening	Oral Exam Take-home Exam Assigned – DUE DATE: April 16, 2026

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Health/Wellness Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.