

OVERVIEW FOR CLINICAL COMPS (2026)

NOTE: Generally, the structure and procedures of the 2026 Clinical Comps exam will very closely parallel those of recent exams. The Clinical Comps exam will be administered in-person in the Psych Building.

Date: April 2026

From: Jamie Walkup, Stephanie Lyon (Clinical Comps Coordinators)

To: Students Taking Clinical Comps

Subject: Procedures for Clinical Comps

Place: Psych Building room 101

I. CLINICAL COMPS, QUESTIONS 1-4

On the days of the Clinical Comps, June 22 and June 23, students will have the schedule below. A question may be answered only during the period in which it is given out. Everyone must take the full one-hour lunch break.

On both Monday and Tuesday, people should arrive between 8:30 and 8:45 am. General instructions will begin at 8:45 a.m. for the morning sessions and at 12:55 p.m. for the afternoon sessions.

Summary

Monday June 22

9:00 am --12:00 noon: Question 1 – Clinical Case

12:00 pm to 1:00 pm: Lunch.

1:00 pm -- 4:00 pm: Question 2 – Diversity

Tuesday June 23

9:00 am – 12 noon: Question 3 – Child Psychopathology

12:00 pm to 1:00 pm: Lunch.

1:00 pm -- 4:00 pm: Question 4 – Adult Psychopathology

1. Communication About the Comps:

Communications about Clinical Comps will take place via emails that go through the Clinical Comps Canvas web site, which Julie Skorny has developed. If you have questions about your membership on the site, check with Julie. All of the responses to emailed questions will be sent to the Canvas list, so everyone will have access to these responses and they will be available in the Email Archive on the Canvas site. This Overview document will be placed on the Canvas web site in the Resources section and on the GSAPP Website under Current Students.

2. Faculty Coordinators: Jamie Walkup, Stephanie Lyon

3. Questions and Courses: see below.

4. Number of Question Options Per Area: see below.

5. Past Exams: Questions from past exams and answers to past exam questions will not be available. Students are encouraged to study relevant material from their past courses in conjunction with the guidelines in item 21 below—not to study for specific questions per se.

6. “Partial Open Book” Exam.

For Question #1 and Question #2 (to be administered on June xx): Students can bring in outside **printed** materials to the exam, including books, articles, written notes and references. **Electronic** copies of textbooks, books, articles, and class notes are also permissible. Access to electronic textbooks, books, and articles is restricted to those materials assigned for class and noted in the course syllabus.

For Question #3 and Question #4 (to be administered on June 24): The only material students can bring to the exam is the *Desk Reference to the Diagnostic Criteria from DSM-5(TM) 5th Edition*, or the *Desk Reference to the Diagnostic Criteria from DSM-5- TR* by the American Psychiatric Association, which lists the DSM-5 categories.

***** NOTE:** You can only write notes in the book relevant to the book material itself.

You should not write notes as guides to other readings.

7. Citations in Answers: For each answer, a few relevant citations of important, published works are expected. For each citation, provide the last name of the first author, e.g., “Fishman,.” (if there are other authors you know of, write, “et al,” e.g., “Fishman et al.”); and the approximate year of the publication. The judgment regarding which articles are significant and should be cited is one element of what is being evaluated by the exam.

8. Integrity Statement: Students must commit to and sign an "integrity statement" for the four questions. A copy of the appropriate integrity statement will be distributed at the end of Question 4. The integrity statement will say:

Concerning Questions 1-4 of the Clinical Comprehensive Exam, I have neither given information to nor received information from others concerning these questions, nor discussed these questions with anyone. This includes information exchanged by cell phones and other devices.

I understand that the above sentence is clarified by the following: Before I saw Questions 1-4, I was able to consult any written source relating to the topic and discuss it with any others. However, once I picked up (or saw) the actual questions, I was not able to talk to anyone else about them.

Also, I understand that I am not to share the questions with students who will take the Exam in the future, and I promise not to do so.

Finally, if I used electronic materials (e.g., textbooks, books, articles, class notes) for Question #1 and Question #2, I hereby confirm that I did not use my device to access any other material besides those materials assigned for class and noted in the course syllabus,

or music stored on the device. I understand that I am not to use a personal electronic device to access any electronic materials for Question #3 and Question #4.

9. Page Limits: The page limits for each question, which will be specified on the question, are as follows: "**Limit your answer to no more than six pages (10-point) double-spaced.**"

10. Time Keeping. Please bring your own watch or clock for keeping track of time during comps. If you have a watch that beeps, be sure to turn off the beep for the exam so as not to bother other people. We expect folks to be attentive to time without excessive help from staff.

11. Cell Phones and Related Devices (iPad, tablet, Kindle, etc.): Cell phone and related device use is restricted to accessing music stored on the device, and electronic copies of textbooks, books, articles, and notes assigned for class and noted in the course syllabus (for Question #1 and Question #2 only). Any other use of a cell phone or related device during the exam is prohibited. Cell phones and other related devices are prohibited during Question #3 and Question #4, except for music stored on the device. Cell phones and related devices cannot be used as phones or to access email or other messaging services during the exam. Cell phones and related devices may be used as usual before the exam begins and during the lunch break.

12. Music devices: Music devices with earphones only are allowed *as long as* they are only used for music. Cell phones can be used for music as long as the music is stored on the device.

13. Faculty Presence: A faculty member will be available (by phone) at the start of each session of the exam to answer questions about the content of questions.

14. University Computers Only: Students may not use their own computers for the exam. Only computers supplied by the University can be used.

15. Grading:

1. Faculty graders will be assigned based on expertise as well as overall workload. To ensure proper grading, be certain to provide the information requested for each answer so that it can be properly used in assigning graders to your exam.

2. The full details of grading procedures are provided in the Blue Book. Briefly:

- If an answer is graded 1, 2, or 2.5 by the first reader, it is satisfactory.
 - If an answer is graded 3 or 4 by the first reader, it is read by a second reader. If the second reader confirms the first and grades a 3 or 4, the answer is unsatisfactory. If the second reader grades a 1, 2, or 2.5, it is read by a third reader. The third reader's grade determines whether the answer is satisfactory or unsatisfactory.
- a) All four questions graded satisfactory: pass the exam without remediation.
 - b) One question only graded satisfactory, written retake of entire exam at a regularly scheduled comps testing date in the future.
 - c) Two (or three) questions graded satisfactory, two (or one) responses graded unsatisfactory:
 - i) For each unsatisfactory question that is graded 3&3 or 3&4 by the two readers, the question has to be remediated with an individual faculty member.

ii) For each unsatisfactory question that is graded 4&4 by the two readers, the question requires a written re-take at a regularly schedule comps testing date in the future.

3. The faculty will aim to complete the grading by mid-October. All students will be notified of their individual results by letter at the same time.

4. Faculty graders have a space for comments in addition to assigning number grades to each answer. These comments, together with the original answers, will be available for review by the student after all the grading is completed. The graders sign their answers.

5. The student answers do not have names on them. Thus, the faculty grading is done without knowledge of who the student is.

17. More About the Questions – see below.

18. Comp Boxes: “Comp Boxes” consist of material that past students have put together to study for the Clinical Comps. Some faculty believe that using comp boxes is not necessary and may even be distracting. Faculty encourage the use of reading lists from relevant courses as listed below.

19. Comps Groups: “Comps Groups” are self-created groups of students who work together to prepare for Comps. While many students prefer them, other students prefer to study on their own.

21. Outline of Content: The student will be asked to answer 4 questions, one drawn from each of the following domains (see details below):

- (1) Clinical Case
- (2) Theories of Cultural Diversity and Their Impact in Clinical Work
- (3) Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Child Psychopathology
- (4) Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Adult Psychopathology

Note: There will only be one question for each of the four areas.

| DOMAIN | RELEVANT COURSES |
|---|--|
| <u>1. The Clinical Case.</u> Analyzing a clinical case and creating a case formulation from <i>only one</i> of the following: a psychoanalytic, cognitive-behavioral, or family systems theoretical perspective. | Psychoanalytic courses, cognitive-behavioral courses, or family systems courses. |
| <u>2. Issues of Diversity and Their Impact on Clinical Work.</u> This question focuses on issues of diversity and how they might impact on the assessment of and interventions with clinical problems, including the relevance of one's own diversity characteristics. | Cultural Diversity courses |

| | |
|--|--|
| | |
|--|--|

| DOMAIN | RELEVANT COURSES |
|---|------------------------------|
| <p>3. Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Child Psychopathology This question focuses on selected categories of psychopathology in children, and looks at them in depth from a variety of perspectives. The child areas are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ADHD 2. Depression 3. Separation Anxiety Disorder 4. Social Anxiety Disorder/Selective Mutism 5. Oppositional Defiant Disorder 6. The Autism Spectrum <p>You are expected to know about each of the 6 categories from the following 6 Perspectives (a-f):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Provide the DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for the disorder. b) Describe other common clinical manifestations in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are not captured in the DSM-5 criteria. c) Describe common etiological theories for the disorder. d) Review developmental aspects of each disorder, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Describe how development affects the disorder, and how the disorder changes over time 2) Describe the factors that can change a child’s trajectory, such as risk and protective factors that may be related to the development of the disorder and/or a better or worse outcome. e) Describe the essential data to collect for making a diagnosis. f) Consider issues of differential diagnosis. <p>NOTE: There will be no choice of disorder in answering this question. You will be expected to be knowledgeable about all 6 areas (a-f) for each of the 6 disorders</p> | <p>Child Psychopathology</p> |
| <p>4. <u>Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Adult Psychopathology.</u> This question focuses on selected categories of psychopathology in adults, and looks at them in depth from a variety of perspectives. The adult areas are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schizophrenia 2. Panic Disorder 3. Bipolar Disorder (includes Bipolar I and Bipolar II Disorder) 4. Major Depression 5. Obsessive-compulsive disorder 6. Borderline personality disorder | <p>Adult Psychopathology</p> |

You are expected to know about each of the 6 disorder categories from the following 4 perspectives, as they are relevant to the particular type of psychopathology.

(Note that it will not be sufficient simply to cite information relevant to each heading, inasmuch as good answers should also reflect sound judgment regarding the importance, value, and significance of the evidence cited.)

a) Epidemiology, including information on incidence, prevalence, socio-demographic and clinical predictors, historical trends, and any relevant cross cultural variation.

b) Theories of the etiology of the disorder, and/or mechanisms/processes underlying specific symptoms.

Etiological responses can include data bearing on a range of risk factors and determinants, including psychological, social, developmental, genetic and biological points of view. Symptom explanations can include experimental human and animal studies and empirically-supported analyses of processes. (Treatment research should be included **only** when it directly bears on etiology and/or mechanisms/processes responsible for symptoms. Citing general psychotherapy outcome studies will not be viewed as responsive.)

c) Diagnosis: How the category is represented in DSM-5. Important symptom features and subtypes. Common differential diagnosis issues. Any important contemporary controversies around diagnosis.

d) Clinical features of the category, including nature and timing of onset, usual course and deviations from typical course, prognosis (including factors known to influence prognosis)

NOTE: There will be no choice of disorder in answering this question.

You will be expected to be knowledgeable about all 4 areas (a-d) for each of the 6 disorders.