

PSYC 4500 A : ADVANCED TOPICS IN DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY- EXPLORING AUTISM

Instructor	Vivan Lee
Term	Fall 2026
Course Delivery	In-Person
Email Address	Vivian.Lee4@carleton.ca
Office Location	Via Zoom
Office Hours	By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION/INSTRUCTOR'S STATEMENT

Autism (or Autism Spectrum Disorder) is a neurodevelopmental condition and individuals on the spectrum often present with social communication and interaction difficulties, and may have repetitive and restrictive behaviours, and/or circumscribed interests.

In this course, students will have an opportunity to explore and have discussions around emerging international autism research covering topics that include (but not limited to): diagnostic criteria, etiology and genetics, biological and psychological factors, development across the lifespan, assessment, as well as interventions and therapeutic programs. In addition, students will learn about topics related to the intersections of autism and mental health, criminology, sexuality, and diverse communities. The course will demonstrate the complexity of living with and supporting autism, as well as the trajectory of individuals and families when diagnostic and support systems work well, or not.

Class Schedule: Tuesdays 8:35AM-11:3AM. In person attendance will be required.

The course provides students with an interactive class style, and opportunities to learn from discussions with the professor, class members, and a dynamic list of guest speakers including (but not limited to): individuals on the spectrum and their caregivers, system navigators, clinical psychologists, and other autism professionals, etc. Students will learn how to apply their knowledge (from research articles, lectures, and materials produced by and for organizations and community

members with autism) to real-world situations and case studies. Course activities are designed to sharpen analytical and critical thinking skills, as well as build practical skills that will prepare students for a variety of careers including in research, education, government, etc.

EVALUATION (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Tentatively, evaluations will consist of weekly reflections, short written or multimedia assignments (e.g., short answer assignment, video submission), participation in-person discussions, group-based work including a presentation, and a final paper. Details will be further discussed on Brightspace and outlined in the course syllabus.

TEXT

Weekly reading assignments include peer-reviewed articles, chapters from autism-based books and novels, and/or policy briefs and organizational reports.