Course Description

This course describes psychological, behavioral and developmental disorders of childhood and adolescence. Particular emphasis will be placed on psychological and ecological factors and on processes that create and maintain symptomatic functioning. The course will begin with several lectures on contextual factors in the development of mental disorders and then move on to examine a number of specific diagnostic categories. The course will include several activities, videotaped vignettes, and guest speakers which will help students develop observational skills, which are so important in formulating assessments and treatment plans. Emphasis will be placed on identifying strengths in the individual client and family/social context, as well as on individual and contextual factors contributing to the client’s difficulties. We will also examine and critique psychiatric diagnostic classification systems (e.g. the DSM-IV) and the impact of labeling and stigma will be explored in order to develop critical thinking about how mental disorders of children and youth are conceptualized.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify factors influencing mental health and mental disorders of children and youth at the individual, familial, cultural/ethnic, and social levels.

2. Describe the transactional processes among the above factors which influence the etiology and maintenance of mental disorders.

3. Describe and critique classification systems of mental disorders of children and adolescents, particularly DSM-IV.

4. Identify and differentiate a number of disorders of children and adolescents and apply them to the evaluation of clients.

5. Demonstrate empathic appreciation of the client’s experience of disorders, from the perspective of the client’s inner world.

6. Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of the child’s or adolescent’s difficulties on parents and other family members.
Course Design and Format

The objectives of the course will be pursued through lectures, readings, discussions, demonstrations, guest speakers with case studies, videotapes, assignments, and a visit to a children’s center. Written assignments will integrate theory, research, and case analysis and will be applied to the student’s practicum work when possible. Students are expected to attend all classes and excessive absence will result in the lowering of the student’s grade.

Course Requirements and Grading

- Class attendance and participation 5%
- In class Quiz #1 (May 24th) 15%
- In class Quiz #2 (July 12th) 15%
- Children’s Center Observation Assignment (Due June 14th) 20%
- Discussion Leader 5%
- Final Term Paper (Due July 19th) 40%

Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes

- Multiculturalism and Diversity will be addressed through discussion of incidence and prevalence of mental disorders, as related to gender and social class, and through discussion of culture, ethnicity, race, gender and class as factors influencing mental health and disorder.

- Social Justice and Social Change will be addressed through discussion of the misapplication of mental health diagnoses based on race, class, and gender bias, and the potential impact of poverty, discrimination, and disenfranchisement on the development of mental disorders and disorders of parenting.

- Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation will be addressed through discussion of protective factors, which promote resilience and positive adaptation.

- Behavioral and Social Science Research will inform the entire content of this course, which will draw especially on current research in the following areas: developmental psychopathology, attachment, risk, resilience, coping, trauma and maltreatment, and studies of particular disorders.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values

Ethical and value issues related to all course topics will be identified and discussed. Issues particularly relevant to this course include: potential bias embedded in certain DSM-IV diagnoses; cultural constructions of the relationship of children to adults and views of children’s rights; issues in the diagnostic labeling of children; and how cultural, class, and gender biases may affect practitioner’s views of child/adolescent mental health.

Class Assignments and Quizzes

1. In-class Quizzes

There will be two in-class half hour written quizzes during the semester. These will not be surprise quizzes and you will be notified in advance which weeks they will occur and topics on which to focus your preparation. The quizzes will be based on your capacity to apply the themes of the course to the class readings from that week.
2. **Observational Assignment**

You will observe a group of children at the University Children’s Center (during class time) for a one-hour period. You will write up your observational notes focusing on such factors as the child’s play, quality/quantity of interactions with peers and teachers, initiation of social interactions, age appropriateness of games and toy selection, physical description (height, weight, fine and gross motor movement, etc.), emotional and behavioral regulation, positive/negative affect, frustration/anger, etc. Although, this observation will occur during the class session focused on social withdrawal you should feel free to focus the paper on other diagnostic categories from internalizing or externalizing domains. One can clearly not diagnose a child from a one-hour observation in a preschool setting, however, this assignment will give you important experience in observing children in naturalistic settings and allow you to develop your observational skills. We will discuss the assignment and expectations in more detail in the week prior to the Children’s Center visit.

3. **Class Discussion Leader**

In groups of 3 or 4 you will sign up to be discussion leaders for a particular class session. In your group’s week as discussion leaders you will be responsible for preparing 5 discussion questions/comments/critiques from the readings to help guide our in class discussion of the readings. These should be emailed to the class email list by 5 o’clock on the day before class. In your role guiding the discussion you will be expected to help focus the class discussion by bridging links to the readings in your classmates’ comments and you should also feel free to draw on examples from your field placement or previous casework to enrich the examples from the assigned readings. Each week everyone is expected to do the readings and actively participate in discussion, but during your week as discussion leader you will have a slightly more formal/involved role.

4. **Attendance, Participation and Reading**

All these are expected. Especially in the shortened sp/su semester, class attendance is important because lectures and discussion will focus on the details of assessment and diagnosis. Frequent absences are not acceptable and will result in a lowering of the course grade. If you are unable to attend class, please email in advance.

5. **Final Term Paper**

The final term paper is a practice assignment involving a clinical case evaluation. For those of you working with clients you are expected to select a current child/youth for the focus of your assignment. Confidentiality is vital for the child clinical assignment and in order to preserve client confidentiality please disguise your case material by using pseudonyms for all family members, omitting or changing specific geographical information and avoiding mention of details which identify clients. Those not working in direct practice are asked to read either The Bluest Eye or Sula by Toni Morrison and to focus their paper on the main child character in the book.

You must include at least five references to peer reviewed journal articles (beyond the course text/readings and the novel itself for those without clients). In other words, it is fine to have an opinion, but it is even better to give solid evidence for your argument. Referencing and format should follow APA style. In class during the semester I will distribute some lists of top journals in this area of practice, as well as handouts on child evaluation protocols and cultural/ecological assessment.

The final paper should be 10 pages (double spaced) plus reference section. Papers will be due at the beginning of the final class on Tuesday July, 19th. In fairness to your classmates, and reflective of the fact that you have the entire term in which to complete the paper, no late papers will be accepted.
Grading will be based on organization, following the terms of the assignment, clarity of writing, and accurate application of concepts. It will account for 40% of the class grade.

The paper should include the following:

1. Apply course concepts in order to do a full and complete evaluation of the problematic behavior(s) and history of the child/youth. Specifically, you should attempt to put the diagnostic and evaluative skills learned in this course to work in discussing the child’s difficulties. This means that you should develop a clinical hypothesis and give a DSM-IV diagnosis for the child.
2. You should give FOUR theoretical explanations for the BEHAVIOR OF THE CHILD, including cultural explanations, biological explanations, social learning theory explanations, and trauma theory explanations for her behavior.
3. Describe the child’s problems in adjustment stemming from all of the forms and levels of stress in their life.
4. Clearly identify a number of risk and protective factors in the environment of the child and explain how these could affect her behavior, especially potential for resilience. Discuss how these risks factors can impact the etiology, duration and course, and potential for treatment.
5. Give information on the family history and suggest potential intergenerational explanations for behavioral problems of the child.
6. Treatment/intervention plan, in terms of treatment format and specific goals of treatment. Indicate your rationale for choosing the approach you did. The relationship between the clinical hypothesis and treatment plan should be clearly stated. If relevant, describe components of the treatment plan which involve case management, as an addition or alternative to clinical work, such as referral for other services, coordination with other professionals, etc. If multiple systems (such as foster care, juvenile court, medical personnel, school personnel, day care, etc.) are involved with the client, discuss your plans for interacting with these other parties and indicate any need you see to advocate on behalf of your client with these systems and individuals.

Required Text


Additional required articles for certain classes will be posted on the C-Tools website for you to download. In addition, for each lecture I will compile a list of supplemental readings (from supplemental Textbooks/Handbooks and academic journals) for those who have an interest in exploring a topic of interest in more detail. Lecture slides will be available on the C-Tools website following each class.

Course Outline and Reading Schedule

1. May 10, 2005: Class Introduction
   - Intro Lecture: The role of stress and cumulative disadvantage in the development of mental health
   - Movie: “The trouble with Evan”
2. **May 17, 2005: Transactional Models of Developmental Psychopathology and Diagnostic/DSM Issues**

- Readings:
  i) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 1
- Guest Speaker: Susan McDonough, Ph.D., MSW: Role of SW in Infant Mental Health

3. **May 24, 2005: Disorders of Infancy and Toddlerhood**

- Readings:
  i) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 13
- Movie: “When the bough breaks”
- **QUIZ #1**

4. **May 31, 2005: Social Withdrawal**

- Readings:
  i) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 8
  ii) Observation Visit to University Children’s Center

5. **June 7, 2005: Childhood Mood Disorders**

- Readings:
  i) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 5
- Guest Speaker: Mary Ruffolo, Ph.D., MSW: Childhood depression

6. **June 14, 2005: Childhood Anxiety Disorders**

- Readings:
  i) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 6
- Guest Speaker: Jordana Muroff, Ph.D., MSW: Treatment of Anxiety Disorders
- **CHILDREN’S CENTER OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT DUE**

7. **June 21, 2005: Conduct and Oppositional Defiant Disorders**

- Readings:
  i) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 3
- Guest Speaker: David Kerr, Ph.D.: The development of externalizing disorders
8. **June 28, 2005: ADHD and Learning Disabilities**

- Readings:
  i) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 2
  ii) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 12
- Movie: “How difficult can this be?”

9. **July 5, 2005: Substance use Disorders, Eating Disorders, and Health Related Disorders**

- Readings:
  i) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 4
  ii) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 15
  iii) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 16
- Movie: “Thin at any cost: Treating eating disorders”

10. **July 12, 2005: Autism, Mental Retardation, and Childhood Schizophrenia**

- Readings:
  i) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 9 ***Emphasis will be on Autism chapter
  ii) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 10
  iii) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 11
- Guest Speaker: Somer Bishop, M.S.: Early Diagnosis and Intervention with Autism
- **QUIZ #2**

11. **July 19, 2005: Trauma, PTSD, Maltreatment, and Domestic Violence**

- Readings:
  i) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 14
  ii) Mash & Barkley: Chapter 7
- Guest Speaker: Michelle Gross, M.S.: Domestic Violence and Child Trauma
- **FINAL TERM PAPER DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS**