Course Description

This course will examine conceptual framework and research findings relevant to mental health and mental disorders of adults and elderly. Biological and psychosocial frameworks and findings will be examined from an evidenced-based point of view. The promotion of health and the prevention of various mental disorders will be examined. The classification (diagnosis), etiology, treatment, rehabilitation and prognosis of mental disorders will be discussed. Various factors that modify mental disorder such as socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability and age will be considered. The impact of these factors on symptomatology, social functioning, quality of life and prognosis will be discussed. The relationship of people with disorders to their families, caregivers and others in supportive and regulatory roles will be explored.

Course Content

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV-TR) system of classifying behavior will be compared with other classification systems such as Person in Environment (P.I.E.). It will also be compared with other social work and social science approaches to assessment, particularly those focusing on social functioning rather than disorder. The reliability of the DSM-IV-TR system; the usefulness of the system for the purposes of promotion, prevention, treatment or rehabilitation will be discussed as well as their links to social work and social science constructs. The disorders to be considered include schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, mood disorders, personality disorders, anxiety disorders and mental disorders of aging. The prevalence of these disorders will be considered with particular reference to their distribution according to such factors as socio-economic status, race ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age and physical disability. Studies exploring the influence of biological factors on the development of these disorders will be examined. This will be linked to the response of these disorders to a variety of medications and to nonpharmacological somatic treatments, such as electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and bright light treatment. At the same time it will be recognized that biological treatments can be helpful for conditions of non-biological
etiology (Think aspirin for headache). Likewise studies exploring the influence of environmental factors on the development, onset, recurrence and persistence of these disorders will be considered. Whatever the presumed etiology, the course will consider the appropriateness of various psychosocial services including psychotherapy/counseling, residential, vocational, social, educational, and self-help and mutual aid programs for people with various types of mental disorder.

The role of families and community caregivers in supporting individuals with these disorders will be addressed. Family and environmental factors will be identifies that may be amenable to modifications, thus preventing relapse. Special attention will be given to understanding the processes by which stigma develops and is maintained.

The potential of the mental disorder classification system to create deviance will be examined. Misuses of the system and their negative consequences will be discussed especially as they fall disproportionately on persons from “minority” groups which include women, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBT persons, persons with primary medical conditions and persons of low socio-economic status. Strategies for avoiding these misuses will be discussed. Concerns about ethnically questionable uses of the DSM-IV-TR to influence eligibility or reimbursement for services will be discussed.

Prevention will be discussed in relation to each of the disorders. For example, obstetric difficulties will be discussed in relation to schizophrenia, race in relation to the misdiagnosis of bipolar disorder, loss in relation to depression and dysthymia, and violence in relation to posttraumatic stress syndrome.

Course Themes:

Multiculturalism and Social Diversity will be addressed through discussions of different patterns of health promotion opportunities and diagnosing practices affecting diverse cultural groups including women, racial and ethnic minorities, persons with variant sexual orientations, persons with other primary medical conditions and persons of low socio-economic status.

Social Justice and Social Change will be addressed through the review of epidemiological studies dealing with the frequency and distinguishing characteristics of those who experience particular disorders; controlled trials of various interventions including medication, intensive outreach services, social skills training and psychoeducational services; and follow-up surveys of persons affected by the disorders.

Promotion, Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation will be addressed through the following means: Epidemiological studies of the influence of, for example, poverty on the incidence and the prevalence of particular disorders will be reviewed for their promotion and prevention implications. Prevention will also be addressed by an examination of the avoidable negative social consequences of severe mental illness, e.g. homelessness, joblessness, and disrupted educational careers. Prevention, still further,
will be considered from the point of view of averting their occurrence by early intervention. Treatment will be discussed in terms of the clinical efficacy and service effectiveness of various interventions. Rehabilitation will be considered in the context of the effectiveness of various residential, vocational, social and educational services for people with mental disorders.

*Values and ethics will be addressed* through the emphasis placed on working on behalf of the most disadvantaged persons with mental disorders. It places special value on advocacy and environmental modifications. The potential harm associated with classification is discussed, as are ethically questionable practices that have arisen as the DSM-IV-TR has been embedded in insurance reimbursement and service eligibility policies.

**Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:**

This course will emphasize working on behalf of the most disadvantaged persons with mental disorders. Special emphasis will be placed on advocacy and environmental modifications. The potential harm associated with classification will be discussed, as will ethically questionable practices that have arisen as the DSM-IV has been embedded in insurance reimbursement and service eligibility policies.

**Course Objectives:**

Students should be able to:

1. Compare and contrast the utility of the mental disorders diagnostic system with broader social work and behavioral science frameworks focusing on social functioning.

2. Discuss the bio-psycho-social aspects of the disorders below in terms of clinical presentation, prognosis, etiology, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.

   a. schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders
   b. mood disorders (including major depression, bipolar disorder, and dysthymia)
   c. personality disorders (including anti-social and borderline personality disorders)
   d. anxiety disorders (including obsessive-compulsive, panic and posttraumatic disorders, and phobias)
   e. mental disorders of aging (including Alzheimer’s and other dementias).
3. Discuss the impact of culture and race on the disorder and the person with diagnosed with the disorder.

4. Discuss the potential of the mental disorder classification system to generate deviance and discuss strategies to minimize those risks and to combat stigma.

5. Discuss the appropriate use of diagnostic/classification systems and the ethical questions surrounding the use of these systems.

6. Distinguish empirically based generalizations about mental disorders from clinical wisdom or authoritative opinions, and demonstrate ability to use the scientifically based in literature in search for solutions to problems.

Course Assignments:

Required Texts:


Recommended Texts:


1) Intervention and multicultural factors in mental disorder: Select one of the following disorders as the topic of your paper: a) schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder, b) major depression or bipolar disorder, c) borderline personality disorders or antisocial personality disorder, d) generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder or posttraumatic stress disorder. (If you would like to work another disorder, let’s talk.) Discuss this disorder from the pint of view of one of the following interventions: a) treatment, b) rehabilitation or c) prevention. Also give equal attention to a discussion of the effect of any one of the following factors on the disorder: gender, age, poverty, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, or ethical considerations. For example, you might do a paper on the prevention of posttraumatic stress disorder among African American females. Another example is a rehabilitation plan for an elderly person with major depression. Illustrate your ideas with observations from your experience (including your practice) or from fiction or first-person accounts. The paper should not attempt to provide comprehensive coverage of the disorder but only coverage of the
cultural and intervention aspects you selected. The assignment will be discussed in class in order to stimulate your thinking about which aspect of the intervention and multiculturalism you wish to focus on. The length of the paper should be 5-8 pages and should include 3 references not in the reserve readings. Some papers may be selected for classroom presentation; group projects are also welcome (let’s discuss your ideas). (Grade=25%, due February 12).

2) Clinical Assessment and Treatment Discussion Using either Observations of a Client(s), or Fictional Accounts, or First-Person Accounts, or Ethnographic Observations (e.g., at self-help group meetings) Instructions will be handed out separately. (Grade=35%, due March 19).

3) Final exam: Includes short-answer essay questions on class lectures and discussions, readings, handouts, and earlier assignments. The exam will be available April 9th. The exam will be graded according to your knowledge of the concepts dealt with in the class and your ability to integrate and discuss their relevance to practice situations. Due April 16th. (Grade equals 40% of the course grade.)

Assignment Notes: With the exception of the final exam, assignments can be modified to suit your interests. However, it’s important to talk early. The grades should be used to assess your progress in understanding the material. However, please remember the grade is not to be interpreted as an indication of your ability or potential as a social worker. The numerical equivalents of the letter grades that will be used to compute the course grade using a spreadsheet (Excel), are: A+ 4.33, A 4.0, A- 3.67, B+ 3.33, B 3.0, B- 2.67, C+ 2.33, C 2.0, C- 1.67.

Please do not put papers in folders, as they are easier to handle without them. Late assignments will be graded down one level (e.g. B+ to B) and will not receive comments except where arrangements have been made at least two weeks in advance.
### Preliminary Course Schedule

|   | Introduction: Description, Content, Objectives, Assignments  
|   | Validity, reliability and limitations of DSM-IV-TR. Classification and assessment of mental disorders, psychosocial problems or social functioning.  
|   |  
| Readings:  
| DSM-IV-TR, pp. xxiii-xxxv; pp.1-37  

| 1-15 | Mood Disorders: Major Depression and Dysthymia  
| Readings:  
Mood Disorders: Bipolar Disorders

Readings:

DSM-IV-TR, pp. 382-392


Anxiety Disorders

Readings:

DSM-IV-TR, pp. 429-484


2-5 Schizophrenia and Psychosis

Readings:

DSM-IV-TR, pp. 297-345


2-12 Personality Disorders

Readings:

DSM-IV-TR, pp. 583-595

1st paper due

2-19 Eating Disorders

Readings:

DSM-IV-TR, pp.583-596


2-26 Spring Break

3-5 Medication and non-pharmacologic treatments.

Readings:


3-12 Drug and Alcohol Use Disorders

Readings:


3-26  Family issues, deviance creation, stigma & ethical issues

Readings:


3-26  Mental Disorders of Aging, Adjustment Disorders, V-codes

Readings:

DSM-IV-TR, pp.147-171

DSM-IV-TR, pp. 679-683

DSM-IV-TR, pp. 731-743


2nd Paper Due
4-2 Sexual Disorders

Readings:

DSM-IV-TR, pp.535-582


4-9 Integrating informal helping systems and formally organized consumer/self-help and advocacy systems

Readings:


Knowledge gaps, future developments and the role of the helping professional. Review of take home exam questions.

4-16 Take Home Exam Due