Course Description

This course will present the state-of-the-art knowledge and research on mental disorders of children and youth, as well as factors that promote mental health and prevent mental disorders in children and youth. Bio-psycho-social theories of resiliency, coping, etiology, the impact of mental health disorders on children and family members, and the relationship of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and social class to mental disorders will be presented. Classification systems of child and youth functioning and disorders will be presented (e.g., the DSM-IV and ICDM-IX). 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:

- Identify factors influencing mental health and mental disorders of children and youth at the individual, familial, cultural/ethnic, and social levels.
- Describe the transactional processes among the above factors which influence the etiology and maintenance of mental disorders.
- Describe and critique classification systems of mental disorders of children and adolescents, particularly DSM-IV.
- Identify and differentiate a number of disorders of children and adolescents and apply them to the evaluation of clients.
- Demonstrate empathic appreciation of the client's experience of disorders from the perspective of the client's inner world.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of the child or adolescent's difficulties on parents and other family members.
- Discuss typical ethical concerns related to mental health and mental disorders of children and youth.
Course Design and Format

The objectives of the course will be pursued through lectures, discussions, demonstrations, case studies and presentations, videotapes and visits by children and/or parents experiencing the disorders covered in class. There will be two examinations of short essay format, one at mid-term and one at the final session. Students are expected to attend all classes and excessive absence will result in the lowering of the students grade.

Course Requirements and Grading

- Mid-term examination (February 18th) 50%
- Final examination (April 15th) 50%
- Class attendance

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 resiliency 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, resiliency and 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. Examples of this include: how views of the rights of children affect our understanding of child mental health, how societal values regarding child development affect judgements we make about the mental health of children, how the use social workers make of DSM IV can bias judgments of child mental health, what the value issues are in paying attention to the child’s inner world, and how cultural and gender biases also affect professional views of child mental health.

Topics and Required Reading Assignments


Additional readings will be on reserve in the School of Social Work Library.
A. Assessment (1/7 and 4/8)

1. DSM-IV-TR, (pp. 1-11).
2. DSM-IV-TR, (pp. 27-37).

B. Anxiety Disorders in Children and Youth (1/14 and 1/28)

1. DSM-IV-TR, (pp. 121-125) and (pp. 429-455) and (463-484).

C. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (2/4)

1. DSM-IV-TR, (pp.456-463).
D. ADHD/Disruptive Behavior Disorders (2/4, 2/11 and 3/4)

1. DSM-IV-TR, (pp. 85-103) and (pp. 108-116).


E. Depressive Disorders/Adolescent Suicidality (3/11)

1. DSM-IV-TR, (pp. 345-428).


F. Childhood Trauma, Abuse & Neglect, and Divorce (3/18 and 4/8)

1. DSM-IV-TR, (pp. 463-468) and (pp. 736-738).

2. DSM-IV-TR, (pp. 679-683).


G. Childhood bereavement/loss (3/18)


I. Gender Identity Issues (3/25)

1. DSM-IV-TR, (pp. 576-582).


J. Developmental Disorders (4/1)

1. DSM-IV-TR, (pp. 41-84).


K. Psychosis (4/1)

1. DSM-IV-TR, (pp. 297-343).