PSYCHOPATHOLOGY AND DIAGNOSIS OF MENTAL DISORDERS
SOWK 612

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I. Course Description

This course will provide the student with advanced exposure to several issues in the area of adult psychopathology and diagnostics. First, the mental status exam will be covered as the basic tool for gathering information on psychopathology. Second, the logic and method of diagnostic classification will be covered, as well as the diathesis / stress model of mental illness. Third, the majority of the course will consist of using the DSM-IV as the model for in-depth exposure and practice in the diagnosis of mental disorders. The major emphasis of the course will be on developing the differential diagnostic skills of the student through didactic and experiential modalities. Finally, there will be discussion of cross-cultural diagnostic issues, and the most effective treatment approaches used for each of the major diagnostic categories.

Course Objectives

1. Assess and observe clusters of psychiatric symptoms and robustly categorize them into DSM-IV-TR diagnostic categories, using the multiaxial assessment.

2. Assert and defend differential diagnoses, according to the DSM-IV-TR.

3. Recognize the uses, limitations, misuses of assigning psychiatric diagnoses.

4. Recognize how culture and class can influence psychiatric symptoms, misdiagnosis, and access to mental health services.

5. Develop an understanding of etiology of various mental health symptoms and illnesses.

6. Identify medical, psychodynamic, and alternative methods of treatment for specific mental health symptoms and illnesses.

7. Become familiar with the history of mental health treatment delivery in the United States.

8. Discern how various symptoms can be ego syntonic and ego dystonic.

9. Construct a comprehensive and concise biopsychosocial assessment, including a mental status exam.

10. Develop familiarity with the usual clinical course of each specific mental illness.
II. Class Format

Format of the class will primarily be didactic and interactive. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the material and are encouraged to share brief, relevant, clinical experiences. Appropriate videos and case vignettes will be used to illustrate class content.

III. Course Evaluation and Grading

Within the School of Social Work, grades are determined in each class based on the following standards, which have been established by the faculty of the School: (1) Grades of A or A- are reserved for student work, which not only demonstrates very good mastery of content, but which also shows that the student has undertaken a complex task, has applied critical thinking skills to the assignment, and/or has demonstrated creativity in her or his approach to the assignment. The difference between these two grades would be determined by the degree to which these skills have been demonstrated by the student. (2) A grade of B+ will be given to work which is judged to be very good. This grade denotes that a student has demonstrated a more than competent understanding of the material being tested in the assignment. (3) A grade of B will be given to student work which meets the basic requirements of the assignment. It denotes that the student has done adequate work on the assignment and meets basic course expectations. (4) A grade of B- will denote that a student’s performance was less than adequate on an assignment, reflecting only moderate grasp of content and / or expectations. (5) A grade of C would reflect a minimal grasp of the assignments, poor organization of ideas and / or several significant areas, requiring improvement. (6) Grades between C- and F will be applied to denote a failure to meet minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in all aspects of a student’s performance on the assignment.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 – 100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>73 – 76</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 72</td>
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All assignments are expected to be written in the APA 5th edition style. Departure from this style will result in a lowering of the assignment grade.

It is expected that students will attend all regularly scheduled classes, participate in the class discussions, and submit work promptly. Failure to meet these expectations may result in reduction in grades.
Late Assignments

Assignments are due on the day and time specified. Extension will be granted only for extenuating circumstances. If the assignment is late, the grade will be affected, usually lowered by ½ grade per day, including weekends. Students who wish to have extensions on deadlines based on disabilities are required to register with the Office of Student Disabilities before the due date of the assignment.

Incompletes

A final grade of incomplete can only be given under extreme circumstances and must be requested in writing (as stated by University policy.) Students who wish to have extensions on deadlines based on disabilities are required to register with the Office of Student Disabilities before the due date of the assignment.

(Note: Please refer to the Student Handbook and the University Catalogue for additional discussion of grades and grading procedures.)

Written Assignments

1) Reaction Paper

Read any one of the papers of this syllabus or any other related article pre-approved by your instructor. The assignment is a 2 page critical reaction to one of the main themes of the article you read. State the themes, conclusions, and your honest reactions. Reactions are considered subjective and quantitative grades will not be assigned to this section of the paper.

2) Diagnostic Summaries

Two written diagnostic case summaries on adult clients will be required in this course. The diagnostic summary will be the presentation of a case that the student is currently or has worked with in his/her field placement. The diagnostic summary will include the following information: PLEASE USE ALL THESE HEADINGS.

- Brief psychosocial information (USE TEMPLATE FROM OUR CLASS). Use all headings.
  - Mental Status Exam (USE TEMPLATE FROM OUR CLASS). Use all headings.
- Multiaxial diagnoses
  - Include at least 1 differential diagnosis. Write this in the form of Rule Out.
- Justification of primary and differential diagnoses.
  - Write the DSM-IV-TR diagnostic criteria, then write a very brief description of how this client’s symptoms meet this criteria.
    - Example
    - “More talkative than usual or pressure to keep talking.”
      - Mr. B talks non-stop for the duration of the interview. He will not be interrupted by clinician.
He talks in a tangential manner about the most recent basketball game.

- Remaining questions: When referring to differential diagnoses, list questions you still have or information that you still need to acquire to be able to rule in or rule out these diagnoses.

All names must be changed to protect client confidentiality. Write a minimum of 9 pages per summary.

3) Final Assignment

The final exam will consist of a 60 minute video of a client interview that will be shown on the last day of class. No recorders are allowed. The student will derive and justify DSM-IV-TR diagnoses for and answer several questions that pertain to the biopsychosocial circumstances of the client. The paper will be due during exam week. To maximize your grade, follow all instructions on Final Exam Handout that will be given during the last class. The work that social workers do with our clients is very sensitive and can have a significant impact on the lives of the people that we serve. For this reason, social workers make it our professional practice to consult with other professionals to insure comprehension and preciseness. You may consult with your colleagues about this client interview and final exam.

IV. Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled class sessions. Students with more than two unexcused absences may risk failure. This policy exists because the social work program is one of professional preparation. In addition to acquiring theoretical knowledge, students are expected to acquire processional values, to integrate knowledge from a range of courses, to develop professional skills and be socialized into the profession. The faculty of this School of Social Work are convinced that this cannot be accomplished through independent study alone. Thus, attendance at classes is required unless legitimate and special reasons exist for absences or tardiness. Any such absences or tardiness should be discussed directly with the course instructor.

The University of Southern California policy permits students to be excused from class without penalty for the observance of religious holy days. This policy also covers scheduled final examinations, which conflict with students’ observances of holy days. Students must make arrangements in advance to complete class work that will be missed or to reschedule an examination due to observance of holy days.

V. Course Expectations

I. Diagnostic Summaries

A - (Due Session 7) 15%
B - (Due Session 11) 15%

II. Reaction Paper (Due on Session 4) 20%
III. Final Exam *(Due during finals week.)* 40%

IV. Meaningful class participation 10%
*(Including class discussion, attendance, tardiness, leaving early, behavior that is distracting to other students. Please do not use your computer in class for any other reason than for taking notes.)*

VI. **Required Texts**


Pocket size DSM-IV-TR is acceptable.

**Optional Text**


VII. **Academic Accommodations**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. *Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible.* DSP is located in STU 301 and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.
Session 1
Introduction and Course Overview
- Person-In-Environment perspective in mental illness
- Clinical diagnosis among diverse populations including culture, race, gender, socioeconomics
- Critique of use of diagnostic frameworks
- DSM-IV-TR and the Multiaxial Assessment

Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Reading


Optional Reading:


Session 2  
The Mental Status Exam

- Aspects of observing and assessing mental status in children, elderly, people who are experiencing psychosis and intoxication, and people who are difficult to engage.

**Meets objectives 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9.**

*Reading (Culture and Mental Disorders)*


**Session 3**  
**The Effects of Trauma**  
- Paradigm perspectives on PTSD vs. Personality Disorders  
- Feminist contributions to understating trauma and its effects  
- Differing traumas and their associated responses (war, rape, childhood sexual abuse, battered women)  
- Controversy related to dissociative disorders  
- Factors in resiliency  

**Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10.**

**Reading**


**Optional Readings:**


Issues of Sexuality

Reading


Optional Reading:


Session 4

Schizophrenia and Other Psychotic Disorders – 1 – Understanding

Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Reading


Optional Reading:


**Session 5**
Schizophrenia and Other Psychotic Disorders – 2 – Associated Challenges and Treatment

**Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.**

**Session 6**
Developmental and Childhood Disorders

**Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.**

**Readings**


**Optional Reading:**


Session 7
Addiction – 1 – Understanding

Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Reading


Optional Reading


Session 8
Addiction – 2 - Treatment

Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Session 9
Mood Disorders - Depression

Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Reading


Session 10
*NO CLASS DUE TO SPRING RECESS*
Session 11
Bipolar Disorders

Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Readings

Session 12
Anxiety Disorders

Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Readings

Optional Reading:


Session 13
Personality Disorders – 1 – Cluster B
Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Reading


Optional Reading:


Session 14
Personality Disorders – 2 – Clusters A & C

Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Session 15
Eating Disorders

Meets objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Reading

Optional Reading:


Session 16

Final Exam Video and Handout

*Final Paper is due during Final’s Week at the usual beginning time of our class.*