

SW698: Social Work Practice in Mental Health & Addictions  
Spring / Summer 2012  
8:00am - 12:00pm

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## Course description

This course teaches practice models and methods of intervention for effective social work practice in mental health care, including the promotion of mental health, the prevention of mental illnesses, and the delivery of psychosocial treatments and rehabilitation services. A major focus is on enabling individuals with mental health problems to increase their functioning in the least restrictive environments, with the least amount of ongoing professional intervention, so these individuals maximize their success and satisfaction. This course has a specific emphasis on services to individuals who suffer from severe and persistent mental illness, substance abuse in conjunction with mental illness (dual-diagnosis population) and/or who are recovering from the effects of severe traumatic events. Interventions relevant to these conditions help individuals develop/restore their skills and empower them to modify their environments so as to improve their interactions with their environments. A second major focus is on culturally competent and gender-specific interventions and special issues for groups who have been subject to oppression. Privilege and social justice concerns will be a major emphasis of the course. Mental health disparities will be considered in relation to diagnoses, treatment options and case disposition within the mental health system.

## Course Content

This course will teach assessment of major, severe mental illnesses and substance abuse problems with a review of research literature looking at etiology, prevalence, efficacy of treatment interventions, outcomes of psychosocial interventions. Ethical issues and values central to social work will be stressed in all classes. Family interventions will be highlighted as well as rehabilitation techniques. Major concepts of recovery, empowerment, stigma will be addressed. The various models of intervention (i.e. self-help, twelve-step, cognitive/behavioral, biological, psychoeducation, family systems etc.) will be taught with regards to their differential application. Policy implications of managed care and community mental health programs will be addressed as they relate to practice concerns. Knowledge of the relationship between macro-micro system interventions in mental health including methods for resource acquisition and system change as well as effective advocacy skills will be stressed. Knowledge of the relationship between mental health and other social systems (e.g. health, education, social services, etc) and of methods to improve cooperation and coordination including interdisciplinary teamwork, case conferences, interagency collaboration will be highlighted. Model programs will be introduced as examples of excellent care and practice. Poverty and homelessness will be stressed as important mental health concerns for

social work practice. The course will emphasize a strengths-based perspective and how to integrate biological/medical concepts with social work practice. Gender, race, class and ethnicity will be integrated into all discussions of assessment and practice issues.

## Course Objectives

Students who complete this course will be able to:

1. Assess the risks and strengths of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and/or communities for the purpose of promoting mental health, early intervention, treatment, and continuing service, with an emphasis placed on problems faced by people who suffer from severe and persistent mental illness, substance abuse, and/or are recovering from the effects of severe traumatic events.
2. Plan or plan and conduct culturally competent, gender-specific, individual, family group, organizational, and community-based capacity building and preventive interventions.
3. Identify and demonstrate understanding of the many components of the mental health system as team member, advocate, broker, community organizer, and program planner in order to interact productively with the many components of the mental health system.
4. Build partnerships with key neighborhood and self-help organizations and institutions for the purpose of mental health promotion and disease prevention.
5. Incorporate social work values and ethical standards in practice in mental health.
6. Plan or plan and engage in advocacy at both micro and macro levels to help individuals overcome oppression, discrimination, and other barriers to access and quality of mental health services.

## Course Design

This course focuses on practice models, challenges, and critical perspectives for practice in mental health care, including the culturally competent promotion of mental health care; the prevention / assessment / treatment of mental illness, and interdisciplinary approaches to psychosocial treatment and rehabilitation services. A major focus will be on the empowerment of individuals with mental health problems to increase their functioning in the least restrictive settings with the least amount of ongoing professional intervention. This course has a specific emphasis on acquiring an understanding of the dilemmas faced by people who suffer from severe and persistent mental illnesses and the consequences of mental illnesses diagnoses, psychiatric treatments and social stigma. We will focus on problems related to substance abuse, and the psychological aftermath of traumatic experience. Using culture, race, class, privilege, and gender as critical lenses, we will review multiple perspectives (client/consumer, the family member, the professional) on the role of psychiatric perspectives in the conceptualizing and structuring of the foundations for mental health services and the role of social work in the provision of these services. Our readings will highlight first person accounts, memoirs, and case studies that describe experiences of the onset and development of mental disorders, including major depression, bipolar illness and schizophrenia as well as the individuals' complex experiences with the mental health system and mental health professionals.

## Class Format

Classes will utilize assigned readings and lecture material as the basis for in-class activities.

## Relationship to Four Curricular Themes

- Social Science and Behavioral Research – is presented throughout the course and includes findings from evaluation studies and intervention research in social work, psychiatry, psychology, anthropology, and sociology.
- Multiculturalism and Diversity – are integrated throughout the course especially in view of the fact that mental health problems are experienced very differently in various cultures, each of which has its own indigenous responses to healing. In addition, the stresses associated with mental health problems and access to appropriate services are differentially affected by gender, poverty, race/ethnicity and sexual orientation. The students must be aware of these issues and help to develop culturally competent and gender-specific interventions and interventions to overcome oppression and discrimination as barriers to access to and quality of care.
- Social Justice Issues – have special relevance to the processes of psychosocial rehabilitation. Persons with psychiatric disabilities are often discriminated against with respect to access to education, employment, housing, and financial assistance. Health insurance plans often discriminate against persons with mental as opposed to physical disabilities. Social justice issues are often seen with respect to the processes of commitment, the rights of people in mental institutions, the rights to treatment (such as in the criminal justice system), access to attorneys, and the determination of competence to stand trial or when mental illness is offered as a defense in a criminal proceeding. The student will learn about these issues in the course as well as the role of social work in fighting for these and other rights.
- Promotion/Prevention/Treatment/Rehabilitation – are addressed throughout the course. Mental disabilities often occur or are exacerbated as a result of stressful environmental conditions and the ways of seeking changes in these conditions or preventing them will be stressed.

## Relationship to Social Work Ethics and Values

Virtually every topic of this course is related to issues of social work values and ethics, and these issues will be dealt with in this course. Examples of these issues are priorities assigned to various services and populations by mental health agencies and the role of social workers in molding these priorities, recognition of the right of self-determination of consumers of mental health services, the principle of the utilization of the least restrictive environments for the treatment of mental disorders, the values placed on preventive services, an understanding of the responsibility of workers to strive for less stressful environments in relationship to preventing mental problems, the creation of community respect for individuals in the community whose behavior, while lawful, departs from community norms, and promoting community awareness of the “not in my backyard” phenomenon.

## Format of the Course

The objectives of the course will be pursued through readings, lectures, class discussions, class activities, and guest speakers. The following is a summary of the evaluation of student learning. Specific details for each is provided on the course site.

## Texts and Course Materials

Please refer to the course site for required text and other course-related materials. Please note that this course will draw heavily from peer-reviewed scientific journals and other quality learning materials obtained in various formats (e.g., audio and video files) online. These materials, to the extent possible, will be provided on the course site.

## Class Schedule and Readings

Please refer to the course site for the class schedule and readings. Please note that readings are subject to change, up to two weeks prior to the scheduled class. This will allow new readings to be integrated as they become available.

## Attendance Policy

Students are free to one class for any reason (e.g., personal, sick, religious holidays) without detriment to their grade. Each subsequent class missed will result in a 5 point reduction. Three or more missed classed may result in a non- passing grade.

## Late Assignments Policy

Late assignments may be submitted up to two days after the due date. However, a 20% reduction in points will be made for each day late.

## Final grade

The final grade for this course will be based on the following rating scheme:

A+	100 +
A	96 - 99
A-	93 - 95
B+	90 - 92
B	86 - 89
B-	83 - 85
C+	80 - 82
C	76 - 79
C-	73 - 75
D+	70 - 72
D	66 - 69
D-	63 - 65