

**SOCIOLOGY 363H1F:  
THE SOCIOLOGY OF MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL DISORDERS**

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**Web Site:** Blackboard.

**Time:** Tuesday 1-3

**Place:** SS2118

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***Calendar Description***

*An overview of the link between social inequality and emotional inequality, focusing on differences in mental health across social groups and the role of stress and coping resources in explaining group differences.*

***Prerequisite***

The prerequisite for Sociology 363 is either a Sociology 200 level or higher course or a Psychology 200 level or higher course. Students without the prerequisite will be removed from the course when discovered.

***Overview***

This course considers the influence of social environment and social experience on mental distress and disorder, focusing especially on differences in mental health by social statuses and across groups, and explanations of these differences in terms of exposure to different types of stress and access to coping resources which counteract the effects of stress.

A sociological perspective on mental health typically uses mental health as a “social mirror” --- an efficient marker which “reflects” the emotional consequences of experience in varying social environments, social conditions, and both social contexts and individual histories in individual’s lives. In this role, mental health is aggregated shorthand, a reference point, for the meanings that flow from the summed impact of past and current experience.

The course can be viewed as a logical sequence of issues that arise in considering the

experiential course of a person at risk for mental health problems. We begin with the problem of defining and measuring disorder and distress, and then consider variations in mental health that are related to social position or category, such as social class, gender, race, and marital status.

We then introduce the Stress Process model as an organizing framework for explaining the role of social inequality and social experience in mental health. This section introduces the basic components of this model, with an emphasis on varieties of stressors and coping resources. Given a person with a mental health problem, then, the next section considers the life consequences of these problems, focusing as examples on educational marriage, and adult achievement outcomes. Finally, we consider important themes in recent mental health research, focusing this year on the impact of social contexts such as neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools, and communities, the impact of macro-stressful events, such as 9/11, and the comparative study of mental health across societies.

My approach in this course is to consider the better-known and/or most prevalent disorders and problems, including depression, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse in particular. We do not restrict our attention to disorders, however. A good deal of the important differences in mental health in a population are not captured by considering only those with a disorder vs. all others. I will discuss mental health issues in terms of a gradient of problems from the minor to the severe, thus including those with real problems but who do not qualify for specific diagnoses. Studying the full range of mental health is important to a sociological approach, since the full distribution of mental health is a sensitive indicator of sources of social disadvantage and inequality.

### ***Required Work***

#### ***Tests***

I will give one term test (all short-answer), two pop quizzes in class, and a final exam. Note that the test and the final are *non-cumulative*. The two in-class quizzes will occur in one class before the first test, and another after the first test. They will be short, and take only a few minutes. Each test is worth 5 points: signing your name is worth 3 points; answering a question about the previous class will add 1 point, and answering a question about the current class will add 1 point.

The term test will be short answer only, but the final will be short answer plus one short essay, based on your choice of two questions. The short-answer sections of tests are somewhat unique in format. Basically, types of responses vary by the type of question. Some questions are multiple-choice, some are fill-in-the-blank, some ask you to choose the correct word to complete a sentence, and some require a phrase or sentence response. Questions focus on evaluating your awareness and understanding of the basic theories, concepts, hypotheses, and findings discussed *in both readings and lectures*. No short-answer questions necessitating an "opinion" to be defended will be included.

### ***Term Work***

Term work will occur in two stages.

First, everyone will post two comments on readings before the first test. These comments are meant to give you an opportunity to raise essential questions about issues raised in specific readings. These comments will be posted in the Journals section of Blackboard ***before 12 noon on the day of class where that reading is assigned.***

Second, you will have a choice to proceed with four more posted comments after the test or write a short essay, described below.

### ***Essay***

The essay asks you to apply the ideas, theories, concepts, and findings from one or two topic areas of the course in answering this question: *How have course concepts helped you understand the mental health status of someone you know well?* You should apply course materials to the task explaining either the problems your chosen subject faces, or their ability to avoid problems in the face of high risk. This essay should be no more than 4-5 pages long, double-spaced. The anonymity of the person should be protected.

### ***Comments***

If you choose not to write a paper, you have the alternative of posting comments on a private "Journals" section of Blackboard on 4 of 7 selected readings after the term test.

Only the highlighted readings in the reading list are available for posted comments. You must select from the highlighted readings.

Comments can raise critical questions, argue for the importance of the reading and its contribution, suggest what is missing and should be considered, connect the reading to other readings, or propose research which follows up the reading and resolves questions in the reading or tests the generality of findings in the reading. These comments should mention the parts of the paper that led to the comment you make, but you also need to be clear that you have read the entire paper. Each comment you submit should be about two to four paragraphs single-spaced.

### ***Decisions about Required Work***

Whether you do the paper or comments after the test will be directly implied by a sign-up for the paper after the test. In other words, if you do not sign up for the paper, you are expected to submit four more comments.

***Due Dates for Work:***

Provisional due dates for required work are as follows:

| Work                        | Date                     | Weights |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------|
| 1. 2 Comments before Test   | Before noon day of class | 10%     |
| 2. Term test                | October 20               | 25%     |
| 2. <i>Either:</i> Paper     | December 1               | 20%     |
| Or: 4 Comments on readings  | before noon day of class |         |
| 3. Two pop quizzes in class | unknown                  | 10%     |
| 4. Final exam               | exam period              | 35%     |

***Please note:*** A late paper work will be given a 10% reduction in the grade immediately. This means that the paper will be graded on the basis of .90 of its original weight in the course. This increases to 20% if the paper is late more than 4 days. Papers will not be accepted if they are more than a week late. Comments cannot be accepted late at all, since readings are discussed in class. Any comment posted late will not be graded.

*Papers will be hand-submitted in one of two ways: 1) at class on December 1; or 2) in the drop boxes in Room 225 in Sociology for papers, up to 5:00 pm that day.*

***Blackboard***

Blackboard will be used in this course primarily for three purposes: 1) I will post required readings beyond the textbook there; 2) You will post comments about readings on the discussion board; and 3) I will post most lecture Power Point materials there.

***Textbook (required)***

*A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health. Second Edition.* Eds. Teresa Scheid and Tony N. Brown. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. (at U of T Bookstore).

*Class Schedule*

| <i>Date</i>  | <i>Section / Topic</i>   | <i>Readings</i>  |
|--------------|--|--|
| September 15 | <b>1. Sociological Approach</b>  | Aneshensel   |
| September 22 | <b>2.1 and 2.2<br/>Definition and Measurement</b>                      | Wakefield<br>Mirowsky and Ross<br>Wheaton                  |
| September 29 | <b>3.1 Patterns</b><br><br><b>3.2 Social Class</b>                     | Kessler (both)<br><br>Eaton                                |
| October 6    | <b>3.3 Gender</b><br><br><b>3.4 Marital Status</b>                     | Rosenfield and Smith<br><br>Williams et al.<br>Simon       |
| October 13   | <b>3.5 Race, Immigration</b><br><br><b>3.6 Age and the Life Course</b> | Williams<br>Montazer and Wheaton<br><br>Mirowsky and Ross  |
| October 20   | <i>Term Test</i>   |  |
| October 27   | <b>4.1 and 4.2<br/>Stress Models</b>                                   | Pearlin and Bierman<br>Wheaton and Montazer                |
| November 3   | <b>4.2 and 4.3 Stress and Coping</b>                                   | Turner and Brown<br>Mirowsky and Ross<br>Ross and Mirowsky |
| November 10  | <i>FALL BREAK</i>  |  |
| November 17  | <b>5.1 Life Consequences</b>   | Breslau<br>Kessler<br>Forthofer                            |
| November 24  | <b>5.2 Social Contexts</b>   | Aneshensel<br>Leventhal<br>Milkie                          |
| December 1   | <b>5.3 Comparative</b>   | Kessler<br>Lee<br>De Silva                                 |
| December 8   | <b>5.4 Terrorism and Macro-Stress</b>                                  | Johnson and Hobfoll<br>Wheaton and Montazer                |

### ***Student Accommodations***

Please see me if you have a disability or other need that requires accommodation or classroom modification. I will be glad to help you in whatever way I can.

### ***Missed Deadlines***

***Medical Issues:*** Please note that requests for medically based exemptions for the assignment deadline must be accompanied by a U. of T. medical form, signed in legible handwriting and completely filled out with address and CPSO registration number. The original form must be given to me in person, within 7 business days, with the opportunity for me to make a Xerox copy. Forms that are scanned or xeroxed will not be accepted.

In case of *illness*, you must supply a duly completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form (available at [www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca](http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca)). A doctor's note is not acceptable. The form must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work at class or to your TA during their office hours. This should be submitted to me or a T.A. within 5 business days after the period of illness noted in the form.

If a *personal or family crisis* prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar. The letter must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work at class or to your TA during their office hours.

### ***Term Test***

If you miss the term test, you must follow one of the procedures above to qualify for a make-up test. The T.A. will not run a make-up test separately for each individual. There will be one sitting arranged for all qualified students for a make-up test.

### ***Academic Integrity***

Students are expected to know and adhere to the University's principles of academic integrity. Any act of plagiarism or other unethical behavior will be addressed in accordance with University guidelines. Students should be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second course, is considered an academic offense. Please see the "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters" (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) for specific information on academic integrity at the U of T.

### ***Appointments***

I do not hold specific office hours. Instead, you can phone the number on the first page and arrange an appointment at any time, or email me to set up an appointment. I am in my office on most days.

## TOPICS/READING LIST

### 1. THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF MENTAL HEALTH.

Carol S. Aneshensel, Jo C. Phelan, and Alex Bierman. "The Sociology of Mental Health: Surveying the Field." Pp. 1-23 in Carol S. Aneshensel, Jo, C. Phelan, and Alex Bierman (eds.). *Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*. New York: Springer, 2013.

### 2. DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT OF MENTAL DISORDER AND DISTRESS

#### *2.1 Definition and Measurement of Mental Disorder.*

Jerome C. Wakefield. 2010. "The Measurement of Mental Disorder." Pp. 20-45 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

#### *2.2 Psychological Distress and its Relation to Disorder.*

John Mirowsky and Catherine E. Ross. 2003 "Measuring Psychological Well-Being and Distress". Pp. 23-50 in *Social Causes of Psychological Distress, Second Edition..* New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Wheaton, Blair. 2007. "The twain meet: distress, disorder and the continuing conundrum of categories." *Health* 11(3):303-319.

### 3. THE SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF MENTAL HEALTH

#### *3.1 Epidemiological Patterns*

Ronald C. Kessler. 2010. "The Prevalence of Mental Illness." Pp. 46-64 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kessler, Ronald C., Patricia A. Berglund, Olga Demler, Robert Jin, Kathleen R. Merikangas and Ellen E. Walters. 2005. "Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication." *Archives of General Psychiatry* 62(6):593-602.

#### *3.2 Social Class*

William W. Eaton, Carles Muntaner, and Jaime C. Sapag. 2010. "Socioeconomic Stratification and Mental Disorder." Pp. 226-256 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

### **3.3 Gender**

Sarah Rosenfield and Dena Smith. "Gender and Mental Health: Do Men and Women Have Different Amounts or Types of Problems?" Pp. 256-268 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

### **3.4 Family Structure and Marital Status**

Kristi Williams, Adrienne Frech, and Daniel Carlson. "Marital Status and Mental Health." Pp. 306-320 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Simon, Robin 2002. "Revisiting the Relationships among Gender, Marital Status, and Mental Health." *The American Journal of Sociology* 107:4 (1065-1096)

### **3.5 Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration**

David Williams, Manuela Costa, and Jacinta P, Leavell. 2010 "Race and Mental Health: Patterns and Challenges." Pp. 268-290 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Shirin Montazer and Blair Wheaton. 2011. "The Impact of Generation and Country of Origin on the Mental Health of Children of Immigrants." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 52: 23-42.

### **3.6 Age and the Life Course**

Mirowsky, John, and Catherine Ross. 2010. "Well-Being Across the Life Course." Pp. 361-383 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

## **4. EXPLANATIONS OF SOCIAL DIFFERENCES**

### **4.1 The Stress Process Model**

Leonard I. Pearlin and Alex Bierman. 2012. "Current Issues and Future Directions in Research into the Stress Process." Pp. 325-340 in C. Aneshensel, J. Phelan, and A. Bierman (eds.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health Second Edition*. New York: Springer.

### **4.2 Stress Models**

Blair Wheaton and Shirin Montazer. 2010. "Stressors, Stress, and Distress." Pp. 171-199 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press..

### ***4.3 Coping Resources and Coping Behavior.***

R. Jay Turner and Robyn Lewis Brown. "Social Support and Mental Health. Pp. 200-212 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

John Mirowsky and Catherine E. Ross. "Control or Defense?: Depression and the Sense of Control over Good and Bad Outcomes." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 31, 1990: 71-86.

Ross, Catherine E., and John Mirowsky. 1989 "Explaining the Social Patterns of Depression: Control and Problem-solving or Support and Talking." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 30(2,Jun): 206-19.

## **5. SPECIAL TOPICS**

### ***5.1 Life Consequences Of Mental Health Problems***

Breslau, Joshua, Michael Lane, Nancy Sampson and Ronald C. Kessler. 2008. "Mental disorders and subsequent educational attainment in a US national sample." *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 42(9):708-716.

Kessler, Ronald C., Hagop S. Akiskal, Minnie Ames, Howard Birnbaum, Paul Greenberg, Robert M. A. Hirschfeld, Robert Jin, Kathleen R. Merikangas, Gregory E. Simon and Philip S. Wang. 2006. "Prevalence and effects of mood disorders on work performance in a nationally representative sample of U.S. workers." *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 163(9):1561-1568.

Forthofer, Melinda S., Ronald C. Kessler, Amber L. Story, and Ian H. Gotlib. 1996. "The Effects of Psychiatric Disorders on the Probability and Timing of First Marriage." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 37:121-132.

### ***5.2 The Impacts of Social Contexts***

Carol Aneshensel . 2009. "Neighborhood as a Social Context of the Stress Process." Pp. 35-50 in William R. Avison, Carol S. Aneshensel, Scott Schieman, and Blair Wheaton (eds.), *Advances in the Conceptualization of the Stress Process*. New York: Springer.

Leventhal, Tama, et al., 2003. "Moving to Opportunity: an Experimental Study of Neighborhood Effects on Mental Health." *American Journal of Public Health* 93: 1576-1582.

Melissa H. Milkie. and Catherine H. Warner. 2011. "Classroom Learning Environments and the Mental Health of First Grade Children." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 52: 4-22.

### ***5.3 Comparative Understandings of Mental Health***

Kessler, Ronald C., et al., 2007. "Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of mental disorders in the World Health Organization's World Mental Health Survey Initiative" *World Psychiatry*: 168-176.

Lee, Sing, Adley Tsang, Ming-Yuan Zhang, Yue-Qin Huang, Yan-Ling He, Zhao-Rui Liu, Yu-Cun Shen and Ronald C. Kessler. 2007. "Lifetime prevalence and inter-cohort variation in DSM-IV disorders in metropolitan China." *Psychological Medicine* 37(1):61-71.

Mary De Silva et al. 2007. Social capital and mental health: A comparative analysis of four low income countries. *Social Science and Medicine* 64: 5-20.

### ***5.4 Terrorism and Macro-Events***

Robert L. Johnson and Stevan Hobfoll. 2010. "Mental Health and Terrorism." Pp. 384-405 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wheaton, Blair, and Shirin Montazer. 2015. "The Impact of 9/11 on the Subjective Welfare of Mid to Later Life Americans." Draft.