

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

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Time: Wednesday 12-2

Place: SS2102

T.A.s **Brigid Burke (b.burke@mail.utoronto.ca)**
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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 social and/or personal coping resources.

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. The course then uses 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 on the life course perspective, the impact of social contexts such as neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools, and communities, and the impact of macro-stressful events, such as 9/11 and school shootings.

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 variation in mental health is 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

I will give one term test (all short-answer), two pop quizzes in class, and a final exam. 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. Term work will include *either* a short paper (4 to 6 pages double-spaced) handed in by the due date in class *or* a **series of comments on readings that you post online** on the dates readings are assigned for class. **These comments must be posted before the class in which the reading is scheduled to be discussed – before 12 noon on Wednesday.**

Note that the test and the final are *non-cumulative*.

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.

Paper

This paper will be a response to the three questions below. The purpose of the paper is to apply concepts and theories discussed in the course. This paper will be a case study of someone you know, using course concepts and findings to help explain their emotional or psychological problems, or alternatively, to help explain why they do *not* have problems given a high-risk life history. The anonymity of the person should be protected. Your current knowledge of the person and their life circumstances must be sufficient to write the paper.

In the course of the paper, you will answer the following three questions:

1. *Give a short history of the problem, or circumstances that could have led to a problem, including important circumstances that must be included to answer questions #2 and #3. Discuss the specific content of the problem, relating it to known criteria for disorder or distress. Also briefly discuss, if appropriate, issues of duration of symptoms, timing in the life course, and severity. This question must be answered in one page or less.*
2. *Comment on the specific risk for these problems suggested by findings on the social distribution of mental health from the course. Does your case fit these findings or not, and if not, suggest a reason? Answer this part in preferably 1 to but no more than 2 pages. You can discuss other risk factors beyond those discussed in the course if you cite supporting literature.*
3. *Discuss the role of social statuses, stress exposures and coping resources in explaining the development of their problem and whether the problem has diminished or grown over time (if applicable). It is important here that you focus only on what you argue are the "crucial" stressors or coping resource problems that explain why the problem occurred when it occurred, and how it was maintained over time. If you choose to analyze someone who has avoided mental health problems despite stress, present why you think the stressors they have experienced are important and how their coping resources helped avoid problems. Answer this question in 3 to 4 pages.*

Comments

If you choose not to write a paper, you have the alternative of posting comments on a private "Journals" section of Blackboard on **6 of 9** selected readings. The readings you can select from are highlighted in the reading list.

Comments are broadly defined as either analytical questions or a commentary about the interpretation of ideas or findings in the paper that raise critical issues about the paper, connect it with other readings, or explain its role as an important contribution to the literature. 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 half to three-quarters of a page single-spaced.

Decisions about Required Work

- If you do at least two comments before the test, you are choosing that method of fulfilling the requirements for the course.
- If you do one only, you can choose to continue with comments or do the paper.
- If you do *no* comments before the test, you can still do comments --but there are only six to choose from at that point and so you will do all six. ***This will be declared by a "sign-up" for the paper after the test.***
- If have submitted one or no comments by that point, and you do not sign up for the paper, then you have chosen the comments.

Due Dates for Work:

You will have to declare whether you intend to write a paper or submit commentaries by the week before the first test. Provisional due dates for required work are as follows:

Work	Date	Weights
1. Term test	October 15	25%
2. <i>Either:</i> Paper Or: 6 Comments on readings	November 26	25%
3. Two pop quizzes in class	unknown	10%
4. Final exam	exam period	40%

Please note: Late term work will be given a 10% reduction in the grade immediately. This means that the paper/ comment 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. Your grade will be zero on that part of the course. There are no late comments: any comment posted late will not be graded.

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 10	1. Sociological Approach	Thoits Wheaton
September 17	2.1 and 2.2 Definition and Measurement	Wakefield Mirowsky and Ross Wheaton
September 24	3.1 Patterns 3.2 Social Class	Kessler (all 3) Eaton
October 1	3.3 Gender 3.4 Marital Status	Rosenfield and Smith Mirowsky and Ross Williams et al. Simon
October 8	3.5 Race, Immigration	Williams Montazer and Wheaton
October 15	<i>Term Test</i>	
October 22	4.1 and 4.2 Stress Models	Pearlin Wheaton and Montazer
October 29	4.2 and 4.3 Stress and Coping	Turner and Brown Mirowsky and Ross Ross and Mirowsky
November 5	5.1 Life Consequences	Breslau Kessler Forthofer
November 12	5.2 Neighbourhoods	Aneshensel Turner Leventhal
November 19	5.3 The Life Course	Mirowsky and Ross Elder and Liker
November 26	5.4 Terrorism and Macro-Stress	Johnson and Hobfoll Kessler 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. The U. of T medical form is available from www.healthservice.utoronto.ca/pdfs/medcert.htm

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.

Peggy Thoits. 2010. "Sociological Approaches to Mental Illness." Pp. 106-124 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Blair Wheaton. 2001. "The Role of Sociology in the Study of Mental Health...and the Role of Mental Health in the Study of Sociology." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 42 (Sept.): 221-234. *Pages 221-224, 227-230 only.*

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.

Blair Wheaton. 2001. "The Role of Sociology in the Study of Mental Health...and the Role of Mental Health in the Study of Sociology." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 42 (Sept.): 221-234. *Pages 224-227 only.*

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.

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.

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.

John Mirowsky and Catherine Ross. 2003. "Social Patterns of Distress: Gender." Pp. 95-112 in *Social Causes of Psychological Distress, Second Edition*. Hawthorne, N.Y.: Aldine de Gruyter

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.

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 Neighbourhoods as 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.

Turner, Heather A., et al. 2013. "Community Disorder, Victimization Exposure, and Mental Health in a National Sample of Youth." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 54: 258-275,

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.

5.3 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.

Elder, Glen H. Jr. and Jeffrey K. Liker. 1982. "Hard Times in Women's Lives: Historical Influences Across Forty Years." *The American Journal of Sociology* 88:241-269.

5.4 Terrorism and Macro-Stress

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

Kessler, Ronald C., et al. 2008. "Trends in Mental Illness and Suicidality after Hurricane Katrina." *Molecular Psychiatry* 13: 374-384.

Wheaton, Blair, and Shirin Montazer. 2013. "The Impact of 9/11 on the Subjective Welfare of Mid to Later Life Americans." Invited Lecture, Rutgers University, Department of Sociology.