Sociology of Mental Health and Illness (920:631)

Spring 2011
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This course serves as a general introduction to the sociology of mental health and illness. The first part of the course, presented by Professor Horwitz, focuses on social constructionist approaches to the study of mental illness and their differences with other approaches to this topic. The second part, presented by Professor Rosenfield, focuses on current dominant and alternative approaches in the sociology of mental health, as well as the impact of social inequalities on mental health problems.

Most of the required reading will be posted on the course’s sakai site. Discussion questions should also be posted to this site.

Course grades are based on three requirements: 1) leading one or two discussion sections over the course of the semester (10%); 2) class participation (20%); and 3) a research paper on a course-related topic of the student’s choosing that the instructor has approved (70%). Students will discuss their ideas for this paper in class on March 1 and present an oral summary of the paper on April 26.

The outline of topics and dates is:

1-18 Overview of the course and discussion of student and instructor interests. No readings.

1-25 The Social Constructionist Approach and Its Relationship to Other Approaches to the Study of Mental Illness

Allan Horwitz, Creating Mental Illness, Introduction and Chapter 1.


Recommended


Elizabeth Lunbeck, The Psychiatric Persuasion: Knowledge, Gender, and Power in Modern America, Ch. 3, pp. 46-80.


2-1 Creating Mental Illness: The Case of the DSM


Recommended


2-8 Creating Depression and Anxiety


Recommended


2-15 Creating Other Categories of Mental Disorder


Recommended


2-22 Creating Biological Psychiatry


Allan V. Horwitz and Jerome C. Wakefield. 2007. The Loss of Sadness, Ch. 8.


Recommended


Allan V. Horwitz and Jerome C. Wakefield. 2007. The Loss of Sadness, Ch. 9.


3-1 Oral Student Presentations of Ideas for Papers

3-8 Dominant Theory and Research in the Sociology of Mental Illness: The Stress Process Paradigm


Recommended


3-15 Spring Break

3-22 Alternatives to the Stress Paradigm: Social Psychological Considerations


Recommended


3-29 Social Inequalities and Mental Health: Social Class


Recommended


4-5 Social Inequalities and Mental Health: Gender and Race/Ethnicity


Recommended


4-12 Labelling Mental Illness


Recommended


4/19 Stigma


Recommended


4-26 Student Reports of Final Papers