

PSY D33H3S (Lec 30)- Stress and Mental Health

Course Outline (Winter 2015)

Class Meets: Thursdays, 1900-2100

(Classroom HW308)

Instructor: Anna Nagy (a.nagy@utoronto.ca)

Office: Portable 3, Rm 123

Home page: Blackboard ("The Portal")

Office Hours: Thursdays from 1500-1600 hrs(other hours by appt)

*******Please check the PSY D33 Blackboard page on a regular basis for important announcements*******

Pre-requisites—

Readings: Course readings will be drawn from scholarly literature, and other peer reviewed sources. A reading list (with links to online resources) will be posted on the blackboard course page for Psy D33.

Course Description: This course provides an evidence-based overview of the concepts of “stress” and “trauma”, and their complex relationship with mental health and various psychological disorders. A critical review of prevalent theories and application of concepts will provide students with an understanding of how stress and trauma are operationalized from neurobiological, psychological, and integrative perspectives; and, how they increase the risk and severity of mental illness. Ultimately, students will come to understand the complexity of the individual stress response, and explore the importance of adopting a holistic perspective of prevention and treatment in vulnerable children and adults.

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this course (includes class attendance, participation in exercises, readings, and assignments), students will be able to explain and integrate the contributions of the various models of stress and trauma; describe how genes and environment interact to enhance risk to mental illness; and, explore the complex relationships between stress, trauma, and various psychological disorders. Critical interpretation of research is demonstrated and encouraged through class examples and discussion. Application of concepts is also supported through the completion of the major writing assignment.

Grading: Your final grade will be based on a final term paper (25%), project proposal (5%), one short written assignment (thought paper) (10%), a classroom presentation (15%), a final examination (35%), and weekly participation (10%). The final exam will consist of two comprehensive long essay questions; possible topics will be announced

ahead of time so that you may adequately prepare (you will be given several topics to prepare for—two questions will be drawn at the exam). The date for the final examination will be arranged by the Registrar and held during the official exam period.

Thought Paper: Please submit a 2 page (max!) thought paper on a topic of your choice (on an issue covered in class, or on an issue that stems from something discussed in class). Select an issue that struck you, or that is particularly meaningful and present an argument around it. Please incorporate at least two peer reviewed articles into your work.

The thought paper assignment is due Feb 5th in class.

Final Assignment:

Prepare a 12-15 page research review paper on a topic of your choice.

The starting point of the paper should be based on research question relevant to the study of stress or trauma and its effects on mental health. Your task is to research the topic more fully, and to write a paper that contains a valid argument relating to the issue of interest. The paper must include approximately 15 references (12-20); all must be peer-reviewed primary journal articles. You may include additional references that are books or review papers (including meta-analyses); however, please be sure that the majority of your work is based on empirical studies. The format of the paper should conform to APA style. A detailed overview of the marking scheme and requirements for the paper will be posted on the course webpage closer to the deadline. This information is detailed and will be a helpful reference. It is expected that assignments will be handed in on the due date, unless prior appropriate arrangements have been made with your instructor. Late assignments will result in a loss of 4% of the total score for the paper per day. In other words, please hand them in on time☺!

The outline for the final assignment is due March 5 in class.

The final assignment is due April 2 in class.

Academic Integrity: Please see <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize> for guidelines on how not to plagiarize. It is expected that all sources of ideas and information will be properly acknowledged. See also: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/documentation> ; scroll down to 'APA style guide'

Note: Adherence to the Student Code of Conduct and the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters will be strictly enforced in this course.

Group Presentation: Students will be expected to participate in one group presentation, with two to three classmates during the last few weeks of class. This is an opportunity to be creative, and to improve your presentation skills! Students will select a topic relevant to stress/coping & mental health (readings should not have been specifically covered in a previous class, although you may build on a concept), and present for 30 minutes (research to be conducted within the last 5 years). Your task is to introduce your classmates to new research, and to engage them in discussion. One example might be to provide a relevant case study drawn from the internet or other sources, and to apply the material you present to the clinical case. Overall, the presentation should include interactive components that demonstrate an application of the concepts. You may use audio-visual material, debates, games, group-work, or other creative endeavours to make the material more interesting. Please check with your instructor a week prior to your presentation for additional help and resources. More information will be provided once classes begin.

Lecture Notes: Much of the material will be presented in the form of interactive class exercises and discussions, so attendance is important to do well in this course. Please read the corresponding assigned readings prior to class each week.

Office Hours: See above for hours and location. If you have any questions, or are having difficulty with the course material, please come and see me during office hours. You may also e-mail me with any questions.

Good luck and welcome to Psy D33 ☺!

COURSE OUTLINE (Tentative—Subject to Change)

Week of:	Topic
Jan 8	Introduction
Jan 15	History of the Stress Concept; The Emotional & Intellectual Basis of Stress; Social determinants of mental health
Jan 22	Neurobiology of Stress Stress and Health
Jan 29	Pre-Natal Stress and Mental Health
Feb 5	Toxic childhood stress and mental health
Feb 12	Epigenetics (gene-environment interactions and mental health)
Feb 19	<i>Reading Week (no class!)</i>
Feb 26	Mood Disorders
March 5	Stress, Trauma, & PTSD
March 12	Schizophrenia
March 19	Innovative Treatments Student Presentations
March 26	Implications for Policy (What others have explored) Student Presentations
April 2	Holistic Mental Health (Our recommendations) Student Presentations

Projects are due April 2nd in class!

(See Reading List for weekly assigned readings)

Reminder: Please check Blackboard weekly for important announcements!

Note: Exam will cover material from both discussion and readings.