

PSY D33H3F (Lec 30)- Stress and Mental Health

Course Outline (Fall 2017)

Class Meets: Tuesdays, 1700-1900hrs

(Classroom MW 264)

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

Office: Portable 0103, Rm 123

Home page: Blackboard ('The Portal')

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1600-1700hrs

*******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.

(Please note that this is a seminar class that entails active participation, and critical discussion around the course material. As such, it is essential that readings be completed PRIOR to coming to class each week.)

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 may affect 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 when considering 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 outline (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—three questions will be drawn at the exam, and you will choose two). 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 Oct 17 in class.

Final Assignment:

Prepare a 10-12 page critical 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 critically evaluate the literature that exists in response to your question, formulating a clear “take home message”. 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 Nov 14 in class.

The final assignment is due Dec 5.

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'

“Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site”.

Please submit an electronic copy of your papers to turnitin, and a hard copy to your instructor.

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 three to four other classmates. This is an opportunity to be creative, and to improve your presentation skills! Students will present material to bring to life the course readings, adding/introducing at least two additional peer reviewed articles (of your choice) to the assigned literature. Your task is to introduce your classmates to the topic, and to the literature, and to engage them in discussion. One way to do this might be to provide a relevant case study drawn from the internet or other sources, and to apply the academic material you present to the clinical case (bring the case to life in some way, and engage the class in debate/discussion on the topic).

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 two weeks prior to your presentation for additional help and resources, and to ensure that your presentation plan is suitable (assistance is gladly provided). More information will be shared once classes begin.

Lecture Notes: Much of the material will 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 |
|--------------------------|---|
| Sept 12 | Introduction |
| Sept 19 Stress | History of the Stress Concept; The Emotional & Intellectual Basis of |
| Sept 26 | Social determinants of mental health |
| Oct 3 | Neurobiology of Stress Stress and Health |
| Oct 10 | READING WEEK—NO CLASS! |
| Oct 17 | Pre-Natal Stress and Mental Health Thought paper due |
| Oct 24 | Toxic childhood stress and mental health |
| Oct 31 | Genes and Epigenetics |
| Nov 7 | Mood Disorders |
| Nov 14 | Stress, Trauma, & PTSD Outline for Critical Research Review Paper due |
| Nov 21 | Schizophrenia |
| Nov 28 | Treatments and Prevention |

Implications for policy

Dec 5

Final Research Review Paper due

(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.