PSYD37H3 S

Social Context of Mental Health and Illness

Winter 2025 Syllabus

Course Meetings

PSYD37H3 S

Section	Day & Time	Delivery Mode & Location
LEC01	Wednesday, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM	In Person: KW264 Kina Wiiya Enadong Building

Refer to ACORN for the most up-to-date information about the location of the course meetings.

Course Contacts

Course Website: https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/373555

Instructor: Prof. Charmaine Williams (Charmaine C. Williams Profile | University of Toronto (utoronto.ca))
Email: charmaine.williams@utoronto.ca
Phone: 416-978-3255 (Office of the Dean)
Office Hours and Location: online, by appointment.
Additional Notes: Students can contact me through the email address fifsw.dean@utoronto.ca to request that my assistant schedule a meeting. Please identify yourself as a student in my class.

Course Overview

This course provides an opportunity to examine the impact of social practices and ideas on mental health and illness, focusing on how these factors affect society, families, and individuals. While contemporary understanding emphasizes the biological influences on mental health, particularly brain function, it is crucial to recognize the significant role of social factors. These factors influence who experiences mental illness, who receives appropriate treatment, and who achieves a good quality of life following a diagnosis.

In this course, the scope of social includes families, local and global communities, healthcare and governmental institutions, and society at large. This analysis includes exploring how issues of diversity and equity intersect with mental health and illness. Additionally, we will discuss how the stigma associated with mental illness affects social attitudes and social policy that have an impact on the experience of living with mental illness.

Throughout the course, students are encouraged to develop self-awareness around what they believe about mental health and illness and how that affects their views on the topics, their roles

as members of communities that include people dealing with mental health challenges, and future roles they may have as healthcare professionals or others supporting people diagnosed with mental illness.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Explain how the social determinants are primary factors that shape mental health for individual, families.
2. Critique western biomedical definitions of mental health, addictions, treatment, healing, and recovery in the context of conceptualizations for similar issues across cultures and contexts.
3. Critically analyze how stigma affects individuals and families affected by mental illness.
4. Explain strategies that promote wellness, resilience, and trauma-informed mental health.
5. Examine policies and practices that promote mental health
6. Engage in critical self-reflection about one's own social location and experiences, values, assumptions, and biases related to mental illness.

Prerequisites: 10.0 credits completed and enrolment in the Combined BSc in Mental Health Studies/Masters of Social Work or Specialist/Specialist-Co-op programs in Mental Health Studies
Corequisites: None
Exclusions: None
Recommended Preparation: None
Credit Value: 0.5

Topics and Course Materials

All materials for the course are available in the UofT Library system or are open-access online.

Module One History and Future of Mental Health	
January 8 Introduction and Overview:	10 Best Mental Health Careers and Why You Should Pursue One. https://www.wgu.edu/blog/best-mental-health-careers-why-you-should-pursue-one2210.html Posluns, K., & Gall, T. L. (2020). Dear mental health practitioners, take care of yourselves: A literature review on self-care. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, *42*(1), 1-20.
January 15 100 (or so) years of Psychiatry *Since mental health care was institutionalized in the 19th century, the pendulum has swung between optimism and disengagement. How much does this have to do with psychiatry itself, and how much is based in social changes around it?*	Reaume, G. (2002). Lunatic to patient to person: Nomenclature in psychiatric history and the influence of patients' activism in North America. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, *25*(4), 405-426. Optional: Byrick, K. et al. (2023). A practical guide to mental health and the law in Ontario. Ontario Hospital Association.
January 22 Mental Diversity – The future of madness? *In an ideal future have we cured mental illness or integrated it? What would a world that embraced mental diversity look like?*	Higgs, R. N. (2020). Reconceptualizing psychosis: the hearing voices movement and social approaches to health. *Health and human rights*, *22*(1), 133-144. Fernyhough, C., Jenkins, J., & Woods, A. (2014). Culture and hallucinations: Overview and future directions. *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, *40*(4), S213–S220. https://doi.org/10.1093/schbul/sbu012 Case Study: Mad Pride: The Struggle to Reclaim Mental Health. Ana and others. Mad Pride: The Fight to Reclaim Mental Health - VICE Video: Documentaries, Films, News Videos
January 29	Online consultations Assignment #1 due

Module 2 Social and Cultural Contexts for Mental Health and Illness	
February 5 What is mental health and what causes mental illness? *How do social determinants influence mental health and illness? How do we understand the balance between individual, social, structural, and historical contributions to mental illness, mental health, and recovery?*	Ahrnberg et al. (2021). Determinants of Positive Mental Health in Adolescents–A Cross-Sectional Study on Relationships between Positive Mental Health, Self-Esteem, Character Strengths and Social Inclusion. *The International Journal of Mental Health Promotion, 23(3), 361-374*. https://doi.org/10.32604/ijmhp.2021.016408 Kim, P. J. (2019). Social determinants of health inequities in indigenous Canadians through a life course approach to colonialism and the residential school system. *Health Equity*, *3*(1), 378-381.
February 12 The social context of diagnosis and treatment of mental illness *Why do some things get diagnosed as illness and others do not? What purpose does diagnosis serve? Whose interests are served by describing human experiences as psychiatric disorders?*	Aftab, A., & Rashed, M. A. (2021). Mental disorder and social deviance. *International Review of Psychiatry*, *33*(5), 478-485. Hughes, F., & Kinderman, P. (2023). 'Finally, I could breathe': the utility and impact of a diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive disorder. *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, *51*(3), 246–258. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1352465822000637 Case Study: Strangers in my Head: A Face in the Crowd https://www.channelnewsasia.com/watch/strangers-my-head/face-crowd-1452946
February 19	**Reading Week**
February 26 Culture, healing and mental illness *Psychiatry is a western invention – can it work beyond our cultural context? Can it work in a multicultural context?*	Pinder-Amaker, S., Winer, J. P., Wadsworth, L. P., Nevins, C. M., Peckham, A., Nota, J. A., & Beard, C. (2023). Making an MPCT: Building and Sustaining a Multicultural Psychology Consultation Team (MPCT) Within an Academic Medical Center. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, *31*(4), 195–201. https://doi.org/10.1097/HRP.0000000000000372 Maree Kopua, D., Kopua, M. A., & Bracken, P. J. (2020). Mahi a Atua: A Māori approach to mental health. *Transcultural psychiatry*, *57*(2), 375-383
March 5	Fieldwork for final assignment and online consultations

Module 3 Contemporary Mental Health Challenges	
March 12 Trauma and Resilience *Violence and trauma come into many peoples' lives, but why do some people experience more than others? And what factors make a difference in recovering from trauma?*	Quiros, L., Varghese, R., & Vanidestine, T. (2020). Disrupting the single story: Challenging dominant trauma narratives through a critical race lens. *Traumatology*, *26*(2), 160. Ventriglio, A., Ricci, F., Torales, J., Castaldelli-Maia, J. M., Bener, A., Smith, A., & Liebrenz, M. (2024). Navigating a world in conflict: The mental health implications of contemporary geopolitical crises. *Industrial Psychiatry Journal*, *33*(Suppl 1), S268-S271.
Assignment 2: due online March 14	
March 19 Families and mental illness *How does society treat families affected by mental illness? What do family members need to support each other effectively?*	Flood-Grady, E., & Koenig Kellas, J. (2019). Sense-making, socialization, and stigma: Exploring narratives told in families about mental illness. *Health communication*, *34*(6), 607-617. Carbonell, Á., Navarro-Pérez, J., & Mestre, M. (2020). Challenges and barriers in mental healthcare systems and their impact on the family: A systematic integrative review. *Health & Social Care in the Community.*, *28*(5), 1366–1379. https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12968
Assignment 3 due online March 21	
March 26 Eco-Anxiety *Is eco-anxiety a new pathology or a sane response in an insane world?*	Hickman, C. (2020). We need to (find a way to) talk about… Eco-anxiety. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, *34*(4), 411-424. Kurth, C., & Pihkala, P. (2022). Eco-anxiety: What it is and why it matters. *Frontiers in psychology*, *13*, 981814.
Assignment 4 due online March 28	
April 2	Assignment 5/Capstone Assignment is Due

Marking Scheme

Assignment	Details	% of final grade
#1: Reflective Essay Due January 29, 2025 at 11:59pm EST	Length: 5-7 pages Font: Times New Roman, 12-point Spacing: Double-spaced Citations: APA format for any references (not included in the page count)	30%
#2, 3, 4: Role-Playing Activities & Debriefs Due March 14, March 21, March 28 at 11:59PM EST	Complete online forms (250-500 words) Instructor assigns participation mark	10% x 3
#5 Capstone Assignment Due April 2, 2025 at 11:59PM EST	Length: 8-10 pages Font: Times New Roman, 12-point Spacing: Double-spaced Citations: APA format for references (not included in the page count)	40%

See "Additional Content" section at the end of the syllabus for assignment guides and rubrics.

Late Assessment Submissions Policy

Late submissions will be subject to a grade reduction penalty, whereby the final grade for the assignment will be lowered by one grade level for each day it is late (e.g., a B+ will be reduced to a B). An assignment is considered late 24 hours after the due date and time passes. Students are encouraged to submit assignments early to avoid late penalties due to technical issues. Problems with the Quercus Portal will not be accepted as an excuse for late submission.

Students with documented accommodations to receive additional time for completing assignments should meet with me to confirm accommodation-based due dates. Students who need to seek extensions due to illness or other personal circumstances must provide appropriate documentation as soon as possible and arrange new due dates.

Policies & Statements

Plagiarism Detection Tool

Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments to the University's plagiarism detection tool 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 tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (https://uoft.me/pdt-faq).

Academic Integrity

The University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

Potential offences in papers and assignments include using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement, submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor, making up sources or facts, obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

If you have any questions about whether actions you are contemplating may be considered academic dishonesty, please discuss it with me.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

The University of Toronto is a richly diverse community and as such is committed to providing an environment free of any form of harassment, misconduct, or discrimination. In this course, I seek to foster a civil, respectful, and open-minded climate in which we can all work together to develop a better understanding of key questions and debates through meaningful dialogue. As such, I expect all involved with this course to refrain from actions or behaviours that intimidate, humiliate, or demean persons or groups or that undermine their security or self-esteem based on traits related to race, religion, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, disability, receipt of public assistance or record of offences.

University Land Acknowledgement

The University of Toronto operates on the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place continues to be home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. When we work, live, and learn on this land, we remember that this is Treaty 13 territory and we are included in treaty agreements that direct us to share this land, care for it, and ensure that Indigenous and other people benefit from our

presence on it. In this course, I have included content on Indigenous issues and knowledge to facilitate our action on commitments to truth and reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island.

Accommodations & Other Considerations

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services Office as soon as possible. I am happy to review any documentation you wish to share from your AccessAbility Services Officer.

AccessAbility Services staff (located in Rm AA142, Arts and Administration Building) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations 416-287-7560 or email ability.utsc@utoronto.ca. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

If you would like to seek academic consideration for another reason, please schedule a meeting with me.

I will be making efforts to deliver this course with attention to inclusion and accessibility. If you have needs or suggestions you would like to share to support that process, please let me know.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools

Students may use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, in this course as learning aids or to help produce assignments. However, students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit.

Students may not use artificial intelligence tools for completing course assignments except when directed to do so. However, these tools may be useful when gathering information from across sources and assimilating it for understanding.

The knowing use of generative artificial intelligence tools, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the completion of, or to support the completion of an assignment or any other form of academic assessment, may be considered an academic offense in this course.

If you are uncertain if you are using AI tools in an appropriate way, please consult with me.

Recording of Classroom Material by Students

Recording or photographing any aspect of a university course - lecture, tutorial, seminar, lab, studio, practice session, field trip etc. – without prior approval of all involved and with written approval from the instructor is not permitted.

Additional Content

Detailed Assignment Descriptions and Rubrics

Assignment #1: Reflective Essay
Instructions:

Write a reflective essay addressing how your personal, cultural, and educational background influences how you see yourself engaging personally and professionally with mental health issues now and into the future. In your essay, be sure to address the five points below. I have included suggested prompts that can guide your reflective process.

1. Personal and Cultural Influences:

   o How do your personal experiences and cultural background shape your views on mental health?

2. Educational Influences:

   o How have your educational experiences, including coursework or training, prepared you to engage with mental health issues?

3. Impact of Diversity on Engagement:

   o How does diversity of the people and communities affected by mental health and illness (e.g., neurodiversity, cultural diversity) affect your approach?

4. Experiences with Individuals Diagnosed with Mental Illness:

   o How have your personal or professional experiences with individuals diagnosed with mental illness shaped your understanding of mental health?

5. Future Engagement:

   o What are your goals for engaging with mental health issues in the future, both personally and professionally?

Format:

- Length: 5-7 pages
- Font: Times New Roman, 12-point
- Spacing: Double-spaced
- Citations: APA format for any references (not included in the page count)

Evaluation Criteria:

- Depth of reflection and original insights (10 points)
- Integration of Personal, Cultural, and Educational Influences (7 points)
- Demonstrated Understanding of the Impact of Diversity on Mental Health Engagement (7 points)
- Technical Elements; Clarity, Organization, Grammar, Spelling (6 points)

Reflective Essay Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (A+)	Very Good (A or A-)	Good (B+ or B)	Adequate (C+ and below)	Below Standards (F)	Points
Depth of Reflection and Insight	10 points Demonstrates deep, insightful reflection on personal and professional engagement with mental health issues.	8-9 points Offers thoughtful reflection with some insights.	7 points Provides basic reflection with limited insights.	5-6 points Reflections are superficial and lack depth	0-4 points No meaningful reflections provided.	/10
Integration of Personal, Cultural, and Educational Influences	7 points Effectively integrates personal, cultural, and educational (incl this course) influences with detailed examples	6 Points Integrates influences with relevant examples.	5 points Provides basic integration with some examples.	4 points Limited integration with few examples.	0-3 points No evidence of integrating relevant influences.	/7
Understanding of the Impact of Diversity on Mental Health Engagement	7 points Thoroughly discusses the impact of diversity on mental health engagement with detailed analysis.	6 points Discusses the impact with good analysis	5 points Provides basic discussion with some analysis.	4 points Limited discussion with minimal analysis.	0-3 points No meaningful discussion provided.	/7
Technical Elements (Clarity, Organization, Grammar, Spelling)	6 points Essay is well-organized, clear, and free of grammatical and spelling errors.	4-5 points Generally well-organized with minor clarity issues and few errors.		0-3 points Poorly organized and difficult to follow with several errors.		/6

Assignments 2, 3 and 4: Role-Playing Activity and Debrief
Activity Title: *Role-Playing Resilience Scenarios*

Description:

Students will participate in a role-playing exercise where they act out scenarios based on the topic of the week. You will draw on knowledge from earlier modules to inform the roles and responses.

This assignment is evaluated in two parts:

Part A: Participation in Role-Play (4 points)
- Active Engagement (2 points): Actively participates in the role-playing exercise, demonstrating understanding of the role and scenario.

- Collaboration (2 points): Works effectively with peers, contributing to the overall flow and outcome of the role-play.

Part B: Reflection on Experience (6 points)

- Role Reflection (2 points):
    - Description of Role (1 point): Clearly describes the role played and the perspective taken.
    - Experience Reflection (1 point): Reflects on the experience, including challenges and feelings encountered.

- Opportunities for Promoting Resilience and Well-Being (2 points):
    - Resilience Strategies (1 point): Identifies specific strategies to promote resilience and well-being.
    - Support Systems and Barriers (1 point): Discusses support systems and barriers, including ways to strengthen or address them.

- Connection to Course Concepts (2 points):
    - Integration of Course Material (1 point): Connects the scenario to historical context, social determinants, and/or contemporary challenges course content.
    - Application of Concepts (1 point): Applies course concepts to the scenario, demonstrating understanding and relevance.

Format: Type your reflection into the text box provided on quercus. The response should be 250-500 words.

Capstone Assignment/Assignment #5: Analysis of Mental Health Issues for a Specific Population

This assignment requires students to explore social, cultural, and other components of mental health and illness for a specific population. Students will conduct an interview with a service provider, service user, researcher, or other informed individual to gain insights into the unique challenges, strengths, and resources of the chosen population. The assignment will culminate in a comprehensive report that integrates interview findings with course concepts and readings. The instructions below are provided to guide your work on the assignment.

Instructions:

1. **Select a Population:** Choose a specific population to focus on for this assignment. Examples include:

   o Indigenous communities

   o Neurodiverse populations

   o Immigrant or refugee populations

   o LGBTQ+ communities

   o People experiencing homelessness

   o Racial or ethnic minority groups

   o Youth, elder, or middle-aged people

   o Intersecting identities across populations (e.g., immigrant elders, Indigenous women, etc.)

2. **Fieldwork: Conduct an Interview (15-30 minutes):** Identify and interview a service provider (e.g., social worker, psychologist, psychotherapist, clergyperson), service user, researcher, or other informed individual who has experience with the chosen population. Prepare a set of interview questions that address the following topics:

   o Social determinants of mental health (e.g., socioeconomic status, housing, education)

   o Community beliefs and practices related to mental health

   o Experiences with mental health services and any barriers to access

   o Strategies used to promote mental health and well-being within the population

   o Strengths and resources within the population that support mental health

3. **Analyze Interview Findings:** Write a comprehensive report that includes the following sections:

   o **Introduction:** Briefly introduce the chosen population and the purpose of the assignment.

   o **Interview Summary:** Summarize the key points from the interview, highlighting the interviewee's insights and experiences.

- o **Social Determinants Analysis:** Discuss how social determinants impact the mental health of the chosen population, using examples from the interview and course readings and other sources.

- o **Cultural/Community Influences:** Analyze the cultural beliefs and practices related to mental health within the population, comparing them to Western biomedical approaches.

- o **Barriers and Strategies:** Identify barriers to mental health care and discuss strategies to overcome them, as described by the interviewee.

- o **Strengths and Resources:** Highlight the strengths and resources within the population that support mental health and well-being.

- o **Reflection:** Reflect on how the interview findings enhance your understanding of cultural competence and diversity in mental health practice. Consider how this knowledge will inform your future professional engagement with mental health issues.

4. **Format:**

- o Length: 8-10 pages

- o Font: Times New Roman, 12-point

- o Spacing: Double-spaced

- o Citations: APA format for references (not included in the page count)

Evaluation Criteria:

- **Depth of Analysis (15 points):** Thorough analysis of social determinants, cultural influences, barriers, and strengths/resources related to mental health.

- **Integration of Interview Findings (10 points):** Effective integration of interview insights with course concepts and readings.

- **Reflection and Insight (10 points):** Thoughtful reflection on the impact of diversity and cultural competence in mental health practice.

- **Technical Elements (5 points):** Clarity, organization, grammar, and adherence to formatting guidelines.

Capstone Assignment Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (A+)	Very Good (A or A-)	Good (B+ or B)	Adequate (C+ or below)	Below Standards (F)	Points
Depth of Analysis	15 points Thorough analysis of social determinants, cultural influences, barriers, and strengths/resources related to mental health.	12-14 points Good analysis with relevant details.	10-11 points Basic analysis with some relevant details.	8-9 points Limited analysis with minimal details.	0-7 points No meaningful analysis provided	/15
Integration of Interview Findings	10 points Effectively integrates interview insights with course concepts and readings	8-9 points Integrates insights with relevant connections	7 points Basic integration with some connections	5-6 points Limited integration with few connections	.0-4 points Lack of integration	/10
Reflection and Insight	10 points Thoughtful, integrated reflection on the impact of diversity and cultural competence in mental health practice	8-9 points Reflective with some insights.	7 points Basic reflection with limited insights	5-6 points Superficial reflection with minimal insights.	0-4 points No meaningful reflection provided	/10
Technical Elements	5 points Clear, well-organized, and free of grammatical and spelling errors	3-44 points Generally clear and well-organized with minor errors.		0-2 points Disorganized and unclear with numerous errors.		