Sociology of Mental Health (SOC 458): General Capstone

General Course Information
Instructor: Marta Elliott, PhD
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E-mail: melliott@unr.edu
Office hours: XXX
Course location: XXX
Course meeting times: XXX

Course Description
This course provides an overview of sociological perspectives on the causes and consequences of mental health and illness.

Pre-requisites
Prerequisites for Capstone courses are junior or senior standing and completion of all General Education courses that build Core Objectives 1-3 and satisfy Core Objectives 4-8. Other course-specific prerequisites may be applied, so long as they do not, in effect, exclude all other majors.

Silver Core Curriculum
This course satisfies Silver Core Objective 13: “Students will be able to integrate and synthesize core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems or complex issues.”

It also develops CO1 (effective composition & communication) and CO3 (critical analysis & use of information), and integrates prior knowledge from CO10 (Diversity and Equity).

Student Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

SLO 1: Outline inequalities in the distribution of mental illnesses in U.S. society according to social class, race, ethnicity, and gender (CO1, 3, & CO10)

SLO 2: Describe, apply, compare, and contrast theoretical explanations of social inequalities in the distribution of mental illnesses (CO3 & CO13)

SLO 3: Describe and apply stress process theory to explain how exposure to stressors and access to resources is rooted in society’s social structure, and how it in turn affects mental health and illness (CO1, CO3, CO10, & CO13)
SLO 4: Describe and explain, using a variety of theoretical explanations, how institutional life such as at work, in the family, in religious settings, and in neighborhoods, is related to mental health and illness (CO 1, CO3, & CO13)

SLO 5: Explain, critique, compare and contrast inter-disciplinary approaches to the study of mental health and illness including perspectives from psychiatry, psychology, anthropology and biology (CO1, CO3, CO13)

How are Silver Core Objectives Developed (CO1 & 3), Integrated (CO10) and Satisfied (CO13) in Meeting the SLOs and how is this Assessed?

Teaching Techniques and Student Experiences

Students will develop CO 1 and CO3, integrate CO 10, and satisfy CO13, as well as accomplish the SLOs described above via the following (for much greater detail, see descriptions of each component further down in the syllabus):

- Listening to in-class lectures
- Reading assigned articles
- Participating in class discussion and in-class activities
- Completing the assessment tools:
  - Quizzes
  - Student presentations
  - Written assignments
  - Essay exam

Student Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the basis of weekly quizzes, written assignments; attendance and class participation; in-class presentations, and a final exam. Final course grades will be based on the following distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Quizzes</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Assignments</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class attendance/participation</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class presentations</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extra Credit</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>up to 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand total</strong></td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>105%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following scale will be used to determine letter grades, which include plusses and minuses:
A 93 – 100%  C  73 – 76.9%
A- 90 – 92.9%  C-  70 – 72.9%
B+ 87 – 89.9%  D+  67 – 69.9%
B  83 – 86.9%  D  63 – 66.9%
B- 80 – 82.9%  D-  60 – 62.9%
C+ 77 – 79.9%  F below 60%

**Weekly quizzes:** Each week students will complete a standardized quiz designed to assess their comprehension of that week’s class materials including lecture and assigned readings. These quizzes develop CO3 by requiring students to critically analyze each question and use the information taught in class and in the readings to select the correct answer. The questions often address issues of mental health inequalities, thereby encouraging students to integrate prior knowledge from CO10. Over the course of the semester, the quiz questions draw upon the students’ growing body of knowledge of the sociology of mental health and illness, requiring them to integrate and synthesize what they have learned regarding a variety of open-ended problems and complex issues, thereby satisfying CO13.

**Written assignments:** Three essays (5-7 pages each) will be due throughout the term. Each essay offers students the opportunity to develop CO1 by writing clearly and persuasively and to develop CO3 by critically analyzing course material as well as additional scholarly publications students discover through their own research. Paper 1 requires students to pick an example of a mental health inequality and write about it, thereby offering them the opportunity to integrate prior knowledge from CO10. Papers 2 and 3 require students to integrate and synthesize material across multiple weeks of the semester. Each paper requires the student to tackle a complex issue and address one or more open-ended problems, thereby satisfying CO13 (see individual paper instructions at the end of the syllabus).

**Attendance and Class Participation:** The attendance and class participation component of student evaluation is based on regular attendance, preparation, and participation in regular class sessions and discussion groups. In-class discussion offers students the opportunity to develop CO1 via having a civil but lively debate on controversial issues. In-class activities group student together to work on tasks that help develop CO3, such as by working together to apply a theory to case studies of individuals with mental illnesses. The first third of the semester focuses on social inequalities in mental illness and in-class discussion and activities based around said inequalities will allow students the opportunity to integrate prior knowledge from CO10. Over the course of the semester, in-class discussion and activities will draw upon the students’ growing body of knowledge of the sociology of mental health and illness, as well as approaches to the subject from other disciplines (e.g., psychiatry, psychology and anthropology), requiring them to integrate and synthesize what they have learned as they tackle complex issues and open-ended problems, thereby satisfying CO13.

**In-Class Student Presentations:** Students will be assigned to small groups based on their ranking of top three presentation topics chosen from a list of contemporary social issues related to mental health and illness. Each group will give an in-class presentation on their assigned topic. This assignment develops CO1 by requiring each student to play a part in making an oral
presentation to the class, and develops CO3 by requiring students to critically analyze information on their assigned topic and present that information in a stimulating and educating fashion. Topics that involve social inequalities in mental illness will allow students the opportunity to integrate prior knowledge from CO10. All topics will give students the chance to integrate and synthesize knowledge learned from their research on the topic itself with all they have learned thus far in this particular course and the courses that preceded it, thereby satisfying CO13. Potential topics include creativity and mental illness, culture-bound syndromes, the insanity plea, the prescription of psychotropic drugs to children, the incarceration of people with mental illnesses, and more.

**Final Exams:** The final exam will evaluate students’ ability to synthesize material presented in the lectures, discussions, and required reading. It will consist primarily of short essay questions. The short essays will assess how well students have developed CO1 and CO3 via the quality of their writing and their ability to use the information taught in the course to critically analyze the questions posed to them. A significant portion of the exam will focus on mental health inequalities, requiring the students to integrate prior knowledge from CO10. The essay questions will probe students about complex issues and open-ended problems, requiring them to integrate and synthesize what they have learned in this particular course, thus satisfying CO13.

Make-up exams will be given only under very **severe circumstances** and only if the instructor is notified of a valid excuse **PRIOR** to the scheduled exam when at all possible. The format of the make-up exam will be at the discretion of the instructor and will be given at the instructor’s convenience.

**Extra Credit:** Students may earn up to 50 points for extra credit which could bring the final grade up by 5% or half a grade. See WebCampus for further details.

**Course Readings:** Three books are required for this course, and may be purchased at the Joe Crowley Student union bookstore or from other book retailers. Additional readings will be posted on WebCampus in PDF format.


**Classroom etiquette:** In this classroom it is your responsibility and mine to show respect for one another. This means that we will not talk when someone else is talking. We will also refrain from entering the classroom after class has begun or leaving before class is over because doing so is disruptive to other students and to the instructor. **Cell phones** must be turned off or in silent mode and may not be used during class. And we will follow all other common sense forms of etiquette toward one another that should go without being said.
**Statement on Academic Dishonesty:** "Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student's enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment. For more details, see the University of Nevada, Reno General Catalog."

**Statement of Disability Services:** "Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building, Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations."

**Statement on Audio and Video Recording:** "Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

**Statement for Academic Success Services:** "Your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (775) 784-4422, Tutoring Center (775) 784-6801, and University Writing Center (775) 784-6030. These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student."
# Course Schedule and Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Quiz</th>
<th>Paper due dates</th>
<th>Student presentations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Text chapters 1 &amp; 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Psychiatric Epidemiology</td>
<td>Text chapters 7 &amp; 9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Socioeconomic Status, Social Class, and Mental Illness</td>
<td>Text chapter 11; Elliott &amp; Lowman 2014</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Race, Ethnicity and Mental Illness</td>
<td>Text chapter 12; Brown et al. 2000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gender and Mental Illness</td>
<td>Text chapter 12; Elliott 2013</td>
<td>4 Paper 1 due</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Stress and Mental Illness</td>
<td>Text chapters 13 &amp; 14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Personality &amp; Social Relationships</td>
<td>Text chapters 17 &amp; 19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Work &amp; Family</td>
<td>Text chapters 20 &amp; 21</td>
<td>7 Paper 2 due</td>
<td>Group 5</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Religion &amp; Neighborhoods</td>
<td>Text chapters 22 &amp; 23; Elliott 2000</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Group 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Psychiatric Approach to Mental Illness</td>
<td>Horwitz and Wakefield 2007</td>
<td>9 Paper 3 due</td>
<td>Group 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Mental Illness</td>
<td>Guarnaccia &amp; Rogler 2014; Kleinman 1987</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Labeling, Stigma, and their impact on persons with mental illness</td>
<td>Text chapters 5 and 25; Elliott &amp; Doane 2015</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Subjective Experiences of Serious Mental Illness</td>
<td>Karp, chapters 1-5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Biography of Serious Mental Illness</td>
<td>Lachenmeyer, entire book</td>
<td>14 Paper 3 due</td>
<td>Group 12</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>In-Class Review for Final Exam</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Final exam will occur on X/XX from XX to XX in the classroom</td>
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</table>
Instructions for All Papers

The following instructions apply to each of your three papers:

Format
- Include a title page with a title, your name, the name/number of the class, and the instructor’s name.
- Insert a running head in the header after the title page with your “Paper 1/2/3” on the left and your name on the right.
- Save and submit your papers as word documents with either .doc or .docx file extensions so that the instructor can grade the paper using track changing in Word.
- Write 5-7 pages of text (not including the title page or references page), double-spaced, using Times New Roman 12 point font, with page numbers, for each paper.

Overall Style
- Be sure to write an introductory paragraph that provides an overview of what the paper is going to be about.
- Be sure to write a concluding paragraph that summarizes the main points that you made in your paper.
- Develop the body of your paper in a logical, analytic fashion; it will help you to create an outline before you start to write your paper.
- Be sure to organize your paper into discrete paragraphs; no paragraph should be much longer than one-half of a page.
- Look out for run-on sentences and sentence fragments.
- Write a rough draft of your paper; take a break, and revise your paper at least once.
- Edit your paper closely so that you do not submit papers containing spelling or grammatical errors.

Inclusion of Scholarly Sources
- Include a minimum of THREE scholarly sources in each paper; your best bet is to read articles published in scholarly journals related to your topic, which you can find via Google Scholar. Note that if you use Google Scholar via the UNR Libraries website, it will provide direct links to .pdf versions of many articles. You may also set up the preferences on your home computer to link “Google Scholar” to the UNR libraries so as to allow you direct access when you log in with your netid. Search Google Scholar with key words related to your chosen research topic.
- Cite your sources in the text whenever you refer to something that you read, AND include a REFERENCES page at the end of your paper.
- Follow either the APA style guide (6th edition) or the ASA style (4th edition) for your in-text citations and your references page.
- Please know that your assignment will be analyzed by SafeAssign, which detects identical assignments submitted by multiple students or material that is plagiarized from other sources. Any student caught plagiarizing will fail the course.
You have recently learned a great deal about the social distribution of mental illness as well as of overall psychological well-being versus psychological distress. You now know how social inequality in several forms predicts people’s mental health.

Pick one axis of social inequality (e.g., social class, race, ethnicity, or gender) and one important aspect of mental health or illness that is systematically related to the axis of inequality. For example, you might choose the inverse relationship between social class and likelihood of having an anxiety disorder, or you might choose women’s greater likelihood of being depressed, or men’s greater likelihood of having an alcohol disorder. What is important is that you pick something that you find interesting. Your job in this paper is to conduct further research on that topic and present your findings.

Once you begin your research, you are likely to find a great deal of published material on social inequality and mental health. You may find that you will need to narrow your topic in order to focus your research. If you get stuck trying to choose a topic or narrow your focus, please contact the instructor via WebCampus email for help.

Here are some prompts to help you in your search for material to write about:

- What evidence exists to substantiate the example of a social pattern of mental health or illness that you have chosen to write about?
- Is there any conflicting evidence that challenges that pattern?
- What theoretical explanations have you found that explain this social pattern?
- Do any explanations you have found seem to contradict what you have learned elsewhere, or contradict something else you have read? If so, how would you reconcile those contradictions?
- Can you identify any weaknesses in the arguments you have read, or the methodologies used to substantiate those weaknesses? If so, describe them, and explain how you would go about fixing them.
- What is not yet known about the social pattern you have chosen to study, and how do you think scholars should go about filling in the blanks of what is not known?
You have now learned a great deal about how exposure to various types of stressors, and access to personal and social resources, affects both mental health and mental illness.

Pick one type of stressor, and one resource, and conduct further research on that topic. For example, you could pick “traumatic life event” stressors and the personal resource of “sense of control” or the social resource of “social support.” What is important is that you pick something that you find interesting. Your job in this paper is to conduct further research on that topic and present your findings.

As was the case with Paper 1, you are likely to find a great deal of published material on the specific topic you choose, and you may need to narrow your topic in order to focus your research. If you get stuck trying to choose a topic or narrow your focus, please contact the instructor via WebCampus email for help.

Here are some prompts to help you in your search for material to write about:

• What evidence is there to link the stressor and resource you chose to overall mental health (or to a specific mental illness)?
• Is there any conflicting evidence that challenges that pattern?
• What theoretical explanations have you found that explain the mental health consequences of this stressor (or resource)?
• Do any explanations you have found seem to contradict what you have learned elsewhere, or contradict something else you have read? If so, how would you reconcile those contradictions?
• Can you identify any weaknesses in the arguments you have read, or the methodologies used to substantiate those weaknesses? If so, describe them, and explain how you would go about fixing them.
• What is not yet known about the stressor or resource that you have chosen to study, and how do you think scholars should go about filling in the blanks of what is not known?
You have now learned a great deal about how four social institutions (work, family, religion, and neighborhoods) are related to mental health and illness.

Pick one of these four institutions to study further. What is important is that you pick a social institution that you find interesting. Your job in this paper is to conduct further research on that topic and present your findings. Because each social institution is so broad, you will likely need to focus on a single dimension. For instance, within the institution of family, you may focus on marriage, or within the institution of religion, you may focus on religious beliefs.

As was the case with the first two papers, you are likely to find a great deal of published material on the specific topic you choose, and you may need to narrow your topic in order to focus your research. If you get stuck trying to choose a topic or narrow your focus, please contact the instructor via WebCampus email for help.

Here are some prompts to help you in your search for material to write about:

- Describe the dimension of the social institution you have chosen to focus on and how it is related to mental health or illness.
- Summarize the evidence that links that dimension to mental health or illness.
- Is there any conflicting evidence that challenges that pattern?
- What theoretical explanations have you found that explain the mental health consequences of this dimension of a social institution?
- Do any explanations you have found seem to contradict what you have learned elsewhere, or contradict something else you have read? If so, how would you reconcile those contradictions?
- Can you identify any weaknesses in the arguments you have read, or the methodologies used to substantiate those weaknesses? If so, describe them, and explain how you would go about fixing them.
- What is not yet known about this social institution that you have chosen to study, and how do you think scholars should go about filling in the blanks of what is not known?