

7391 Assessment & Differential Diagnoses  
School of Social Work  
University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Course Number: 7391  Credits: 3  Prerequisite: SOWK 7330 (HBSE) or equivalent  
Instructor: E. Christopher Lloyd, PhD, LCSW  
Office: 401F Ross Hall  
Email: eclloyd@ualr.edu (preferred)  Phone: 569-8464

I. DESCRIPTION OF COURSE

During this course, students will learn to complete a psychosocial mental health assessment of social work clients. This includes a thorough knowledge of the diagnostic criteria of the current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual published by the American Psychiatric Association as well as engagement skills, mental status examination procedures, and general assessment skills. Students will also learn how to incorporate biological and social information into their assessment of the individual social work client. Finally, students will learn how to document their findings in case records and reports to interested collateral parties.

To achieve these goals, students must develop both clinical knowledge and clinical skills. Knowledge is provided through reading assignments and in lecture and seminar classroom formats. In addition to learning key diagnostic criteria, students will develop an understanding of how biological and social factors contribute to the development and maintenance of observable mental disorders using both theory and research. Clinical skill development opportunities are provided through written case analysis, classroom discussion, required role-plays, and audio-visual materials. During the development of clinical knowledge and skills, the role of culture, gender, sexual orientation, poverty, oppression, and similar influences are highlighted. Each unit in the class focuses on a specific mental disorder or other topic.

II. OBJECTIVES OF COURSE

Students will demonstrate:

1. Understanding of how biological, psychological, and social factors influence the formation and maintenance of mental disorders and the ability to distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom (practice behavior 3.1 for competency #3)

2. Knowledge of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual system of diagnosis including

   1. The five axis system of diagnosis
   2. Key criteria for all major disorders
   3. Strengths and limitations of the client (practice behavior 10.4 for competency #10) and the DSM system
3. The ability to critically evaluate and apply knowledge to understand and predict human behavior, both individually and in the social environment (practice behavior 7.2 for competency #7)

4. Knowledge of engagement strategies for persons with mental disorders and the ability to use empathy and other interpersonal skills (practice behavior 10.1 for competency #10)

5. Knowledge of mental disorders’ expectable courses and outcomes, including contributions of intervention, age, culture, gender, oppression, and similar factors

6. Effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues (practice behavior 3.4 for competency #3)

7. Practical assessment skills including mental status exam procedures, and collecting, organizing and interpreting client data (practice behavior 10.3 for competency #10)

8. Sufficient self-awareness to limit the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups, attend to professional roles and boundaries (practice behavior 1.2 for competency #1) (practice behavior 4.2 for competency #4) and make ethical decisions by applying the NASW Code of Ethics (practice behavior 2.1 for competency #2)

9. A view of themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants (practice behavior 4.4 for competency #4)

III. UNITS, CONTENT & REQUIRED READING ASSIGNMENTS

***Other readings may be assigned as optional or required and will be emailed to students.***

**Unit 1: Overview of Mental Health and Mental Illness (1 week)** (practice behavior 3.4 for competency #3) (practice behavior 1.2 for competency #1) (practice behavior 4.2 for competency #4)

A. Introduction to course, discussion of expectations
B. Brief History of Mental Illness
C. Introduction to the American system of care (incl. medical terminology)
D. Ethical issues, especially cultural competence (practice behavior 2.1 for competency #2)

**Unit 2: Frameworks for Understanding Mental Illness (1 week)** (practice behavior 7.2 for competency #7) (practice behavior 10.1 for competency #10) (practice behavior 1.2 for competency #1)

A. The biopsychosocial perspective (practice behavior 3.1 for competency #3)
B. Biological contributions (neurophysiology and genetics theories)
C. Psychological contribution (cognitive and ego psychological theory)
D. Social contribution (systems theory)

Readings:

Text pp. 19 - 25


Review this web site on the basics of neuroanatomy and neurophysiology:

http://www.williams.edu/imput/synapse/index.html


**Unit 3: The Practice of Assessment Using the DSM-5 (3 weeks)** (practice behavior 7.2 for competency #7) (practice behavior 10.1 for competency #10) (practice behavior 10.3 for competency #10) (practice behavior 1.2 for competency #1) (practice behavior 4.2 for competency #4)

A. General organization of the DSM

B. Diagnostics using the DSM system

C. Clinical Assessment (practice behavior 3.1 for competency #3)
   1. Core knowledge and skills
   2. Cultural competence
   3. Ethics in assessment
   4. Documenting assessments (practice behavior 3.4 for competency #3)

D. Engagement (practice behavior 10.1 for competency #10) (practice behavior 4.4 for competency #4)

Readings:

Text, pp. 733 – 760.


**Unit 4: Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders (1 weeks)** (practice behavior 7.2 for competency #7) (practice behavior 4.4 for competency #4)

A. Clinical definition and features
   1. Positive symptoms
   2. Negative symptoms

B. Diagnostic criteria and considerations, Engagement (practice behavior 10.1 for competency #10)

C. Etiology, course, prognosis, and cultural issues
   (practice behavior 3.1 for competency #3)

Readings:

Text pp. 87 – 123


**Unit 5: Bipolar and Related Disorders, Depressive Disorders (1 week)** (practice behavior 7.2 for competency #7) (practice behavior 4.4 for competency #4)

A. Clinical definition and features
   1. Episodes
   2. Disorders

B. Diagnostic criteria and considerations
   1. Loss and bereavement

C. Engagement (practice behavior 10.1 for competency #10)

D. Etiology, course, prognosis, and cultural issues
   (practice behavior 3.1 for competency #3)

Readings:

Text pp. 123 – 188


**********Mid-Term Examination**********

(1 week)

**Unit 6: Anxiety Disorders, Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders, and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (1 weeks)** (practice behavior 7.2 for competency #7) (practice behavior 4.4 for competency #4)

A. Clinical definition and features
   1. Trauma: acute, chronic, and vicarious
   2. Worry
   3. Obsessions and compulsions
B. Diagnostic criteria and considerations,
C. Engagement (practice behavior 10.1 for competency #10)
D. Etiology, course, prognosis, and cultural issues (practice behavior 3.1 for competency #3)

Readings:

Text pp. 189 – 290


**Unit 7: Personality Disorders (1 week)** (practice behavior 7.2 for competency #7) (practice behavior 4.4 for competency #4)

A. Clinical definitions and features
   1. Clusters
   2. Psychosocial issues (cultural, legal, et al.)
B. Diagnostic criteria and considerations, Engagement (practice behavior 10.1 for competency #10)
C. Etiology, course, prognosis, and cultural issues (practice behavior 3.1 for competency #3)

Readings:

Text pp. 645 – 684 and review pp. 761 – 782

**Unit 8: Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorders, Neurodevelopmental Disorders (1 week)** (practice behavior 7.2 for competency #7) (practice behavior 4.4 for competency #4)

A. Clinical definitions and features
B. Diagnostic criteria and considerations
   1. Altered presentation of symptoms in children
C. Etiology, course, prognosis, and cultural issues, Engagement (practice behavior 10.1 for competency #10)
   (practice behavior 3.1 for competency #3)

Readings:

Text pp. 31-88, 461 – 480


**Unit 9: Neurocognitive Disorders and Assessing Older Persons (1 week)** (practice behavior 7.2 for competency #7) (practice behavior 4.4 for competency #4)

A. Clinical definitions and features
B. Diagnostic criteria and considerations, Engagement (practice behavior 10.1 for competency #10)
C. Etiology, course, prognosis, and cultural issues (practice behavior 3.1 for competency #3)
D. Palliative and end-of-life care

Readings:

Text pp. 591 – 604


**Unit 10: Substance-Related and Addictive Disorder, Somatic Symptom and Related Disorders (1 week)** (practice behavior 4.4 for competency #4)

A. Clinical definitions and features
B. Diagnostic criteria and considerations, Engagement (practice behavior 10.1 for competency #10)
C. Etiology, course, prognosis, and cultural issues (practice behavior 3.1 for competency #3)

Readings:
Text pp. 309 – 328 and 481 – 590

The Social Milieu of Recovery (downloaded January 28, 2009 from Salon.com)

**Unit 11: Special Topics (1 week)**

*practice behavior 3.4 for competency #3* (practice behavior 10.3 for competency #10) (practice behavior 10.3 for competency #10) (practice behavior 1.2 for competency #1) (practice behavior 4.2 for competency #4)

A. Suicide assessment  
B. Psychiatric emergencies  
C. Forensic and legal issues  
D. Persons with HIV/AIDS  
E. Psychiatric advance directives (PADs)

Readings:  
TBA

**Unit 12: The DSM-IV-TR (1 week)**

Readings:  
Text pp. 809 – 816

**IV. TECHNIQUES OF INSTRUCTION**

Students are expected to read and make notes on the material prior to coming to class so that they can engage in a critical discussion with the professor. The instructor will provide information in both lecture and seminar fashion. Students are expected to participate in classroom discussions, role-plays, and other activities.

**V. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**


All papers will be provided to you via Blackboard or the course listserv. Please check your UALR email regularly to insure receipt of materials in a timely fashion.

**VI. WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Students are required to write a mental health evaluation of themselves. After this first assessment is returned to them, students will complete two mental health assessments of fictional
or historical individuals. These much be approved in advance by the instructor. The mental health evaluation of themselves is due by class time of week 4 while the other two may be turned in any time prior to class time of week 12.

2. Students are required to write a term paper. This paper assignment is designed to help you develop expertise in one of the mental disorders of interest to you. The paper should be approximately 10 pages in length, excluding the title page and reference list (no abstract is required). The six edition of APA style must be used. All references must be from peer reviewed journals, books from UALR library, or the class internet white list. If you would like to use an additional source, please see the instructor. You will be penalized for using non-approved sources. It is due by class time of week 14.

Organize your paper using the following major headings (add others as needed):

1. **Introduction**: Identify your disorder of interest and provide up-to-date epidemiology.
2. **Major Disorder**: Include in this section the following:
   A. Definition of the disorder: signs/symptoms/course/prevalence/variations in severity and presentation. Merely reciting the DSM criteria is not adequate.
   B. Differential diagnosis, both from similar disorders and differences of severity, timings, and similar diagnostic issues
3. **Etiology**: What is the current thinking on what causes the disorder you have selected? There may be several theories, some of which may conflict with others—elaborate and discuss.
4. **Cultural Issues**: How does this disorder present differently across culture?
5. **Intervention**: What are major the intervention options (psychosocial and biological) for the disorder? What evidence supports these interventions? MAKE A SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATION FOR A PREFERRED (BEST) INTERVENTION AND DEFEND IT.

Assignments must be submitted electronically in either Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or OpenDocument (.odt) formats. Assignments should be turned in as a single file. The filename should start with the students initials (as the name currently appears in university records) and the assignment name.

**VII. METHODS OF EVALUATION**

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<th>Assignment</th>
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**VIII. GRADING SCALE**

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IX. CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY

Learning in a graduate professional program is based in large part on the interaction that occurs between the instructor and students in the classroom. Regular attendance at class is an expected professional responsibility of the student. Absences of greater than 20 percent of the total class time constitute grounds for course failure, at the discretion of the instructor.

X. HONOR CODE

All students registered for courses in the School of Social Work are expected to adhere to the rights, responsibilities, and behavior as articulated in both the UALR Student Handbook and the NASW (National Association of Social Workers) Code of Ethics. An essential feature of these codes is a commitment to maintaining intellectual integrity and academic honesty. This commitment insures that a student of the School of Social Work will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thereby affirming personal honor and integrity.

XI. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Your success in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have a documented disability (or need to have a disability documented), and need an accommodation, please contact me privately as soon as possible, so that we can discuss with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) how to meet your specific needs and the requirements of the course. The DRC offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process among you, your instructor(s) and the DRC. Thus, if you have a disability, please contact me and/or the DRC, at 501-569-3143 (V/TTY) or 501-683-7629 (VP). For more information, please visit the DRC website at www.ualr.edu/disability.