

**SOCIOLOGY 363H1S:  
THE SOCIOLOGY OF MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL DISORDERS**

**Blair Wheaton  
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Winter, 2022**

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**Web Site:** Quercus.

**Time:** Tuesday 2-4

**Place:** **online January; OISE 2212 if in class**

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**Overview**

*An overview of the link between social inequality and emotional inequality, focusing on differences in mental health across social groups and the role of stress and coping resources in explaining group differences.*

**Prerequisite**

The prerequisite for Sociology 363 is 1.0 SOC at the 200 level or higher. Students without the prerequisite will be removed from the course when discovered.

**Overview**

This course considers the influence of social environment and social experience on mental distress and disorder, focusing especially on differences in mental health by social statuses and across groups, and explanations of these differences in terms of exposure to different types of stress and access to coping resources which counteract the effects of stress.

A sociological perspective on mental health typically uses mental health as a “social mirror” --- an efficient marker which “reflects” the emotional consequences of experience in varying social environments, social conditions, and both social contexts and individual histories in individual’s lives.

The course can be viewed as a logical sequence of issues that arise in considering the experiential course of a person at risk for mental health problems. We begin with the

problem of defining and measuring disorder and distress, followed by a consideration of broad social patterns in mental health, and then we consider variations in mental health that are related to social position or category, such as social class, gender, race, and marital status, immigration, and stage of life.

We then introduce the stress process model as an organizing framework for explaining the role of social inequality and social experience in mental health. This section introduces the basic components of this model, with an emphasis on varieties of stressors and coping resources. Given a person with a mental health problem, then, the next section considers the life consequences of these problems, focusing as examples on education, marriage, and work. Finally, we consider important themes in recent mental health research as “Special Topics”, focusing this year on four topics: the life consequences of mental health problems, the impact of social contexts such as neighbourhoods, workplaces, or schools on mental health, international patterns, and the study of macro-stressful events, such as mass violence, disasters, and COVID-19..

My approach in this course is to consider the better-known and/or most prevalent disorders and problems, including depression, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse. We do not restrict our attention to disorders, however. A good deal of the important differences in mental health in a population are not captured by only focusing on disorder. I will discuss mental health issues in terms of a gradient of problems from the minor to the severe, thus including those with real problems but who do not qualify for specific diagnoses.

## **Required Work**

### **Tests**

I will give one term test (short-answer), nine end-of-class quizzes starting in week three, and a final “online assessment”. *Note that the test and the final assessment are non-cumulative.*

*Quizzes* will be short, and take only a few minutes. You will do them online in real time during class. Only 7 of the 9 quizzes in class will be counted in your grade; we will drop the lowest two grades in the 9 quizzes. Each quiz is composed of three questions: 1) a code identifier shown in class (3 points), 2) a short question about the current lecture (1 point), and 3) a short question about the last lecture (1 point). The questions are straightforward and should be easy to answer correctly if you are in the class. The code identifier essentially counts 3 points just for being there. These quizzes will take no more than 5 minutes of class time.

The term test will be *short answer* only, but the final will be short answer plus one short essay, based on your choice of two questions. The short-answer sections of tests are unique in format. Basically, types of responses vary by the type of question. Some questions are multiple choice, some are fill-in-the-blank, some ask you to choose the correct word to complete a sentence, and some require a phrase or sentence response. Questions focus on evaluating your awareness and understanding of the basic theories, concepts, hypotheses, and findings discussed *in both readings and lectures*. No short-answer questions necessitating an “opinion” to be defended will be included.

### **Term Work**

You have a choice in terms of required term work: you can either complete one extended comment online on one reading, from 500 to 800 words, or you can write a short case study of the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of someone (anonymously) you know, using course concepts and findings.

You can choose any reading on the reading list for your comment online. The T.A. will grade comments as a group, rather than one by one, so we will wait for at least 20 online comments before grading. This is fairer, and more reliable as well. Guidelines about comments will be posted on the Quercus web site.

Comments *should be analytical, not descriptive*. The word “analytical” is broader than “critical”: it refers to analyzing *both* the weaknesses and the strengths of the reading. Your comment can raise critical questions, argue for the importance of the reading and its contribution, suggest what is missing and should be considered, connect the reading to other readings, or propose research which follows up the reading and resolves questions in the reading or tests the generality of findings in the reading. These comments should mention the parts of the paper that led to the comment you make. But it should be also clear that you have read the entire paper. Guidelines about comments will be posted on the web site. Your comment should be from 500-800 words in length.

The short-case study is a 500-800 word short paper applying concepts in this course to a real case of someone you know, focusing on the effect of COVID-19 on this person’s mental health, and why there were changes in mental health for this person. You can focus on combinations of stress the person was facing, the loss of coping resources, the effects of work stress or family stress, the effects of isolation, the exacerbation of previous problems, the roles of social class, gender, work, marital status, immigration status, age, or stage in the life course. The purpose is to use *just one to three* ideas from the course to help explain the unfolding changes in mental health for this person.

### **Reading**

Readings are listed by topic in the reading list. All readings will be posted on Quercus. Note that any readings are not assigned and will not be asked about specifically on tests. However, you can use them for comments, and I will sometimes refer to material in these readings in lectures – which you *are* responsible for on tests. Exam questions on optional readings will be restricted to whatever is covered in class.

**Due Dates for Work:**

Provisional due dates for required work are as follows:

Work	Date	Weights
1. <b>One posted comment on one reading</b>  <i>OR:</i> <b>Short case study paper.</b>	Before noon day of class reading is assigned.  March 29	20%
2. <b>Term test</b>	February 15	25%
3. <b>Seven in-class quizzes</b>	Each class from week 3 forward	20%
4. <b>Final online assessment</b>	exam period	35%

*Please note: There are no late comments. There is plenty of choice available in submitting comments.*

**Quercus**

Quercus will be used in this course primarily for four purposes: 1) I will post required readings there; 2) You will post comments about readings on the discussion board; 3) I will post most lecture Power Point materials there; 4) In-class quizzes will be conducted there (*if possible*).

**Required Reading**

I do not use a textbook in this course. Instead, all required readings will be posted on the course website.

Class slides will also be posted online. They are quite detailed, but not detailed enough to understand without attending class.

**Special Voluntary Seminars**

I will schedule two voluntary seminars during the semester you can sign up for. There will be a limit of about 15 students in each seminar. These seminars have various purposes: to discuss course material or respond to questions you may have in greater depth, have a discussion about issues you are interested in that have been raised in the course, respond to larger questions about research or graduate school, relevance of the course to social policy, recent social change and its effect on mental health, or to discuss competing perspectives on mental health.

**Class Schedule**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Section / Topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>
January 11	<b>1. Sociological Approach</b>	Aneshensel
January 18	<b>2.1 and 2.2 Definition and Measurement</b>	Wakefield Wheaton <b>Optional:</b> Schnittker.
January 25	<b>3.1 Patterns</b>  <b>3.2 Social Class</b>	Kessler  Eaton Fryers
February 1	<b>3.3 Gender</b>  <b>3.4 Marriage and Relationships</b>	Simon Kiekens  Simon Wight et al
February 8	<b>3.5 Race, Immigration</b>	Williams Joly and Wheaton Louie and Wheaton <b>Optional:</b> Hughes
February 15	<b>Term Test</b>	
February 22	<b>Reading Week</b>	
March 1	<b>3.6 Age and the Life Course</b>  <b>4.1 The Stress Process</b>	Mirowsky and Ross  Aneshensel and Mitchell
March 8	<b>4.2 and 4.3 Stress and Coping</b>	Wheaton et al Mirowsky and Ross Ross and Mirowsky
March 15	<b>5.1 Life Consequences</b>	Breslau Kessler <b>Optional:</b> Breslau 2011
March 22	<b>5.2 Social Contexts</b>	Aneshensel Wheaton and Clarke <b>Optional:</b> Kessler et al.
March 29	<b>5.3 International Patterns</b>	Kessler Karam Lee Cheng
April 5	<b>5.4 Mass Violence and Disasters</b>	Wheaton and Montazer Galea et al. Bierman and Schieman Wu

**Student Accommodations**

Please see me if you have a disability or other need that requires accommodation or classroom modification. I will be glad to help you in whatever way I can.

**Missed Deadlines or Tests**

*Medical Issues:* (NOTE: Because of Covid-19, students do NOT need to submit the usual documentation, i.e., medical notes or the Verification of Illness forms).

Students who miss the test, or are late in submitting an assignment for medical reasons, need to email the instructor (not the TA), and also declare their absence on the system (ACORN) on the day of the test or assignment due date.

Students who miss the test, or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

The short case study paper is subject to late penalties. If you submit this paper within three days of the deadline, your grade will be reduced by 10%. If you submit this paper between 4 and 7 days after the deadline, the grade will be reduced by 15%. After one week, the paper will not be accepted.

**Term Test**

If you miss the term test, you must follow one of the procedures above to qualify for a make-up test. The T.A. will *not* run a make-up test separately for each individual. There will be one sitting arranged for all qualified students for a make-up test.

**Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to know and adhere to the University's principles of academic integrity. Any act of plagiarism or other unethical behavior will be addressed in accordance with University guidelines. Students should be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second course, is considered an academic offense. Please see the "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters"

(<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) for specific information on academic integrity at the U of T.

**Appointments**

I encourage you to email or phone me using the number on the first page and arrange an appointment at any time. I am in my office on most days. But, in general, I will be in my office from 4-5 on Tuesday after this class, if you want to stop by.

I will designate special office hours in the weeks before assignments are due – to be announced later.

**Re-marking**

We will use specific marking keys for both assignments and tests. Those keys define the universe of possible answers and possible variations in those answers. In a course such as this, the only issue that may come up is a mistake in applying the key to the answers in specific cases. If there is a mistake in an assignment or test you get back, you should see the T.A. *within two weeks of your receipt of the test or assignment*. In general, we will not consider work for re-grading after feedback on a later test or assignment, unless it is in this two week period.

Note that your grade after re-marking can remain the same, or increase, or decrease.

**Special Voluntary Seminars**

I will schedule two voluntary seminars during the semester you can sign up for. There will be a limit of about 14 students in each seminar. These seminars have various purposes: to discuss course material or respond to questions you may have in greater depth, have a discussion about issues you are interested in that have been raised in the course, respond to larger questions about research or graduate school, relevance of the course to social policy, recent social change and its effect on mental health, or to discuss competing perspectives on mental health.

## TOPICS/READING LIST

### 1. THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF MENTAL HEALTH.

Carol S. Aneshensel, Jo C. Phelan, and Alex Bierman. "The Sociology of Mental Health: Surveying the Field." Pp. 1-23 in Carol S. Aneshensel, Jo, C. Phelan, and Alex Bierman (eds.). *Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*. New York: Springer, 2013.

### 2. DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT OF MENTAL DISORDER AND DISTRESS

Jerome C. Wakefield. 2010. "The Measurement of Mental Disorder." Pp. 20-45 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wheaton, Blair. 2007. "The twain meet: distress, disorder and the continuing conundrum of categories." *Health* 11(3):303-319.

#### **Optional:**

Schnittker, Jason. "The Proximity of Common Unhappiness and Misery." *Society and Mental Health* 2012: 135-153.

### 3. THE SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF MENTAL HEALTH

#### **3.1 Epidemiological Patterns**

Kessler, Ronald C., Patricia A. Berglund, Olga Demler, Robert Jin, Kathleen R. Merikangas and Ellen E. Walters. 2005. "Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication." *Archives of General Psychiatry* 62(6):593-602.

#### **3.2 Social Class.**

William W. Eaton, Carles Muntaner, and Jaime C. Sapag. 2010. "Socioeconomic Stratification and Mental Disorder." Pp. 226-256 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tom Fryers, David Melzer, and Rachel Jenkins. 2003. "Social Inequalities and the Common Mental Disorders" A systematic review of the evidence." *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 38:229-237.

#### **3.3 Gender**

Simon, R. W. (2014). Twenty years of the sociology of mental health: The continued significance of gender and marital status for emotional well-being. In R. J. Johnson, R. J. Turner, & B. G. Link (Eds.), *Sociology of mental health: Selected topics from forty years, 1970s-2010s* (pp. 21-36 only). Springer Science + Business Media

*One of the two following readings:*



***Either.....***

Kiekens, W. J., la Roi, C., & Dijkstra, J. K. (2020). Sexual identity disparities in mental health among U.K. adults, U.S. adults, and U.S. adolescents: Examining heterogeneity by race/ethnicity. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*. Advance online publication. Pp. 1-13.

***Or.....***

Campbell O. L. K., Bann D., Patalay P. (2021). The gender gap in adolescent mental health: A cross-national investigation of 566,829 adolescents across 73 countries. *SSM - Population Health*, 13: 1-9.

**3.4 Marriage and Relationships**

Simon, R. W. (2014). Twenty years of the sociology of mental health: The continued significance of gender and marital status for emotional well-being. In R. J. Johnson, R. J. Turner, & B. G. Link (Eds.), *Sociology of mental health: Selected topics from forty years, 1970s-2010s* (pp. 36–45). Springer Science + Business Media

Simon, Robin 2002. "Revisiting the Relationships among Gender, Marital Status, and Mental Health." *The American Journal of Sociology* 107:4 (1065-1096) .

Wight, Richard. G., Leblanc, A. J., & Lee Badgett, M. V. (2013). Same-sex legal marriage and psychological well-being: findings from the California Health Interview Survey. *American journal of public health*, 103(2), 339–346.

**3.5 Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration**

David R. Williams et al. 1997. Racial Differences in Physical and Mental Health Socio-economic Status, Stress and Discrimination. *Journal of Health Psychology* 2: 335-351.

Joly, Marie-Pier, and Blair Wheaton. "Human rights in countries of origin and the mental health of migrants to Canada." *SSM - population health* vol. 11 100571. 20 Mar. 2020, doi:10.1016/j.ssmph.2020.100571

Patricia Louie and Blair Wheaton . 2019. The Black-White Paradox Revisited:. Understanding the Role of Counterbalancing Mechanisms during Adolescence. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* June (60): 169-187.

***Optional:***

Hughes, M., Kiecolt, K. J., Keith, V. M., & Demo, D. H. (2015). *Racial identity and well-being among African Americans. Social Psychology Quarterly*, 0190272514554043

**3.6 Age and the Life Course**

Mirowsky, John, and Catherine Ross. 2010. "Well-Being Across the Life Course." Pp. 361-383 in Scheid and Brown, (eds.) *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health, Second Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

## 4. EXPLANATIONS OF SOCIAL DIFFERENCES

### 4.1 The Stress Process Model

Aneshensel C.S., Mitchell U.A. (2014) The Stress Process: Its Origins, Evolution, and Future. In: Johnson R., Turner R., Link B. (eds) *Sociology of Mental Health*. Springer Briefs in Sociology. Springer. Pp. 53-75.

### 4.2 Stress

Blair Wheaton, Marisa Young, Shirin Montazer, and Katie Stuart-Lahman. 2012. "Social Stress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." Pp. 299-325 in Carol S. Aneshensel, Jo, C. Phelan, and Alex Bierman (eds.). *Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*. New York: Springer, 2013.

### 4.3 Coping Resources and Coping Behavior.

John Mirowsky and Catherine E. Ross. "Control or Defense?: Depression and the Sense of Control over Good and Bad Outcomes." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 31, 1990: 71-86.

Ross, Catherine E., and John Mirowsky. 1989 "Explaining the Social Patterns of Depression: Control and Problem-solving or Support and None Talking." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 30(2,Jun): 206-19.

## 5. SPECIAL TOPICS

### 5.1 Life Consequences Of Mental Health Problems

Breslau, Joshua, Michael Lane, Nancy Sampson and Ronald C. Kessler. 2008. "Mental disorders and subsequent educational attainment in a US national sample." *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 42(9):708-716.

Kessler, Ronald C., Hagop S. Akiskal, Minnie Ames, Howard Birnbaum, Paul Greenberg, Robert M. A. Hirschfeld, Robert Jin, Kathleen R. Merikangas, Gregory E. Simon and Philip S. Wang. 2006. "Prevalence and effects of mood disorders on work performance in a nationally representative sample of U.S. workers." *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 163(9):1561-1568.

#### *Optional:*

Breslau, Joshua, et al. 2011. "A multinational study of mental disorders, marriage and divorce." *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*. 124: 474-486.

### 5.2 Social Contexts

Carol Aneshensel . 2009. "Neighborhood as a Social Context of the Stress Process." Pp. 35-50 in William R. Avison, Carol S. Aneshensel, Scott Schieman, and Blair Wheaton (eds.), *Advances in the Conceptualization of the Stress Process*. New York: Springer.

Wheaton, Blair and Philippa Clarke. (2003). "Space Meets Time: Integrating Temporal and Contextual Influences on Mental Health in Early Adulthood." *American Sociological Review* 68:680–706.

**Optional:**

Ronald C. Kessler et al. 2014. "Housing Mobility Interventions for Children in High-Poverty Neighborhoods with Subsequent Mental Disorders During Adolescence." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 311: 937-947.

**5.3 International Patterns**

Kessler, Ronald C., et al., 2007. "Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of mental disorders in the World Health Organization's World Mental Health Survey Initiative" *World Psychiatry*: 168-176.

Karam, Elie G., Zeina N. Mneimneh, Hani Dimassi, John A. Fayyad, Aimée N. Karam, Soumana C. Nasser, Somnath Chatterji and Ronald C. Kessler. 2008. "Lifetime prevalence of mental disorders in Lebanon: first onset, treatment, and exposure to war." *PLoS Medicine* 5(4): Article e61.

Lee, Sing, Adley Tsang, Ming-Yuan Zhang, Yue-Qin Huang, Yan-Ling He, Zhao-Rui Liu, Yu-Cun Shen and Ronald C. Kessler. 2007. "Lifetime prevalence and inter-cohort variation in DSM-IV disorders in metropolitan China." *Psychological Medicine* 37(1):61-71.

Cheng, Cheng. 2017. Anticipated support from children and later-life health in the United States and China, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 179, 201-209.

**5.4 The Study of Macro-Level Stressors: Mass Violence, Disasters, and Pandemics.**

Wheaton, Blair, and Shirin Montazer. 2021. "The Impact of 9/11 on the Subjective Welfare of Mid to Later Life Americans." Draft.

Sandro Galea, Chris R. Brewin, Michael Gruber, Russell T. Jones, Daniel W. King, Lynda A. King, Richard J. McNally, Robert J. Ursano, Maria Petukhova, Ronald C. Kessler, "Exposure to Hurricane-Related Stressors and Mental Illness After Hurricane Katrina." *Archives of General Psychiatry*. 2007: 64(12):1427-1434.

Bierman A, Schieman S. Social Estrangement and Psychological Distress before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Patterns of Change in Canadian Workers. 2020. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*.;61(4):398-417.

Wu, Cary, Yue Wian, and Rima Wilkes. 2021. "Anti-Asian Discrimination and the Asian-White Mental Health Gap during COVID-19." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44(5):819-835