

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

**Blair Wheaton
Department of Sociology
Winter, 2023**

Office: Room 376
Department of Sociology
725 Spadina Avenue

E-mail: blair.wheaton@utoronto.ca

Web Site: Quercus.

Time: Thursday 2-4

Place: SS 2118

T.A.s Rachel Meiorin (rachel.meiorin@mail.utoronto.ca)
Brigid Burke(b.burke@mail.utoronto.ca)

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 three topics: the impact of social contexts such as neighbourhoods, workplaces, or schools on mental health, social media and its effect on mental health, 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 and the final will both be *short answer* only. 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 two comments on course readings online, each from 300-500 words, or you can write a short critical analysis of research reported online about mental health that can be questioned by more credible, more updated, or more generalizable results in the literature. In this paper, you should use some course readings to counter the claims online, but you also can use papers beyond the course list.

Online Comments

You can choose any readings on the reading list for your online comments. 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.

One comment is due on any week before the first test, and the second is due on any week after the test up to and including the last class.

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 comments 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.

Critical Analysis Paper

The short-case study is a 800-1000 word paper that takes as it focus a potentially misleading claim you find online about mental health – it’s distribution in the population, its causes, its consequences, or what makes it better. In this paper, you should focus on evidence claims that cannot be supported and should be questioned. You will compare the claims made, and the research that supports those claims, with research you judge to be better in some essential respect: the credibility of the methods, the design, the sample, the measure, analysis, or some combination thereof. You can use multiple alternative research papers to argue your point. You should discuss why the alternative sources provide a clearer and fairer answer to the same research question.

Reading

Readings are listed by topic in the reading list. All readings will be posted on Quercus. Note that any optional readings are not assigned; 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.

Please note: Some readings may be deleted from the course as the course proceeds. This will be announced in the first few weeks of class.

Due Dates for Work:

Provisional due dates for required work are as follows:

Work	Date	Weights
1. Two posted comments on readings, one before, one after the test. OR: Short case study paper.	Before noon day of class reading is assigned. March 30	10% + 10 % or: 20%
2. Term test	February 16	25%
3. Seven in-class quizzes	Each class from week 3 forward	20%
4. Final assessment	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 12	1. Sociological Approach	Aneshensel
January 19	2.1 and 2.2 Definition and Measurement	Wakefield Wheaton Optional: Schnittker.
January 26	3.1 Patterns 3.2 Social Class	Kessler Lee Eaton Fryers
February 2	3.3 Gender and Sexuality 3.4 Marriage and Relationships	Simon Kieckens Simon Wight et al
February 9	3.5 Race, Immigration	Williams Joly and Wheaton Louie et al. Optional: Hughes
February 16	Term Test	
February 23	Reading Week	
March 2	3.6 Age and the Life Course 4.1 The Stress Process	Mirowsky and Ross Aneshensel and Mitchell
March 9	4.2 and 4.3 Stress and Coping	Wheaton et al Mirowsky and Ross Ross and Mirowsky
March 16	5.1 Life Consequences	Breslau Kessler Optional: Breslau 2011
March 23	6.1 Social Contexts	Aneshensel Wheaton and Clarke Optional: Kessler et al.
March 30	6.2 Social Media	Pantic Bragieri Hunt Kraut
April 6	6.3 Macro-Level Stress	Wheaton and Montazer Galea et al. Matic Raj 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%. If you submit this paper more than 7 days after the deadline but before April 20th, we will accept the paper, but it will be deducted by 25%. After April 20th, 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.

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.

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.

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 and Sexuality

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

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.

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

Louie, P., Upenieks, L., Erving, C. L., & Thomas Tobin, C. S. (2022). Do Racial Differences in Coping Resources Explain the Black–White Paradox in Mental Health? A Test of Multiple Mechanisms. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 63(1), 55–70.

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 21st 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.

THE LIFE CONSEQUENCES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

5.1 Effects on Education, Work, and Marriage

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.

SPECIAL TOPICS

6.1 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.

6.2 Social Media

Igor Pantic. 2014. "Online Social Networking and Mental Health." *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 17: 652-657.

Luca Braghieri, Ro'ee Levy, and Alexey Makarin. 2022 . "Social Media and Mental Health". *American Economic Review* 2022, 112(11): 3660–3693.

Melissa G. Hunt, Rachel Marx, Courtney Lipson, and Jordyn Young (2018). No More FOMO: Limiting Social Media Decreases Loneliness and Depression. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*: Vol. 37, No. 10, pp. 751-768. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2018.37.10.751>

Optional:

Robert Kraut, Michael Patterson, Vicki Lundmark, Sara Kiesler, Tridas Mulopadhyay, and William Sherlis. 1998. "Internet Paradox: A Social Technology that Reduces Social Involvement and Psychological Well-Being?" *American Psychologist* 55: 1017-1031.

6.3 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.

Teodora Matic et al., 2023. "Depression, Anxiety, Stress, and Suicidality Levels in Young Adults Increased Two Years into the COVID-19 Pandemic". *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20, 339:1-13.

Anita Raj et. al. 2023."The associations of everyday and major discrimination exposure with violence and poor mental health outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic ". *Social Science & Medicine* 318: 1-10.

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