

SOCIOLOGY 419: SOCIOLOGY OF MENTAL ILLNESS (4 Credits)

Spring Quarter 2022

Hybrid Class | 470 Karl Miller Center (KMC)

In-Person/Face-to-Face (F2F) Meetings: 2:00-3:50pm Wednesdays

Professor: M. Thompson, Ph.D.

Office Hours: 10:00am-12:00pm Tuesdays and by appointment (via [Zoom](#), phone, or email)

Phone: 503-725-3614

Email: mthomp@pdx.edu

TA: Tasha Lane, M.S.

Office Hours: 11:00am-12:00pm Fridays (via [Zoom](#))

Email: ltasha@pdx.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to give you an overview of the ways a sociological perspective informs our understanding of mental health and illness. While sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and others deal with issues of mental illness, they often approach the topic in very different ways. In general, a sociological perspective tends to focus on aspects of the social environment that we often ignore, neglect, or take for granted. It calls attention to how society or groups are organized, who benefits or is hurt by the way things are organized, and what beliefs shape our behaviors. In viewing mental illness, sociologists have primarily challenged dominant views of mental illness, examined how social relationships play a role in mental illness, questioned the goals and implications of mental health policy and researched how mental health services are organized and provided.

The course is divided into three sections, each exploring different aspects of this sociological view of mental illness. In the first section we will explore various definitions of mental illness, critically analyze different forms of mental illness, and examine the social process of labeling mental illness. In the second section we will analyze theories of mental disorder and how factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, race, and age affect mental disorder. The third section will examine historical and current social responses to mental illness.

Students are expected to read chapters from two textbooks. Students are expected to participate in class and in individual write-ups or small group discussions (F2F and/or online) based on these readings. One paper, weekly quizzes, and a final examination are also required.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course was designed with four objectives in mind:

1. To introduce a sociological perspective on mental illness, and to discuss how this perspective differs from those offered by psychiatry, psychology, and other relevant disciplines.
2. To describe and analyze the history of definitions of mental illness and of the dominant treatment modalities, particularly in the United States.
3. To provide basic information about the distribution of mental illness and psychological distress in the population, and about the theories that have been offered to explain the distribution.
4. To improve students' skills at reading and critiquing sociological theory and research, and at applying sociological concepts to examples of mental illness.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available through the PSU bookstore and on reserve at the library)

- Scheid, Teresa L. and Eric R. Wright (Editors). 2017. *A Handbook for the Study of Mental Health: Social Contexts, Theories, and Systems*. 3rd Edition. Cambridge University Press (abbreviated as S&W throughout this syllabus).
- Karp, David and Gretchen E. Sisson. 2010. *Voices from the Inside: Readings on the Experiences of Mental Illness*. Oxford University Press (abbreviated as K&S throughout this syllabus).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 24% Weekly Quizzes. There will be nine weekly quizzes, based on the required readings. These quizzes will be multiple choice and true/false and will be open book/open notes. Your lowest quiz score will be thrown out (only your top 8 [out of 9] quizzes will count toward your final course grade).
- 22% Active class participation. Students must come to our F2F class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Participation be assessed via F2F and online group discussion write-ups and individual exercises.
- 24% Paper. You are required to write one 5-7 page paper, chosen from among three available paper assignment options.
- Each paper has its own due date.
 - The paper assignments are designed to help you develop your communication, analysis, and critical thinking skills by writing clearly and persuasively to connect course material to additional scholarly publications on a topic of your choice. The paper assignment is also intended to develop your ability to recognize and discuss alternative perspectives on mental illness.
 - Details of the three paper options are provided following the course schedule on the final pages of this syllabus.
 - Papers must be submitted on Canvas on the day they are due.
- 30% Final examination. The final exam is cumulative (covering material from all 10 weeks of the quarter). It is open book/open note and will consist of multiple choice, true/false and essay questions. The exam is intended to test your knowledge of the major theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from the sociology of mental illness. It will cover material from readings, individual write-ups, group discussions, lectures, and films.

Grading Scale	Letter Grade
92% and above	A
90-91%	A-
88-89%	B+
82-87%	B
80-81%	B-
78-79%	C+
72-77%	C
70-71%	C-
60-69%	D
Below 60%	F

COURSE POLICIES AND INFORMATION

- Late Assignments. Assignments, quizzes, papers, exams, and readings should be completed by their due date. If you must miss a F2F class meeting or be late with an assignment, please notify me before the deadline. Because we are still dealing with the COVID-10 pandemic, I will be flexible regarding deadlines, but I will need to be informed about late work and when it will be completed to facilitate grading. Deadline extensions greater than two days will only be permitted in extreme circumstances.
- Class Notes. If you must miss class, get notes from one of your classmates. Then see the professor to clarify anything you do not understand. I will post the PowerPoint slides on Canvas before each F2F class. One note of warning, however: I view my PowerPoint slides as an outline of the day's lecture and they should not be considered a sufficient replacement for attending class, paying attention, and taking your own notes.
- Sharing of Class Material: Sharing class material (syllabi, recordings, handouts, PowerPoint slides, or any other material from this course) outside of the class (with anyone not registered for the class) without the instructor's express permission is not permitted.
- Course announcements. Please check Canvas frequently (a minimum of 2 times per week) for any announcement related to the course.
- Contact for technical support: Helpdesk. Computing and Canvas questions should be directed to the Helpdesk (www.pdx.edu/oit/contact). They may be contacted in the following ways.
 - Phone: 725-4357 (5-HELP)
 - Online through the Help Center: <https://portlandstate.atlassian.net/servicedesk/customer/portals>
- Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities. PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, useable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu, <https://www.pdx.edu/drc>.

- If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.
- F2F meeting and online etiquette. Failure to meet minimal standards of class etiquette is disruptive and disrespectful to me and to your classmates. Therefore, you are expected to come to F2F class meetings on time, stay throughout the class period, and to refrain from inappropriate conversations—whether written or spoken. In all course communications, you are required to observe the following expectations:
 - In electronic communication, avoid using all CAPS as it can give the impression that you are shouting. If you want to emphasize a point, use *asterisks* around a word.

- No personal attacks. If you disagree with anyone, describe your perspective clearly and professionally. No personal criticism or derogatory language.
 - Be respectful when making a comment or responding to others' comments.
- Policy on Academic Dishonesty: Students who violate PSU rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failing the course and/or dismissal from the university. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of PSU, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For more information on PSU policies and definitions of academic misconduct, see: <https://www.pdx.edu/dean-student-life/academic-misconduct>.
 - Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities: PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, useable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please discuss with me.

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment. If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations.

During the pandemic, DRC is performing all essential functions of the work of the DRC remotely, including initial appointments and [meetings](#). Call 503-725-4150, email drc@pdx.edu or visit the virtual front desk via [Zoom](#) Monday - Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The DRC is currently open for in-person visits 2pm-5pm Monday-Friday. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, and they are monitoring voice mail and email messages closely and will respond as soon as possible.

- If you already have accommodations through DRC, please contact Professor Thompson to make sure she has received the faculty notification letter and to ensure that all accommodations are being provided.

- Title IX Reporting Obligations: Portland State is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender or sex-based harassment and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, know that help and support are available. PSU has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and on-housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Information about PSU's support services on campus, including confidential services and reporting options, can be found on PSU's Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response website at: <http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help> or you may call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725-5672.

Please be aware that all PSU faculty members and instructors are required to report information of an incident that may constitute prohibited discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. This means that if you tell me about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence that may have violated university policy or the student code of conduct, I must share the information with my supervisor or the University's Title IX Coordinator or the Office of

Affirmative Action. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus on Canvas.

- Resources to Help You Succeed at PSU. Services to help you thrive in this class and at PSU more generally, including information about the writing center, financial services, and technology support can be found here: <https://www.pdx.edu/student-life/support-services>.
 - My SSP (My Student Support Program) provides access to confidential mental health and wellbeing support.
 - The Basic Needs Hub provides students with one place to stop for all concerns related to providing for basic needs support (food assistance, housing services, emergency funds, technology access, etc.)
 - The Writing Center provides one-on-one help with writing, on a walk-in or appointment basis. 188 Cramer Hall, 725.3570.
 - Center for Student Health and Counseling (SHAC) provides mental health, physical health, dental, and testing services. 1880 SW 6th Ave., 725-2800.
 - The OWL at Purdue University provides online grammar and writing resources.
- Classroom Requirements for All Students and Faculty Due to Covid-19. The University has established rules and policies to make the return to the classroom as safe as possible. It is required for everyone to follow all the Return to Campus rules and policies. To participate in this class, PSU requires all students to comply with the following.

Vaccination: Be vaccinated against COVID-19 and complete the [COVID-19 vaccination attestation](#) form. Those students with medical or nonmedical exemptions or who will not be on campus at all must complete the process described on the “COVID-19 Vaccine Exemption Request Form” to establish those exemptions.

Health Check, Illness, Exposure, or Positive Test for COVID-19: Complete the [required self-check for COVID-19 symptoms before coming to campus each day](#).

If you are feeling sick or have been exposed to COVID-19, do not come to campus. Call [The Center for Student Health and Counseling \(SHAC\)](#) to discuss your symptoms and situation at 503-725-2800. They will advise you on testing, quarantine, and when you can return to campus.

If you test positive for COVID, [report your result to SHAC](#) and do not come to campus. SHAC will advise you on quarantine, notification of close contacts, and when you can return to campus.

Please notify Professor Thompson should you need to miss a class period for any of these reasons so that we can discuss strategies to support your learning during this time.

If I become ill or need to quarantine during the term, either I or the department chair will notify you via PSU email about my absence and how course instruction will continue.

Failure to Comply with Any of these Rules: As the instructor of this course, the University has given me the authority to require your compliance with these policies. If you do not comply with these requirements, I may ask you to leave the classroom, or I may need to cancel the class session entirely.

In addition, failure to comply with these requirements may result in a referral to the Office of the Dean of Student Life to consider charges under PSU's Code of Conduct. A student found to have violated a university rule (or rules) through the due process of student conduct might face

disciplinary and educational sanctions (or consequences). For a complete list of sanctions, see Section 14 of the [Student Code of Conduct & Responsibility](#).

Guidance May Change: Please note that the University rules, policies, and guidance may change at any time at the direction of the CDC, State, or County requirements. Please review the University's main [COVID-19 Response](#) webpage and look for emails from the University on these topics.

Course Schedule
(subject to change with reasonable notice)

Week/date of F2F meeting	Topic, Required Readings, and Relevant Page Numbers	Online work deadline (11:59pm)
PART I: THE SOCIAL DEFINITION AND DISTRIBUTION OF MENTAL ILLNESS		
WEEK 1:		
Wednesday, March 30	<u>Course Introduction and What is Mental Illness?</u> 1. S&W: Scheid & Wright, “Theoretical Perspectives on Mental Health and Illness: Introduction to Part I” [Pp. 1-5] 2. S&W: Horwitz, “An Overview of Sociological Perspectives on the Definitions, Causes, and Responses to Mental Health and Illness [Pp. 6-19] 3. K&S: “The Illness Experience” [Pp. 11-16] 4. K&S: Manning, “Undercurrents” [Pp. 222-235]	Tuesday, April 5
WEEK 2:		
Wednesday, April 6	<u>Historical & Cultural Perspectives on Mental Illness; Theories of Mental Illness and Medicalization</u> 1. K&S: Hornbacher, “Wasted” [Pp. 236-244] 2. S&W: Link & Phelan, “Labeling and Stigma” [Pp. 393-408] 3. K&S: “The Stigma of Mental Illness” [Pp. 165-169] 4. Rosenhan, “ On Being Sane in Insane Places ” [Pp. 250-258]	Tuesday, April 12
WEEK 3:		
Wednesday, April 13	<u>Theories of Mental Illness and Medicalization, continued</u> 1. K&S: “The Meanings of Medication” [Pp. 121-125] 2. S&W: Whooley, “Defining Mental Disorders: Sociological Investigations into the Classification of Mental Disorders” [Pp. 45-65] 3. K&S: Karp, “Teens Talk” [Pp. 137-148].	Tuesday, April 19
WEEK 4:		
Wednesday, April 20	<u>Psychiatric Diagnosis and Psychiatric Epidemiology; The Mental Illness Experience</u> 1. S&W: Wakefield & Schmitz, “The Measurement of Mental Disorder” [Pp. 20-44] 2. K&S: “An Unwelcome Career” [Pp. 16-24] 3. K&S: “Flights of the Mind” [Pp. 24-32] 4. K&S: “The Eden Experience” [Pp. 33-43]	Tuesday, April 26
PART II: THE SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY OF MENTAL ILLNESS		
WEEK 5:		
Wednesday, April 27	<u>The Stress Process Model: SES and Race/Ethnicity</u> 1. S&W: Scheid and Wright, “The Social Context of Mental Health and Illness: Introduction to Part II” [Pp. 173-179] 2. S&W: Eaton and Muntaner, “Socioeconomic Stratification and Mental Disorder” [Pp. 239-265] 3. S&W: Williams, Costa, & Leavell, “Race and Mental Health” [Pp. 281-303]	Tuesday, May 3

Week/date of F2F meeting	Topic, Required Readings, and Relevant Page Numbers	Online work deadline (11:59pm)
WEEK 6:		
Wednesday, May 4	<u>The Stress Process Model: Gender and Marital Status</u> 1. S&W: Rosenfield, Kato & Smith, “Gender and Mental Health” [Pp. 266-280] 2. K&S: Karp, “In Sickness and in Health” [Pp. 85-93] 3. S&W: Williams, Frech, & Carlson, “Marital Status and Mental Health [Pp. 322-337]	Tuesday, May 11
WEEK 7:		
Wednesday, May 11	<u>The Stress Process Model: Life Course, Age, and Parenthood</u> 1. S&W: Keith & Brown, “African American Women and Mental Well-Being: The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Socioeconomic Status” [Pp. 304-321] 2. S&W: Mirowsky & Ross, “Well-Being across the Life Course” [Pp. 338-356]	Tuesday, May 17
PART III: SOCIAL RESPONSES AND TREATMENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS		
WEEK 8:		
Wednesday, May 18 Paper Option #1 due 5/18	<u>Mental Health Treatment and Stigma</u> 1. S&W: Scheid & Wright, “Mental Health Systems and Policy” [Pp. 387-392] 2. K&S: “Caregivers Speak” [Pp. 73-77] 3. K&S: “Hospitalization [Pp. 95-99] 4. K&S: Millet, “The Loony-Bin Trip” [Pp. 100-109] 5. K&S: Owen, “To Tell or Not to Tell” [Pp. 169-179]	Tuesday, May 24
WEEK 9:		
Wednesday, May 25 Paper Option #2 due 5/25	<u>Mental Health Treatment, Deinstitutionalization, and the Law</u> 1. K&S: Schiller, “The Quiet Room” [Pp. 109-120] 2. S&W: Watson, Adams, & Jackson, “Mental Health Policy in the United States” [Pp. 573-590] 3. S&W: Avison, “Epilogue: The Three Solitudes of the Sociology of Mental Health” [Pp. 591-594]	Tuesday, May 31
WEEK 10:		
Wednesday, June 1 Paper Option #3 due 6/1	<u>Treatment, Deinstitutionalization, and the Criminal Justice System</u> 1. K&S: “In the Community” [Pp. 193-197] 2. K&S: Earley, “The Ninth Floor” [Pp. 197-206] 3. S&W: Hiday & Ray “Mental Illness and the Criminal Justice System” [Pp. 467-492]	Tuesday, June 7
FINALS WEEK: Final exam due by 11:59pm on Wednesday, June 8		

Instructions for All Papers

The following instructions apply to each of the three paper options:

Format:

- Include a title page with a title, your name, the name/number of the class, and instructor name.
- 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, and 1-inch margins.

Overall style:

- Write an introductory paragraph that provides an overview of what the paper is going to be about.
- 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 if you 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 ½ of a page.
- Look for run-on sentences and sentence fragments.
- Write a rough draft of your paper; take a break and revise your paper at least once.
- Before submitting, proofread! Edit your paper closely so that you do not submit papers containing spelling or grammatical errors.

Inclusion of scholarly references:

- Include a minimum of three peer-reviewed scholarly sources in your paper. Identify, read, and cite articles published in scholarly journals related to your topic, which you can find via Google Scholar or through PSU's library. The library has a Social Sciences librarian who can help you identify sources if you're struggling to find them on your own.
- 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.
- Choose a citation style to cite your sources. The PSU library website has examples of how to cite your sources here: <https://library.pdx.edu/research/citing-sources/>. I am not picky about which style you use (APA, MLA, and ASA are all acceptable), instead I just want you to be sure you're citing your sources in a consistent manner.
- A major consideration in grading will be your ability to successfully tie class material to your other sources. Therefore, you *are* expected to refer to class material, such as lecture and required readings. When you refer to the Scheid & Wright textbook, the Karp & Sisson book, or to class notes/PowerPoint slides, be sure to provide a citation [e.g., (Scheid & Wright 2017) or (Karp & Sisson 2010) or (class notes 5/11/2022)].

Paper Option #1: The Social Antecedents of Mental Illness (due week 8)

Due Wednesday, May 18th at 11:59pm

You have recently learned a great deal about how exposure to various types of stressors, and access to personal and social resources, affects 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 is to conduct further research on that topic and present your findings, explaining how they relate to class material, including readings, lectures, and other elements of the class.

Once you begin your research, you are likely to find a great deal of published material on the specific topic you chose, 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 Professor Thompson or PSU library’s Social Sciences librarian ([Kimberly Pendell](#)) 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?

Paper Option #2: The Social Distribution of Mental Illness (due week 9)

Due Wednesday, May 25th at 11:59pm

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, gender, sexuality, etc.) 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 the likelihood of having depression, or you might choose women’s greater likelihood of anxiety disorders, or men’s greater likelihood of substance abuse disorders. What is important is that you pick something that you find interesting. Your job is to conduct further research on that topic and present your findings, explaining how they relate to class material, including readings, lectures, and other elements of the class.

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 Professor Thompson or PSU library's Social Sciences librarian ([Kimberly Pendell](#)) 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?

Paper Option #3: Social Institutions and Mental Illness (due week 10)

Due Wednesday, June 1st at 11:59pm

You have recently learned about how social institutions (work, family, neighborhoods, religion, the educational system, the mental health system, etc.) are related to mental health and illness.

Pick one of these institutions to study further. What is important is that you pick a social institution that you find interesting. Your job is to conduct further research on that topic and present your findings, explaining how they relate to class material, including readings, lectures, and other elements of the class. 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 work, you may focus on workplace conditions.

Once you begin your research, you are likely to find a great deal of published material on the specific topic you chose, 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 Professor Thompson or PSU library's Social Sciences librarian ([Kimberly Pendell](#)) 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 these 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?