Sociology of Mental Health
SOCL 443/843: Spring 2017
Tues. and Thurs. 11:00am to 12:15 p.m.
Mabel Lee, room 230

Professor: Dr. Christina Falci
Office: 714 Oldfather Hall
Office Phone: 472-3762
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursday 12:30 to 1:30, or by appointment
E-mail: cfalci2@unl.edu (e-mail is the best way to reach me)

Course Description: This course will cover topics in the sociological study of mental health and illness. The first part of the course will review the conceptualization, operationalization, and prevalence of mental health and illness as well as provide an overview of distinct approaches to the study mental health and illness (e.g., sociological, biological). Following this introduction the course will cover three broad topics in the sociology of mental health and illness. Importantly, sociologists focus less on individual experience and more on conditions that determine why so much experience is common to different people or common among particular groups of individuals within a society. Part two of the course will cover the social factors (e.g., stressors, social integration) that influence the development of mental health and illness. Part three will assess the social distribution of mental health across various social groups (e.g., race, class, and gender) in the US as well as explanations for what produces group differences in mental health outcomes. The final part of the course will consider the social construction and consequences of mental health and illness.

Course Format: Weekly class meetings will consist of lecture, large group discussions and small group work. I welcome questions and comments at any point during the lecture. Your questions will help clarify ambiguities that students may have and help everyone deepen their understanding of the course material. Furthermore, your comments will add to the intellectual breadth and depth of this course. As an upper-level course, this class will incorporate a considerable discussion component and engagement with the assigned readings. Therefore, it is imperative that you read the assigned readings for the day before coming to class.

Required Course Material:
- additional readings will be posted on blackboard

Undergraduate Student Course Requirements: I expect students to show up for class on time, come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings, participate in the class discussions and take good class notes.

- **Class Participation (100 points):** A participation grade will be assigned to each student based on demonstration of assigned readings completion, contributions to the class discussion, completion of group work assignments, and overall attendance.
Short Answer Exams (3 – 100 points each): After the end of the first three sections in the course you will take a short answer exam. I will distribute a list of short answer questions one week prior to the exam and exam questions will only be drawn from this list.

Final Paper (100 points): At the end of the semester, you will write a 5-page paper providing an analysis of a person suffering from mental health problems. You may choose to focus on yourself, someone in your life that you know very well, or you may select a memoir to read or movie to watch that has a primary focus of reviewing the life of a person with mental health problems. In any approach, your task will be to apply the concepts and theories learned in this course to the subject of your paper. I will provide an additional handout with full guidelines for this assignment later in the semester.

Grade Basis: based on the percentage for the # of earn points divided by the # of possible points:

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Absences, Make-Ups, Late Work, Pass/Fail, Honor System: If you have a conflict with taking any of the exams, you must inform the instructor at least two weeks ahead of time to see if other arrangements are possible. Missed exams may only be made-up with documented evidence of illness or emergency. Assignments turned in late will lose points (5 points per weekday) unless there is documentation of illness or emergency. Students may take this class pass/fail, but students must complete all course requirements in order to receive a passing grade. Furthermore, those taking the course Pass-No Pass will need a C or better to obtain a Pass (a C minus is a “No Pass”). Finally, I will take all necessary steps to enforce the Honor System for the sake of fairness to all students. I will report incidents of academic dishonesty in writing to UNL’s Judicial Affairs.

- Plagiarism is taking someone else’s ideas/work/words and using them as your own – a very serious offense within academia. To better understand how to avoid plagiarism please take advantage of this UNL resource: [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/integrity#plagiarism](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/integrity#plagiarism)

Disabilities: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, you must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Graduate Student Course Requirements

- Class Participation (20%): A participation grade will be assigned to each student based on demonstration of assigned readings completion, contributions to the class discussion, completion of group work and overall attendance.

- Review / Reaction Papers (50%): At the end of the first three sections of the course, you will write a 6-page (not counting references) review/reaction paper to the material presented in
that section of the course. Thus, there will be a total of three review/reaction papers. The reaction papers should cite all the assigned readings as well as four additional sources of your choosing. An additional handout will be provided with all assignment guidelines.

❖ Final Paper (30%): I am open to student suggestions as to what final paper might be most beneficial to you at this stage in your graduate career. I provide you with the following two options: a) an extensive and critical literature review or b) an empirical research paper. The paper should be 15-20 pages double spaced, not counting references or tables. All paper proposals must be submitted for approval by Tuesday, September 23rd. If you want to pursue something other than a literature review or empirical paper, then please speak with me before turning in your paper proposal.

Course Schedule

Part 1: Theories, Concepts, and Measurement

1: Tues., Jan. 10th  Introduction
   ➢ Schwalbe, Michael. “Sociological Mindfulness”

2: Thurs., Jan. 12th  Sociological Approaches to Mental Illness and Distress
   o Handbook: chapter 1 and 6

3: Tues., Jan. 17th  continued

4: Thurs., Jan 19th  Biological and Psychological Approaches to Mental Illness
   o Handbook: chapter 4 (skim pages 66-81) and chapter 5 (skim all pages)

5: Tues., Jan. 24th  Concepts and Measurement of Mental Illness and Distress
   o Handbook: chapter 3

6: Thurs., Jan. 26th  Prevalence of Mental Illness
   o Handbook: chapter 3

7: Tues., Jan. 31st  Concept and Measurement of Well-Being
- *Handbook*: chapter 7

8: Thurs., Feb. 2nd  Catch-up and/or Review
- no readings

9: Tues., Feb. 7th  Undergraduate Short Answer Exam #1
- Graduate Student Reaction Paper #1 DUE

*Note:* I will provide the schedule details for parts 3, 4 & 5 of the course in the next few weeks.
Part 2: Social Causes of Mental Health

10: Thurs., Feb. 9th  Stress Exposure in Adults
   o Handbook: p. 163-170 & chapter 9

11: Tues., Sept. 25th  Stress Exposure in Youth
   o Handbook: chapter 17
     2015. Gendered Contexts: Variation in Suicidal Ideation by Female and Male Youth across U.S. States

12: Tues., Sept. 30th  Social Integration
   o Handbook: chapter 10

13: Thurs., Oct. 2nd  Social Networks

14: Tues., Oct. 7th  Stress Process Theory: Moderation and Mediation
     ➢ reading on mediation and moderation

15: Thurs., Oct. 9th  Memoir Presentations

16: Tues., Oct. 14th  Undergraduates Test #2
                    Graduate Student Short Paper #2 DUE

Part 3: Mental Health across Institutional Contexts

17: Thurs., Oct. 16th  Neighborhoods

*Tuesday, October 21st - Fall Break*

**18: Thurs., Oct. 23  Work and the Economy**


**2015.** Job Pressure and SES contingent Buffering: Resource Reinforcement, Substitution, or the Stress of Higher Status? *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 56(2) 180–198

**Tues., Oct. 28th  Family: Marriage**

- *Handbook*: chapter 10
  - Multiple Chronic Conditions, Spouse’s Depressive Symptoms, and Gender within Marriage

**19: Thurs., Oct. 30th  Family: Parenthood**


**20: Tues., Nov. 4th  Religion**


**21: Thurs., Nov. 6th  Memoir Presentations**

**22: Tues., Nov. 11th  Undergraduates Test #3  Graduate Student Reaction Paper #3 DUE**
Part 3: Social Distribution of Mental Illness across Social Status


23: Thurs., Nov. 13th  Social Class
  o  Handbook: chapter 12

24: Tues., Nov. 18th  Race
  o  Handbook: chapter 14

25: Thurs., Nov. 20th  Gender
  o  Handbook: chapter 13

26: Tues., Nov. 25th  Intersectionality
  o  Handbook: chapter 15

Thursday, November 27th – Thanksgiving

27: Tues., Dec. 2nd  Age and the Life course
  o  Handbook: chapter 19

Part 4: Social Construction and Consequences of Mental Illness

28: Thurs., Dec. 4th  Labeling and Stigma
  o  Handbook: chapter 29

29: Tues., Dec. 9th  Mental Health Utilization
  o  Handbook: p. 407-419 and chapter 21

30: Thurs, Dec. 11th  Criminal Justice
   - *Handbook*: chapter 24


Final Exam:
Graduate Student Term Paper Due: Monday, December 15th by 5pm