

**WWS 594M - POP 502 – Topics in Policy Analysis: Mental Health
Spring Term, 2006
Instructor: Burton Singer**

Monday, 1-4 PM

OBJECTIVES & SYLLABUS

The purpose of this course is to investigate concepts of mental health and illness from an international and historical comparative perspective, giving equal emphasis to behavioral and pharmacological interventions, targeted at both health promotion and treatment of illness. We review the evolution of diagnostic criteria for mental illness, emphasizing depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and anxiety disorders. We also include a discussion of narcotics addiction, with its interesting social, psychological, and biological underpinnings. Treatment programs, emphasizing an integration of pharmacological and psychological interventions, will be discussed, along with consideration of public perceptions of mental illness and their implications for policies pertaining to treatment and prevention programs. Tensions between the pharmaceutical industry, the public interest, and government regulation will be an important aspect of the consideration of pharmacological interventions for mental disorders and narcotics addiction.

Course Requirements –

- (i) Weekly brief (2-3 pages) responses to specific questions that will be posed in advance about the topic for the week
- (ii) One policy paper (approximately 20 pages) on a topic concerning mental Health. Specific topics for the papers are based on discussion between the instructor and each student individually. The papers are designed to mesh well with the specific interests of each student.

Week 1 –

History of mental illness in Europe and America and comparison with China and India. Cultural variation in notions of mental health and illness. Stigma associated with mental disorders and its impact on the development of prevention and treatment programs. Diagnostic Criteria for Mental illnesses: Depression, Schizophrenia, Bipolar disorder, Dementia, and Alzheimer's disease. The World Mental Health Survey and contemporary mental illness rates.

Week 2 –

History of psychiatry and psychoanalysis and the influence of neuroscience on them. Neurobiology of depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and Alzheimer's disease. Recent discoveries about neurogenesis and their implications for positive mental health. Pharmacotherapies and their implications for the future of psychiatry. Introduction to ethical issues.

Week 3 –

Addictive disorders, emphasizing heroin and alcohol. Social, psychological and biological aspects of addiction. Case studies illuminating the natural history of heroin addiction and alcoholism. History of treatment and prevention programs for heroin addiction and alcoholism. What does contemporary neurobiology have to say about processes of addiction and the structuring of rehabilitation programs?

Week 4 –

Pharmacological interventions and the role of the pharmaceutical industry in structuring research and training in psychiatry, the availability of treatment options, and the taxonomies of mental disorders. Ethical issues from the perspective of physicians, the public, and government responsibility. Economics of mental illness and treatment. Implications health insurance programs.

Week 5 –

Genetic susceptibility to mental illness and addictive disorders. Consequences of the fact that protective environments can promote gene expression and neurobiological modifications that are preventive. The role of stratification of populations by genetic predispositions for prevention and treatment programs. Ethical issues pertaining to the availability of genetic information.

Week 6 –

How should mental health surveillance and the development of mental health services be structured at a national level. Case studies from Canada, Sweden, Netherlands, and the UK, and Russia. Cross-national comparisons including the U.S. Discussion of desirable policies and the means of implementing them.

Course Readings and Assignments –

All readings and assignments will be available, indexed by week, on the course Blackboard. It is expected that the readings for each week will be studied in advance of the class meeting, as discussion of controversial issues will be an important part of the course.