

CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY

PSYCH 545 AND 445

FALL, 2009

DR. NORA NOEL

Class times: Wednesday, 5:00 - 7:45 pm Office Hours: M W 2 - 3

Class Meeting Room: SB 104 Office: SB 110D; 962 - 4044; e-mail: NOELN@UNCW.EDU

OVERVIEW

This course is designed as an advanced consideration of substance abuse problems from a bio-psycho-social perspective. We will be reading and discussing ideas about how processes interact to produce dependence on and abuse of psychoactive substances. The class format will be seminar style. There will be weekly readings, reaction papers and group discussions.

For graduate students, the prerequisites for this course are Drugs and Behavior (Psych 245) and admission to the graduate program. The next graduate course in the sequence (Psych 551) will consider treatment strategies for people who abuse substances. Psych 551 is open only to Graduate Students in the Psychology Substance Abuse concentration.

For undergraduate students, Chemical Dependency 445 has two prerequisites: Psych 245 (Drugs and Behavior) and Psych 355 (Research Methods in Psychology). If you have not passed these two courses, or have an equivalent background approved by me, then you should not be in this course.

READINGS

The required readings for the course will be listed from week to week. They are a mixture of "classic" articles, recent reviews and recent research reports. This year we are going to try something new and use a book for one of the readings each week, so I highly recommend that you buy it. The book is "**Rethinking Substance Abuse**" edited by William R. Miller and Kathleen M. Carroll (Guilford Press, 2006). I will give you an overview of the next week's material at the end of each class, so that you can think about some of the important issues while you are reading. Everyone (graduate and undergraduate) is required to do all the readings each week, every week. Because this is a seminar, you will be expected to have read the assigned material before each class and to come to class prepared for a discussion of the issues raised in the material. I will freely call on you, by name, in class to answer questions about the material, so come prepared. The reading is spread out pretty evenly, with about three readings per week.

I recommend that the graduate students planning to take Psych 551 keep copies of all readings from this class, since I will expect you to be familiar with them in the Spring semester and on your Comprehensive exams.

SEMINAR PARTICIPATION

Since some of you have not taken a seminar before, it might be helpful to know what to expect. A seminar is defined as, "a small group of students in college or graduate school engaged in original research or intensive study under the guidance of a professor." It is from the Latin word seminarium which means "seed plot" or a place where new ideas are grown. Originally, for the Romans and the Greeks, seminars were small informal "wine and cheese" gatherings of learned men (before affirmative action) to discuss important and new ideas. It gradually changed to refer to a class, but retained the idea of discussion, so, ironically, in this class we have a seminar to discuss wine (if not cheese).

Because this is a seminar, class attendance and participation are required. If you miss a class, I will have to deduct points from your participation grade. You cannot participate in a seminar that you do not attend. As a rule of thumb, students who miss two or more classes will lose a whole grade, for example, going from A to a B, or worse, a B to a C.

In addition, all students (undergraduate as well as graduate) will be required to write and turn in electronically a one page (double-spaced) reaction paper. Each week there will be at least one recent research paper among the readings. The reaction paper should discuss briefly how the more theoretical papers relate to the research presented. These reactions will serve to promote discussion and focus our work each week. Be prepared.

Your participation grade will be based, in part, on the quality of your reactions as well as on your in-class discussion.

Reaction papers: The topic of the course is addictive behaviors. In order to provide an understanding of addictive behaviors, a theory has to address four important questions: 1) Why do people in general use psychoactive substances?; 2) Why do some people use more than others?; 3) Why do some people become dependent/ addicted/ abusers/whatever?; and 4) What can be done to alleviate this dependence/ addiction/ abuse/whatever? Your reaction papers can address how each reading answers these questions, and how effectively the reading answers the questions (e.g. do the authors have good data or other evidence to back up their hypotheses? Do they provide a good description or definition of the phenomenon they discuss? Is the theory plausible?) Note that your reaction paper should be short (one page each week), and thus very much to the point about the reading.

Class Discussions: Examples of some discussion from past classes include: 1) How do 12-Step treatment approaches relate to disease models of alcohol and drug addiction? 2) Are all addicts physically dependent on a substance? If not, how does one decide if they are dependent? What are the important issues influencing this decision? Is there such a thing as psychological dependence without physical dependence? 3) Should drug laws be changed based on the actions or the consequences of the drugs? Should drugs be banned? 4) Can we predict the development of alcoholism on the basis of genetic or personality factors? 5) How does ethnicity influence substance use? Does knowledge of this influence lead to stereotyping?

Graduate students have an additional participation requirement. Each graduate student will choose a week and lead the discussion of the readings for that week. This will also involve doing one extra reading for that week and preparing a presentation of that paper in a way that facilitates discussion of the other work. Obviously, you will need to meet with me ahead of time. This is to give you the experience of leading a discussion. Note that this does not relieve the other class members of their duty to read all the class material and write a reaction before the class. In addition, if one of the undergraduates wants to try this one week, I can make arrangements and help out with that.

GRADING

Your grade will be determined by your seminar participation including your weekly reaction papers and participation in the class discussions (50 %), your performance on the midterm (20 %), and your performance on the final exam (30 %). Requirements for participation are discussed below. The midterm and the final will be essay exams. The final exam will be comprehensive for the course.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Week 1; August 19:

Introduction

Nature of class (What is a seminar?)

How the class will be conducted

What will be covered in the class

Short assessment of your current knowledge

Week 2; August 26:

Defining and Addressing Substance Abuse

Week 3; Sept 2:

Why Do People (Ab)Use Psychoactive Substances? "Traditional" Formulations and Models

Weeks 4 & 5; September 9 & 16:

Why Do People (Ab)Use Psychoactive Substances? Neuroscience, Genetics and Learning

Week 6; September 23:

Why Do People (Ab)Use Psychoactive Substances? Developmental Hypotheses

Weeks 7 & 8: September 30 & October 7

Why Do People (Ab)Use Psychoactive Substances? Cognitive and Social Learning Theories

Weeks 9 and 10: October 14 & October 21

Ethnic, Cultural and Social Issues Associated with Drug Abuse

Week 11: October 28, MIDTERM EXAM

Week 12: November 4

Some Examples of Very Negative Consequences of Addiction

Weeks 13 & 14: November 11 & 18

Paths to Recovery: Treatment, Self-Help Groups & Natural Recovery

Week 15: December 2

Course Wrap-Up

Exam Week: FINAL EXAM