

Global Mental Health and Development SUMMER 2024

Course Description

This course will explore the subject of human mental health and development in populations around the world, with additional emphasis on the role that development during childhood plays in shaping long-term health, illness, and well-being of both the individual and their societies. We will examine a collection of global health problems deeply rooted in rapidly changing social structures and that transcend national and other administrative boundaries. Although taught from a psychological perspective, this course is necessarily interdisciplinary. The class can be considered ideal for students wishing to explore a variety of subject areas with an eye toward their own possible professional trajectories – public health, anthropology, economics, epidemiology, medicine, and psychology – and to better consider the interrelated complexities of psychosocial, political, economic, and environmental factors that govern physical and mental health in our world.

Why take this course while studying abroad?!? This course will be taught while students are studying abroad. The value of taking this course while away from your home, school, and known places of comfort is that it will help to leverage better insights into how your own society (e.g., the US) conceives of mental health, but also how the culture you're embedded in views mental health and illness. Guest lectures from several local scientists and scholars during the course will help to bring this contrast to light.

The course will be divided into three major themes:

1. **The Science of Mental Health:** We will consider how various scientific disciplines – psychology, developmental biology, genetics, neuroscience, anthropology, and medicine – have shaped our understanding of what constitutes adaptive and maladaptive human psychological development at our most “plastic” periods of development. Yet mental health is more than merely the absence of disease—it is an evolving human resource that helps humans adapt to the challenges of everyday life, resist infections, cope with adversity, feel a sense of personal well-being, and interact with their surroundings in ways that promote successful development. We will consider the psycho-social-biology of health and wellbeing and consider how experiences and environmental influences “get under the skin” to interact with underlying predispositions (e.g., genetics) to shape lifelong outcomes in both physical and mental well-being.
2. **Culturally Informed Models of Mental Health:** We will examine various overlapping and competing models of mental health. Much of the scientific literature that underlies the dominant frameworks for evaluating mental health derive from American and European epistemologies. However, growing psychological traditions in low- and middle-income countries as well as theoretical work from other cultural traditions (e.g., Asian/Easter) are providing important (and often corrective) insights into the basis of mental health and illness.
3. **Social Determinants and Contexts for Mental Health and Development Around the World:** Nations with the most positive indicators of population health, such as lower infant mortality and longer life expectancy, typically have higher levels of wealth (though not always lower levels of income inequality). As such, physical and mental health are a nation's wealth, as a sound body and mind enhance humans' capacity to develop a wide range of competencies that are necessary to become contributing members of a successful society. Throughout the course, we will consider the social, cultural, and environmental determinants (risk factors) of health. Three domains of influence thought to provide the basis for adaptive and/or maladaptive mental health in most areas of the world will be considered: (a) social support and inter-connectedness; (b) sound and appropriate nutrition; and (c) the resources within human's physical environment (safety/violence/stress; chemical/toxins, sociocultural institutions). We will consider scientific evidence about these types of risk factors and how they shape, either similarly or differently, mental health and development around the globe.

Readings

There is no text for this course. Readings for this course will consist of a combination of original research articles, position papers, official intergovernmental reports, book chapters, and news/media stories.

*****All readings posted as .pdfs on the course's Canvas site.*****

Course Requirements (& % of grade)

- 1. Question of the Day (QOD) (50%):** Timely engagement with class material – lectures and readings – will be as critical to student learning as it will be to the overall richness of the class. Prior to the end of each class meeting and based on lecture, discussion and readings of a given day, students will complete brief written reflections on the day's lecture and class discussion. The goal of the QOD is to get you to think about an issue of relevance to the class and to provide your thoughts and opinions about the issue as well as to use material from the class to justify your response. **There is no right or wrong answer. However, there are “adequate amounts of effort” vs. “obviously inadequate amounts of effort” as well as clear use of the day's lecture and reading(s). This response is to be in your own words based on your own thoughts on each given day.**
- 2. Discussion Participation (25%):** Although there will always be approximately 30 minutes of lecture each class, there will also be plenty of time for active discussion, both during the class meeting time and following the QOD. Active participating in these discussions is a requirement of the class and will be graded subjectively by the instructor. Feedback will be given regularly to help you calibrate.
- 3. Oral Paper (25%):** From an instructor-provided list of topics, you will select a topic about which to prepare a paper that you will deliver to the class in a 10-minute presentation in the final week of class. The topic will require you to consider the pros and cons of both sides of a “hot topic”. For example, “there is no culturally relevant reason for a society to tolerate child marriage”, or “social investments into human development should be greatest during the ____ period of development.” A separate set of guidelines for this project will be distributed by Week 2.

Course Topic Schedule & Assigned Readings (Developed as a 4 week program that can be adapted to 5 weeks)

*****Class meets Monday-Thursday; there is no class meeting on Friday**

| Week/Date | Topics/Activities | Readings for this date: |
|---------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Week 1 Monday | Course introduction; the state of human mental health & development today | Syllabus & Readings 1 |
| Week 1 Tuesday | Culturally inclusive theories of mental health & development | Readings 2 |
| Week 1 Wednesday | <i>Guest Lecture: Local Realities & Models of Mental Health</i> | TBD |
| Week 1 Thursday | The “determinants” of mental health and development around the world | Readings 3 |
| Week 2 Monday | Poverty as a context for mental health and development | Readings 4 |
| Week 2 Tuesday | Malnutrition as a context for mental health and development | Readings 5 |

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| Week 2 Wednesday | War and conflict as a context for mental health and development | Readings 6 |
| Week 2 Thursday | Climate change as a context for mental health and development | Readings 7, 8 |
| Week 3 Monday | <i>Guest Lecture: Culturally specific determinants of mental health and development</i> | TBD |
| Week 3 Tuesday | Bio-embedding of experience; Developmental origins of mental illness and dysfunction | Readings 9, 10 |
| Week 3 Wednesday | First 1000 days of life | Readings 11 |
| Week 3 Thursday | Child & adolescent mental health and development | Readings 12, 13 |
| Week 4 Monday | Adult mental health and mental development | Readings 14 |
| Week 4 Tuesday | ***Student oral presentations | N.A. |
| Week 4 Wednesday | ***Student oral presentations | N.A. |
| Week 4 Thursday | Final discussion and course summary | Readings TBD |

Course's Required Readings

Students are required to read the assigned readings in advance of/in time for the class they assigned (as indicated in the schedule).

Readings for the course will comprise a mix of published scientific and organizational briefs, often written for the general public, as well as a carefully selected set of theoretical and empirical papers (chapters or journal articles). It is felt that the former will facilitate an understanding of the latter, and lectures and class discussions will help to solidify student understanding of the readings.

All readings will be available in .pdf form on the course's Canvas site – NOTE: actual readings may change

WEEK 1

Monday – Course introduction: The state of human mental health & development today

1. Rebouças, P., Falcão, I. R., & Barreto, M. L. (2022). Social inequalities and their impact on health: a current and global perspective. *Jornal de pediatria*, 98, 55-65.

Tuesday – Culturally inclusive theories of mental health and development

2. Zheng, X., Wang, R., Hoekstra, A. Y., Krol, M. S., Zhang, Y., Guo, K., ... & Wang, C. (2021). Consideration of culture is vital if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. *One Earth*, 4(2), 307-319.

Wednesday – Guest Lecture: Local Realities & Models of Mental Health

Reading TBD

Thursday – The “determinants” of children’s health and development around the world

3. Walker et al. (2007). Risk factors for adverse outcomes in developing countries. *Lancet*, 369, 145-157.

WEEK 2

Monday – Poverty as a context for mental health and development

4. Lu, C., Black, M. M., & Richter, L. M. (2016). Risk of poor development in young children in low-income and middle-income countries: An estimation and analysis at the global, regional, and country level. *The Lancet Global Health*, 4(12), e916-e922.

Optional this lecture:

Gromada, A., Rees, G., & Chzhen, Y. (2020). Worlds of Influence: Understanding What Shapes Child Well-Being in Rich Countries. Innocenti Report Card 16. *UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti*.

Tuesday – Malnutrition as a context for mental health and development

5. Harris, J., & Nisbett, N. (2020). The basic determinants of malnutrition: resources, structures, ideas and power.

Wednesday – War and conflict as a context for mental health and development

6. Catani, C. (2018). Mental health of individuals living in war zones: a risk and protection perspective. *World Psychiatry*, 17(1), 104.

Thursday – Climate change as a context form mental health and development

7. Burke, S. E., Sanson, A. V., & Van Hoorn, J. (2018). The psychological effects of climate change. *Current psychiatry reports*, 20(5), 1-8.
8. Van Sistine, T. (2022). Campuses are offering therapy for anxiety over climate change. *Washington Post*

WEEK 3

Monday – Guest Lecture: Culturally specific determinants of mental health and development

Reading TBD

Tuesday – Bio-embedding of experience; Developmental origins of disease

9. Barker, D. J. (2003). The developmental origins of adult disease. *European journal of epidemiology*, 18(8), 733-736.
10. Ellis, B.J. & Boyce, W.T. (2008). Biological sensitivity to context. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17 (3), 183-187.

Wednesday – First 1000 days of life

11. McDonald, C. M., & Thorne-Lyman, A. L. (2017). The importance of the first 1,000 days: An epidemiological perspective. In *The biology of the first 1,000 days* (pp. 3-14). CRC Press.

Thursday – Child & adolescent health and development

12. . Grantham-McGregor et al. (2007). Developmental potential in the first 5 years for children in developing countries. *Lancet*, 369, 60-70.
13. Dahl, R. E., Allen, N. B., Wilbrecht, L., & Suleiman, A. B. (2018). Importance of investing in adolescence from a developmental science perspective. *Nature*, 554(7693), 441.

WEEK 4**Monday** – Adult health and development

14. Lee, F. S., Heimer, H., Giedd, J. N., Lein, E. S., Šestan, N., Weinberger, D. R., & Casey, B. J. (2014). Adult mental health—opportunity and obligation. *Science*, 346(6209), 547-549.

Tuesday – *** Student oral presentations *****Wednesday** – *** Student oral presentations *****Thursday** – Final discussion and summary of course
Reading TBD