

SOCIOLOGY 2280 – 001

SOCIOLOGY OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Winter Semester 2025
Lecture: 3 units
Online Asynchronous
December 30, 2024 – January 17, 2025

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to major theories and research pertaining to the study of mental health, mental illness, and psychological distress. The first half of the course will examine definitions, experiences, and treatment of mental health and illness. We will compare sociological definitions of mental illness with approaches offered by other disciplines. The second half of the course will focus on differences in mental health across race, class, and gender, and how the criminal legal system, social networks, and health care providers respond to people experiencing mental illness. We will discuss labeling and stigma, the social origins of mental health inequality, and criminalization of disorders. Throughout the course, we will learn theories and concepts extending from the sociology of mental health via critical engagement of the research literature, short quizzes, and class activities.

LEARNING GOALS

By taking this course, students will gain insight into the utility of a sociological perspective for the study of mental health. We will address questions related to who is or can be psychologically healthy, how mental health and medicine is organized, how mental health is structured and distributed, and the complex interplay between these factors.

This course is designed with the following objectives in mind:

1. Build knowledge of major theories and concepts in the sociology of mental health
2. Develop insight into how sociologists study, measure, and explain mental health and illness
3. Understand critical perspectives on the social and institutional determinants of mental health
4. Evaluate instances of labels and treatments of mental illness as mechanisms of social control
5. Enhance skills as a critical reader and communicator of research on mental health

REQUIRED READINGS

Readings for this course will come from a course textbook, peer-reviewed academic journals, and a book manuscript. Students are required to read materials before class to understand

lectures and to engage in discussions. Students will need to purchase the book listed below. Readings not derived from the textbook listed below will be freely available on [HuskyCT](#).

[*Sociology of Mental Disorder*](#) by William C. Cockerham. 12th Edition. ISBN: 9781032526041. This textbook is available for purchase via the [UConn bookstore](#).

SOFTWARE/TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

The software/technical requirements for this course include:

- [HuskyCT/Blackboard](#)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader or a similar program
- Microsoft Office (free to UConn students through <https://software.uconn.edu/>)

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

For a three credit course, [University policy](#) stipulates that for every 1 hour in class there is a minimum of 2 hours of student work outside of class. To this end, assignments in this course are designed to assess your knowledge of topics covered in class in various ways.

LECTURE RECORDINGS

There will be 24 lecture recordings this semester. Each recording will present information and then as you to fill in answers to a few questions that will pop up as the recording progresses.

In the case of open ended lecture recording questions, HuskyCT will automatically grade these as worth the full amount of points.

Throughout the semester, I will go through submissions to determine whether open-ended questions were answered fully.

Thus, the grade that is entered by HuskyCT upon submission may change thereafter depending on my judgment.

Please note that lectures will typically cover readings for a given day, but will often extend beyond material covered in readings.

QUIZZES

Students will be given regular quizzes designed to help you master material as well as assist your ability to apply concepts to real world situations.

There will be 26 quizzes throughout the semester. I will drop your **two** lowest quiz grades.

These quizzes will be short (i.e., 2–10 questions) that address readings and topics covered in lecture recordings.

Quizzes will feature multiple choice questions. Please contact the instructor if you would like to review a quiz.

All quizzes are open book, open note, but should not be completed with classmates. Quizzes will not be timed.

VIRTUAL MEETING

Because this class is asynchronous and online, engagement with me and your peers is limited. Hence, I ask that you schedule at least one meeting with me during the few weeks of this semester.

Please find available times to meet via Nexus:

https://nexus.uconn.edu/secure_per/schedule1.php?stser=3710

In cases where the specified times do not work with your schedule, please email me and we can find another time.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Class assignments will include exercises conducted throughout the semester. An example of a class assignment would include writing a few sentences that apply a theory or concept discussed in lecture to a topic of your choosing.

If you have an excused reason for missing a class assignment or quiz, you may make up the points **within four days of the date of the missed class** by completing the following assignment.

EXCUSED SUBMISSION ASSIGNMENTS

In the event that students do not submit a quiz or class assignment by a given deadline, they may complete an excused submission assignment.

Excused absences include severe health problems, hospital stays, family emergencies, religious holidays, disability related events, and varsity sports.

Unexcused absences include anything else such as work commitments, obligations for other classes, job interviews, and extracurricular activities.

It is your responsibility to communicate with me about issues related to submitting work on time. Please notify me ahead of time if you anticipate needing to submit an assignment after the due date.

These assignments should be written as follows:

1. Review the Material

- a. Watch the lecture recording, go through the slides, and finish the readings for that course period.
2. Submit a 3 to 5 page double-spaced paper in size 12 font with 1-inch margins that does the following:
 - a. Identifies and explains the main concepts, arguments, and theories covered in the lecture recording
 - b. Summarizes the significance of the readings covered in the lecture recording
 - c. Applies the main concepts or theories to one's own life in at least 2 ways
3. Submit documentation of your excused absence

GRADING

Your final grade will be broken down as follows:

15%	= Lecture Recording Questions (150 total points; 24 lecture recordings)
52%	= Quizzes (520 total points; 26 quizzes; drop the lowest 2 quiz grades)
5%	= Meet with Professor Talbert at least once (50 points)
28%	= Class Assignments (280 total points; 11 assignments)
100%	= 1000 Points (Total points available)

A = 93 to 100%	B- = 80 to 82%	D+ = 67 to 69%
A- = 90 to 92%	C+ = 77 to 79%	D = 63 to 67%
B+ = 87 to 89%	C = 73 to 76%	D- = 60 to 62%
B = 83 to 86%	C- = 70 to 72%	F = 59 to 0%

I understand you will work hard on assignments, and you may not be satisfied with a grade you receive.

If this is the case, I encourage you to schedule a meeting with me at least 24 hours after the assignment is graded. This allows you time to critically assess the assignment and look over any issues you might see.

DEADLINES

Deadlines are based on Eastern Standard Time. I reserve the right to change dates accordingly as the semester progresses. All changes will be communicated in an appropriate manner.

CLASS STRUCTURE

This class will be delivered asynchronously online. As such, it will rely heavily on students critically engaging readings, theories, and concepts on their own in addition to lecture recordings. In order to build a web of knowledge within this class, it will be important for you to complete lectures, assignments, and quizzes regularly. Failure to do so will inhibit performance, and your grade will suffer.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to race/ethnicity, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationality. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

In addition, if I mispronounce your name at any time, please correct me. It is important to me to get everyone's name right.

At times, assignments may necessitate students engaging the instructor in meaningful discussion. Each of you comes to class with a unique background and perspective, which is valued. It is normal for people to disagree, but it is important to do it in a mature and thoughtful manner.

Please strive to understand others, suspend judgment, and remain open-minded. You will always be expected to be polite and respectful to all members of the class.

GETTING HELP

I look forward to helping you get the most out of this course and I encourage you to schedule times to meet with me. To do so, please send me an email. Please be sure to be specific in your email messages so that I can provide you with the best help.

Due to federal legislation that is in place to protect your privacy, I am unable discuss grading via email. If you would like to ask me about grades, you must attend my office hours or schedule an appointment with me.

Students who feel they may benefit from speaking with a mental health professional can find support and resources through the [Student Health and Wellness-Mental Health](#) office.

The [Academic Achievement Center](#) offers online course support, workshops, and supplemental instruction.

Additionally, UConn's [Keep Learning](#) site will provide students with strategies on how to be successful in your classes, along with tips on how to communicate with your instructors and classmates and ensure you maintain your mental health.

POLICY AGAINST DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND RELATED INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

The University is committed to maintaining an environment free of discrimination or discriminatory harassment directed toward any person or group within its community—students, employees, or visitors. Academic and professional excellence can flourish only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect.

All members of the University community are responsible for the maintenance of an academic and work environment in which people are free to learn and work without fear of discrimination or discriminatory harassment. In addition, inappropriate amorous relationships can undermine the University's mission when those in positions of authority abuse or appear to abuse their authority. To that end, and in accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination and discriminatory harassment, as well as inappropriate amorous relationships, and such behavior will be met with appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the University.

Additionally, to protect the campus community, all non-confidential University employees (including faculty) are required to report sexual assaults, intimate partner violence, and/or stalking involving a student that they witness or are told about to the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE). Please be aware that while the information you provide will remain private, it will not be confidential and will be shared with University officials who can help. An exception to this reporting exists if students disclose information as a part of coursework submitted to an instructor in connection with a course assignment. Even in the absence of such obligation, all employees are encouraged to contact OIE if they become aware of information that suggests a safety risk to the University community or any member thereof. The University takes all reports with the utmost seriousness.

As a member of the University of Connecticut student community, you are held to certain standards and academic policies. In addition, there are numerous resources available to help you succeed in your academic work. Please review these important [standards, policies and resources](#), which include: The Student Code, Academic Integrity, Resources on Avoiding Cheating and Plagiarism, Copyrighted Materials, Credit Hours and Workload, Netiquette and Communication, Adding or Dropping a Course, Academic Calendar, Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Romantic Relationships, and Sexual Assault Reporting Policy.

ACCOMODATIONS

The University of Connecticut is committed to protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and assuring that the learning environment is accessible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please let me know so that we can discuss options. Students who require accommodations should contact the [Center for Students with Disabilities](#), Wilbur Cross Building Room 204 (860) 486-2020.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic misconduct is not tolerated and includes, but is not limited to plagiarism, sharing, copying, or cheating on any of the exams or papers. This course expects all students to act in accordance with the [Guidelines for Academic Integrity](#) at the University of Connecticut. Because questions of intellectual property are important to the field of this course, we will discuss academic honesty as a topic and not just a policy. If you have questions about academic integrity or intellectual property, you should consult with me.

Standards of academic integrity will be strictly enforced. Behaving dishonestly in order to get a better grade is unfair to the vast majority of students who behave honestly. Any violations of the code will result in, at a minimum, a grade of 0 on the assessment or assignment and may also result in further penalties. Forging any type of documentation or excuse (e.g., letters from doctors or regarding family emergencies) will be penalized. In addition, as required by University policy, academic misconduct will be reported in writing to the Dean of Students, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the College or School in which you are enrolled.

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Lectures, materials, slides, notes, handouts, assignment instructions, rubrics, and displays are protected by state common law and federal copyright law. They are my own original expressions and I've recorded them prior or during my lecture in order to ensure that I obtain copyright protection. Students are authorized to take notes in my class; however, this authorization extends only to making one set of notes for your own personal use and no other use. If you are authorized to record lectures, you may not copy this recording or any other material, provide copies of either to anyone else, or make a commercial use of them without prior permission from me.

IMPORTANT REGISTRATION DATES

According to University policy, January 2 is the last day to add/drop the course. January 16 the last day to withdraw from the course with a W on your transcript (<https://wintersession.uconn.edu/dates-fees/>).

The tentative course schedule is printed below. I reserve the right to alter this syllabus at any time, and I will notify students in a timely and appropriate manner if changes occur.

COURSE SCHEDULE

UNIT 1: DEFINITIONS, EXPERIENCES, AND TREATMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ILLNESS

DECEMBER 31: SYLLABUS & SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. "The Promise." *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Pp. 3–24).

JANUARY 1: MADNESS AND SOCIETY

Chapter 1 "Madness and Society" in *Sociology of Mental Disorder*.

JANUARY 1: MENTAL ILLNESS AS PSYCHIATRIC DISORDER

Bruce, Martha L., and Patrick J. Raue. 2013. "Mental Illness as Psychiatric Disorder." Pp. 41–58 in *Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*, edited by C. S. Aneshensel.

Kane, Joseph. 2011. "Batman and Psychiatry – Psychiatry in the Movies." *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 199(5):359–359.

JANUARY 2: PSYCHIATRY AND MEDICALIZATION

Kendler, Kenneth S. 2024. "Are Psychiatric Disorders Brain Diseases?—A New Look at an Old Question." *JAMA Psychiatry*.

Conrad, Peter. 1975. "The Discovery of Hyperkinesis : Notes on the Medicalization of Deviant Behavior." *Social Problems* 23(1):12–21.

JANUARY 2: WHAT IS A PSYCHIATRIC DIAGNOSIS

Kleinman, Arthur. 1988. "What is a Psychiatric Diagnosis?" Pp. 63–73 in *Rethinking Psychiatry: From Cultural Category to Personal Experience*. New York: Free Press.

JANUARY 3: TYPES OF MENTAL DISORDER

Chapter 2 "Types of Mental Disorder" in *Sociology of Mental Disorder*.

JANUARY 3: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DEPRESSION

Horwitz, Allan V. 2011. "Creating an Age of Depression: The Social Construction and Consequences of the Major Depression Diagnosis." *Society and Mental Health* 1(1):41–54.

JANUARY 4: MEASURING MENTAL ILLNESS

Kessler, Ronald C. 2002. "The Categorical versus Dimensional Assessment Controversy in the Sociology of Mental Illness." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43(2):171–88.

World Health Organization. 2022. "Prevalence of Mental Disorders."

JANUARY 4: ACTING MENTALLY DISORDERED

Chapter 3 "Acting Mentally Disordered: The Examples of Schizophrenia, Anxiety, and Depression" in *Sociology of Mental Disorder*.

Kyaga, Simon, Paul Lichtenstein, Marcus Boman, Christina Hultman, Niklas Långström, and Mikael Landén. 2011. "Creativity and Mental Disorder: Family Study of 300 000 People with Severe Mental Disorder." *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 199(5):373–79.

UNIT 2: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ILLNESS

JANUARY 5: CONCEPTS AND CURES

Chapter 4 "Mental Disorder: Concepts of Causes and Cures" in *Sociology of Mental Disorder*.

Aneshensel, Carol S. 2005. "Research in Mental Health: Social Etiology versus Social Consequences." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 46(3):221–8.

JANUARY 5: DEVIANCE

Chapter 5 "Mental Disorder as Deviant Social Behavior" in *Sociology of Mental Disorder*.

JANUARY 6: STRESS PROCESS MODEL

Pearlin, Leonard I. 1989. "The Sociological Study of Stress." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 30(3):241–56.

Hargrove, Taylor W., Carolyn T. Halpern, Lauren Gaydos, Jon M. Hussey, Eric A. Whitsel, Nancy Dole, Robert A. Hummer, and Kathleen Mullan Harris. 2020. "Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Trajectories of Depressive Symptoms Across Early- and Mid-Life Among the Add Health Cohort." *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities* 7(4):619–29.

UNIT 3: SURVEYING PATTERNS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ILLNESS

JANUARY 6: SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY

Chapter 6 "Mental Disorder: Social Epidemiology" in *Sociology of Mental Disorder*.

JANUARY 7: SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Durkheim, Émile. 1897 [1997]. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. Translated by George Simpson and John A. Spaulding. New York: Routledge. (Pp. xiii–xxxii).

León-Pérez, Gabriela, Caroline Richards, and Amy L. Non. 2021. "Precarious Work and Parenting Stress among Mexican Immigrant Women in the United States." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 83(3):881–97.

JANUARY 7: SOCIAL CLASS

Chapter 7 “Mental Disorder: Social Class” in *Sociology of Mental Disorder*.

JANUARY 8: AGE, GENDER, AND MARRIAGE

Chapter 8 “Mental Disorder: Age, Gender, and Marital Status” in *Sociology of Mental Disorder*.

Morris, Bonnie J. 1994. “On the Genesis of Anorexia Nervosa: A Feminist Perspective.” *Medical Hypotheses* 42(3):180–82.

JANUARY 9: NEIGHBORHOODS AND MIGRATION

Chapter 9 “Mental Disorder: Urban versus Rural Living, COVID-19, and Migration” in *Sociology of Mental Disorder*.

JANUARY 10: RACE AND MENTAL HEALTH

Chapter 10 “Mental Disorder: Race” in *Sociology of Mental Disorder*.

Brown, Tony N. 2003. “Critical Race Theory Speaks to the Sociology of Mental Health: Mental Health Problems Produced by Racial Stratification.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 44:292–301.

JANUARY 11: RACIALIZED STRESSORS

Williams, David R. 2018. “Stress and the Mental Health of Populations of Color: Advancing Our Understanding of Race-related Stressors.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 59(4): 466–485.

Talbert, Ryan D., Jasmine L. Aboumahboob, and Cailey Hauver. 2023. “Local Confederate Memorialization and Gender-Ethnic Variation in Mental Health among Black Residents.” *Sociological Perspectives* 66(5):798–819.

JANUARY 12: SOCIAL PSYCHIATRY

Fanon, Frantz. 2019 [1960]. “The Meeting Between Society and Psychiatry.” Pp. 511–530 in *Alienation and Freedom*, edited by J. Khalfa and R. J. C. Young.

JANUARY 13: INTERSECTIONALITY

Beauboeuf-Lafontant, Tamara. 2007. “‘You Have to Show Strength’: An Exploration of Gender, Race, and Depression.” *Gender and Society* 21(1):28–51.

Schmitz, Rachel M., Brandon Andrew Robinson, Jennifer Tabler, Brett Welch, and Sidra Rafaqut. 2020. “LGBTQ+ Latino/a Young People’s Interpretations of Stigma and Mental Health: An Intersectional Minority Stress Perspective.” *Society and Mental Health* 10(2):163–79.

JANUARY 14: STIGMA

Chapter 13 “Stigma” in *Sociology of Mental Disorder*.

Manago, Bianca, and Trenton D. Mize. 2021. “The Status and Stigma Consequences of Mental Illness Labels, Deviant Behavior, and Fear.” *Social Science Research* 102690:1–15.

UNIT 4: SOCIAL CONTROL OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ILLNESS

JANUARY 15: LAW

Chapter 15 “Mental Disorder and the Law” in *Sociology of Mental Disorder*.

Talbert, Ryan D., and Evelyn J. Patterson. 2023. “Formal Social Control and Mental Health: Ethnic Variation among Black Women.” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 10(1):139–158.

JANUARY 16: MENTAL ILLNESS AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Metzl, Jonathan. 2009. *The Protest Psychosis*. Beacon Press: Boston. “Preface,” Part 1 “Ionia,” and Part 6 “Remnants”