The Psychology of Trauma
Psychology 477
University of Michigan
Fall, 2015

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Class Meets: 269 Weiser Hall
Wednesday 1-4 PM
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Course Description:
This three-credit advanced undergraduate seminar in psychological science is focused on the study of traumatic stress and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Using readings, lectures, clinical case presentations, films, and class discussions, we cover the history, etiology, theories, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of traumatic stress at different ages across the lifespan. Following the developmental psychopathology model, research on relevant risk and protective factors associated with traumatic stress is also presented. The course begins with discussion of a range of traumatic events and definitions of trauma symptoms and responses. Next, theoretical frameworks and models useful for understanding traumatic stress reactions are introduced, including developmental psychopathology, cognitive development, neuropsychology, and intergenerational systems theory. In addition, assessment, diagnosis, and the evidence for best intervention practices in treating traumatic stress are examined. Each week a didactic presentation is followed by a clinical case presentation, a film, and/or an invited speaker. Class activities, assignments and discussion center on assessing, explaining and diagnosing traumatic stress in films and readings. Full preparation and participation in discussion is expected at each class with questions given in advance. There will be weekly, required short essays responding to questions based on the reading and applied to in-class presentations or films. The final paper (approximately 10-12 pages) requires students to apply course concepts to a character in a novel (to be selected) by 1) identifying traumatic events, 2) diagnosing traumatic stress reactions, 2) evaluating both risk and protective features, 4) proposing a treatment plan, and 5) outlining a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention. Grades are based on the short essays (50%), the final paper (40%), and class discussion and preparation (10%).

All readings are located on the Ctools website:

Overrides:  The class is limited in enrollment size to 30 spaces that are currently filled. Therefore no overrides will be given.

Attendance:  Attendance is required. If, for ANY REASON, you know that you cannot be present for class sessions you should email me right away.

Written Assignments:  Written assignments take the form of weekly reaction papers or essays and one final course paper.  Assignments are due at the next class following each session. The essays are approximately two pages in length and typically consist of an assignment based on the reading or class presentation that week. The final paper is due at the end of the term. For this paper you will read an assigned novel and 1) identifying traumatic events, 2) diagnose the main character’s traumatic stress reactions, 2) evaluate both risk and protective features, 4) propose a treatment plan, and 5) outline a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention. The final paper is approximately 10-12 pages in length, double-spaced.

Plagiarism:  During this course you will be asked to review and critically analyze the written work of psychologists and authors. It is a serious academic offense at the University of Michigan to plagiarize the
work of others (including the work of other students). That means, it is unlawful for you to use others’ words as your own, to paraphrase or quote without proper credit (citation of the author and the work), to give credit in one part of a report but not in a different part of a report that uses someone else’s words or ideas, or to take others’ work and submit it as your own. If you are suspected of plagiarism, your case will be reviewed and investigated by the Academic Judiciary Committee of LSA, which determines the appropriate disciplinary action. In this course you will be working as part of a research team. Therefore, it is essential that you very carefully note parts of reports that reflect team effort and ideas and parts that reflect your individual contribution.

**Late Assignments:** A written assignment is handed out at each class session to be completed and handed in the following week. These assignments generally consist of your applying course concepts to the reading, presentations or films. Your thoughts are reported in a two-page paper. In deference to your classmates who turn in their assignments on time, there will be NO late papers or assignments accepted. This is not negotiable.

**Grades:** Grades are based on the following: short essays (50%), the final paper (40%), and class discussion and preparation (10%). A 100 point system reflects alphabetical grades as follows: 100-98 = A+; 97-93 = A; 92-90 = A-; 89-87 = B+; 86-83 = B; 82-80 = B-; 79-77 = C+; 76-73 = C; 72-10 = C-; 69-67 = D+; 66-63 = D; 62-60 = D-, below 60 = E.

**Feedback:** I look forward to teaching this course and providing you with an enriched class experience throughout the semester. I am very interested in your evaluation of this course and suggestions for improving the educational experience for you and for others. I will be soliciting your feedback at regular intervals throughout the semester via ratings, but also welcome emails and constructive comments at any time. While there are no set office hours, I am available to meet individually by appointment. If you would like to set up an appointment please do so via email.

**September 9  Introduction: The Psychology of Trauma**

- **Film:** Ordinary People – adolescent accident trauma
- **Written Assignment 1:** Identifying traumatic events and symptoms in family members.
- **Readings for assignment #1:**
  - DSM 5 Criteria for PTSD Diagnosis

September 16  Identifying Traumatic Events and Traumatic Responses
Discussion: Trauma and symptoms in adolescents and their families (film and Zoe case).
Film: Bowling for Columbine – Traumatic high school gun violence
Written Assignment #2: Traumatic events and symptoms in Columbine students.
Readings for assignment #2:
Vicary, A. M., & Fraley, C. (2010). Student reactions to the shootings at Virginia Tech and
Northern Illinois University: Does sharing grief and support over the internet affect


Framework of the outreach after a school shooting and the students’ perceptions of the
provided support. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 5*.

*Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 45*, 407-415

September 23  Theories Explaining Trauma Symptoms – Part I -Vulnerability
Discussion of Columbine assignment: What can/should we do about gun violence?
Lecture: War and PTSD, Vulnerability to PTSD
Written assignment #3: Holocaust survivor
Readings:


parental trauma in children of holocaust survivors. In Catherall D. R. (Ed.) *Handbook of


September 30  Theories Explaining Trauma Symptoms – Part II – Development & Neuroendocrine
Discuss the holocaust survivor case in terms of intergenerational theory.
Lecture: The Developmental Theory and Traumatic Stress
3-4 Guest Presenter: Maria Galano, M.S., Child PTSD and Cortisol Stress Reactivity
Clinical Presentation: The Case of Sam
Written assignment #4: Give an explanation for the symptoms that Sam expressed following the death of his mother using developmental and neuroendocrine theories, and discuss whether and how these were addressed in the treatment.

Readings:

October 7   Theories Explaining Trauma Symptoms – Part III – The Brain
Discuss the developmental and hormonal theories and the case of Sam.
Lecture: Neuro-cognitive-psychological theories of trauma ???.
3PM Guest Presenter: Rebecca Sripada, Ph.D. Neural Dysregulation in Adult PTSD
Written assignment #5: The Case of Luis P.
Readings:

October 14   Theories Explaining Trauma Symptoms – Part IV - Culture
Discuss the case of Luis P and questions at end of chapter
Coping, Culture and Traumatic Stress: Film: The Color Purple
Written assignment #6: The case of Celie – discuss cultural risk and protective factors
Readings:


**October 21**  
Coping, Culture and Traumatic Stress- Theories IV- Intergenerational  
Discuss the case of Celie – trauma, cultural risk and protective factors  
Hurricane Katrina – Added trauma of racism  
Lecture: Intergenerational Transmission of PTSD: Culture & Coping with Traumatic Stress  
3-4 Guest Presenter Hannah Clark, M.S.: American Indian Historical Trauma  
Written assignment #7: Identify cultural risk and protective factors for coping with traumatic events following Hurricane Katrina  
Readings: Begin to read one the assigned novels: TBA.

**October 28**  
Group Therapy  
Discussion: Identifying cultural risk and protective factors following hurricane Katrina  
Film: The Trouble with Evan, Part I  
Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model of risk and protection  
Assignment #8: Continue/finish reading the assigned novel, identify all of the traumas for the main character in the novel and apply assigned readings to the main character. DUE IN TWO WEEKS  
Readings:  


November 4  Therapy for Adolescents Traumatized by Abuse
Film: *The Trouble with Evan, Part II*
In class exercise: Licensing parents
3-4 Guest Presenter: Sara Tischler, LLMSW, Therapy with a traumatized child
Assignment #8: Continue/finish reading the assigned novel, identify all of the traumas for the main character in the novel and apply assigned readings to the main character. DUE IN NEXT WEEK
Readings from last week.

November 11  Therapy for Children Traumatized by Violence
Film: Bill Moyers Documentary
Presentation: The Kids’ Club Program
Written Assignment #9: Using the case of Evan as example, show exactly how one of the evidence-based practices (e.g., TF-CBT or the Kids’ Club Program) would be used for therapeutic intervention with Evan who was exposed to family violence and maltreatment and his parents.
Readings:


November 18  Therapy for Traumatized Adults
Presentation: The Moms’ Empowerment Program: Intervention for Women Exposed to Violence. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcodyFKKdVM&NR=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcodyFKKdVM&NR=1) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugTeOz7rsgE&NR=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugTeOz7rsgE&NR=1) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7v2LmM_FO-U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7v2LmM_FO-U)

Written assignment #10: Using Evan’s mom as example, discuss what might have helped her in parenting Evan earlier in his life.
Readings: The novel and


November 25  What differentiates stressful reactions from traumatic ones? Assessment
In-class activity: Differentiating between distress and trauma.
Assessment Protocol for Trauma Studies
Final Written Paper Assignment Handout
Readings: The novel.

December 2  Resilient Coping with Traumatic Events and Disasters
Lecture: Understanding the psychological construct of resilience.
Transitioning from Trauma: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf2vRcRcsE8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf2vRcRcsE8)
Film:  *Good Will Hunting* 126 minutes
Readings: The novel.

Bonanno (2012). Uses and abuses of the resilience construct: Loss, trauma, and health-related adversities. *Social Science and Medicine, 74*, 753-756.


December 9  Posttraumatic Growth
Film:  *Strong at the Broken Places* (38 minutes)
*Through a Child’s Eyes* (33 minutes)
Final papers due.