

GS SOWK 5912 3.0A - Summer 2006

Critical Perspectives in Mental Health

Time: Monday and Wednesday evenings 7:00 – 9:00 pm
May 1 – June 19, 2006

Location: Kinsmen Bldg., Room K1005

Instructor: Ann Thompson

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Course Description

Over the past ten years, the concept of mental health recovery has emerged as a viable alternative approach in mental health that has the potential not only for individual recovery but also for family recovery. This course will examine the challenging issues that confront social workers practising within the traditional mental health system, in particular, abuse of power, social control, and human rights. It will introduce the mental health recovery paradigm, with its emphasis on empowerment of individuals with serious mental health problems along with their family members, the importance of psychiatric survivor stories, the role of hope and resilience, the concept of developing wellness tools and strategies to enhance recovery, and the need for person-centred and strengths-based approaches in practice. It will also examine recovery-oriented systems and community programs, which help and hinder the implementation of recovery, and look at the implications for social work practice.

Course Objectives:

1. To gain a basic understanding of the issues confronting critical social workers within the traditional mental health system/medical model.
2. To examine a recent shift in perspective within mental health, to include the concept of mental health recovery, with a survivor and family focus.
3. To gain a basic understanding of the theory and practice of mental health recovery, as well as the recovery competencies needed to work in mental health.
4. To explore the application of recovery principles within social work practice, research and mental health policy.

Course Format:

Participation is key to our learning process. As graduate students you will be expected to read and reflect on the assigned readings prior to each class and then participate fully in weekly discussions. The experience of guest speakers will be used to illustrate and expand on concepts presented in this graduate seminar course.

Course Evaluation:

1. Class Participation (15%)

This course will be presented in a seminar style, which means that class discussions and student commitment to participation will be a necessary ingredient. Students are expected to attend class regularly and to come prepared to discuss their reactions to and reflections about the assigned readings. There is a **required text** and students will also be asked to complete **at least one additional reading from the course kit** per class. Students are encouraged to identify 2-3 key ideas or questions arising from each reading and be prepared to discuss these in class. Students will also be invited to bring media presentations of mental health stereotypes to class discussion as well.

The class participation mark will be based on **3** components:

- Regular class **attendance**
- Class participation – engaging in **discussions**
- **2 class readings** – Select 2 assigned readings from the course kit and prepare a **brief commentary** on each of your chosen articles (5 min. max.) along with **2 questions** based on each article. In your commentary please share with everyone the relevance of this article for you and your learning about mental health. Type your questions, including your name, and submit at the end of the class. Your comments **do not** have to be written down or handed in – just the questions.

2. 1st Assignment – Short Reflective Essay (25%)

Pat Capponi's book "Beyond the Crazy House" offers an informed and deeply humane critique of our mental health system in Canada. Through a number of psychiatric recovery stories, she reveals a treatment system in desperate need of reform. In this short essay, you are asked to reflect on her critique from the perspective of a provider. What role do you think a critical social worker might hope/expect to play within this system?

Due Date: Monday, June 5, 2006

Length: 5 pages, double spaced, 12 font.

3. 2nd Assignment: - Brief Outline of Plan for Final Paper (5%)

In no more than one page, briefly outline your project plan for the final assignment. Identify some of the literature sources you intend to use and your target audience. This outline can be completed in point form, if you wish.

Due Date: Monday June 12, 2006

NB. This assignment is **optional** for those students who wish to put more weight on the final paper with respect to marks – eg. 60%. Please notify the instructor in writing by June 12th, if you will **not** be completing this 2nd assignment.

3. 3rd Assignment – Final Paper (55%) (or 60% - see #3)

Incorporating the insights you have gained from course readings, Capponi's book, guest speakers, and class discussions:

- 1) Select an area of mental health (research, practice, program, policy, etc.) and critically examine it by locating it within perspectives of the traditional medical model and mental health recovery.
- 2) Based on your discussion, develop a project plan in this particular area of mental health (eg. a research study, mental health intervention, provider training session/workshop, community program, a mental health agency setting, etc.) that would contribute to the advancement of a recovery paradigm for mental health. Highlight implications for social work theory, research, training, and practice.

***Please see the instructor for suggestions regarding additional resources if wanted/needed.

Due Date: Friday, June 30, 2006

Length: 10 – 15 pages, double spaced, 12 font

Required Texts

Capponi, P. (2003). Beyond the crazy house. Toronto: Penguin Books. Available at the York Book Store

Course Kit – Available at the York Book Store