

Psychology 4085-E02/5085-E02
Psychological Suffering and Wellness
Summer, 2020, 4th Session
“Meeting” times TBD

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Course description and objectives:

Students, colleagues, and administrators have attempted to persuade me for years, as the only person who teaches this course on a regular basis, to offer it in an on-line format. Well, here we are. Let’s see what we can make of it, shall we?

This course is a seminar in how we suffer, and relatedly how we turn suffering into meaning-making, to “suffer better.” Although similar to what in other courses might be entitled “Psychopathology” or “Abnormal Psychology,” and certainly satisfying the content requirements for those areas, ours will be a different sort of gathering. We will work as a seminar.

As a seminar, *we* will be doing the work of negotiating and implementing along the way a way of gathering, and a conceptual and experiential focus, that I cannot predict in advance. So, this syllabus map is a preliminary and tentative guide to our beginning a journey, okay? But I have some initial catalyzing ideas.

Beginning Friday, June 26th (our first scheduled class day) and continuing through July 21st (see schedule, below), we will **meet on-line each class day (M-F) through Collaborate Ultra** from **10:00 – 11:30**. Although of course I cannot require you to join these meetings, I strongly encourage you to do so and I assure you that our class experience will be much richer as a result. In these virtual, real-time meetings, I will:

- answer your participation questions (see below),
- provide a conceptual overview of our work for the day,
- facilitate a conversation (as opposed to a pre-packaged lecture) about our course work), and
- allow the graduate students (there are nine or so enrolled) to keep you undergraduates company in little break-out discussions. THAT will be cool.

Among the things to appreciate about Collaborate Ultra is the ability to record the gatherings and host them for later viewing; thus if you are unable to “attend” our meetings, you may review them later. But **please**, do everything possible to join us and to join in each class day (you’ll only be a spectator otherwise!) The only way to get something meaningful out of on-line classes is to treat them as a class, I am thinking.

My best guess about how things might go is that we will organize our seminar time together around considerations of “big questions” in psychopathology and health, in suffering and wellness. We will consider the problem of demarcation, hold and heft various definitions of struggle and wellness in the psychology of human experience, trace the origins of each definition and demarcation to important theoretical foundations and explore diagnostic and classification schemes pertaining to each, and consider various

categories of “psychopathology” correspondent to *DSM* taxonomic organization. We’ll decide along the way how much to emphasize each of these themes, and give attention to what is most interesting to us. Of course, all of this is ridiculously ambitious for a short summer term; at best we will hope for an emerging acquaintance with some key conceptual and experiential pivots. It will be a very good outcome of the course if some of what we think we know is called into question, and we have a sense of where we might go for more questions and some provisional outcomes in the future: “If (the patient) brings money and time, we shall have a nice analysis. If in the process there are also some gains for her, so much the better” (Freud to Fleiss).

Readings:

I have struggled mightily to find a text that does justice to this topic, and haven’t really found one. So this semester I’m trying something different. How about this:

1. Read (as soon as possible) **Chapter 16** in my free, open educational resource Introduction to General Psychology textbook. The link is here: <https://sites.google.com/westga.edu/intropsych/>
2. Get (borrow, purchase, check out) a good intro “Abnormal Psychology” text. Some of these are remarkably dense, and all, I think, include far more material and far more references than we’ll be able to consider together.
3. Be on the lookout for readings that speak to the questions we may raise together. I’ll do the same, and each class meeting we’ll pool our resources, and come up with a dynamic and lively reading list that will be much better than anything I could put together at this point. Check on CourseDen, okay?

The readings, it turns out, will be only one of two primary data sources for the class. My perspective and preference on this point will be quite clear to you, I hope, after you read the *Sacred Shapings* chapter. We cannot only work in the hand of theory and conceptualization, or hold only subjectivity, but must cultivate an ambidexterity of theory and experience.

The readings, from the text and others that you and I uncover along the way, will give us an opportunity to attend to the “textbook” portrayal of human struggle and victory, and will introduce us to the rich and kind and precise language of clinical description and explanation around various categories of struggle and wellness.

The other emphasis of the class, and the other data source for our tour of struggles, will involve echoing, amplifying, and celebrating the generous and courageous perspectives of those struggling with life in various categories of suffering. We’ll do a lot of this each time we gather virtually, and you will be doing some of this work individually in preparation for your “guest expertship” around selected topics. As we get acquainted deeply with the voices of those who live life in struggle, our class interactions will be much the richer as a result.

Class Activities and requirements:

Because we will be drawing on the human experience as the primary data source for the class, it is essential that each of us attends and participates. Our Collaborate Ultra

meetings will include some organizational lecture material, but for the most part will be devoted to a meeting of minds around the intriguing issues raised in our readings and their reflections in our lives. Course requirements include:

Preparation, attendance, and participation. This on-line format will be pretty new for me and perhaps for many of you. I just finished what in my sense was a spectacular experience wrapping up two courses on an on-line basis last semester, and I hope to build on that foundation through a combination of synchronous (real-time, “getting together” via the CourseDen Collaborate Ultra videoconferencing platform) and asynchronous (“recording for later viewing”) gatherings.

1. **Attendance.** I will not keep track of your attendance or participation in our Collaborate Ultra gatherings, but at the very minimum I hope that you attend and participate in those gatherings, and if not review the recordings of them thoroughly. As a disciple of [intrinsic motivation](#), I’ll leave that up to you. (did you click that link?)
2. **Participation points.** Each of us is expected to read thoroughly the material for each day, and come prepared to contribute meaningfully and well to our class interactions. For each day (**beginning on our FIRST meeting**) you’ll prepare and turn in (via the CourseDen Assessment→ Assignments tab) a question that comes from your informed curiosity, your reading and stewing, and from our gatherings. **For the first class:** “*The biggest question I have about “abnormal psychology” is....*” I’ll answer some of these questions during our gatherings, and you’ll also get credit at the end for attendance/participation in this way. Through cards you may earn up to **50** points. **The questions are due no later than 9:00 on the morning of each scheduled class day** (so that I may compile and answer them in our meeting later that day), including our first scheduled meeting on June 26th. I will not accept tardy or make-up questions.
3. Each of you will prepare and present (during one of our virtual gatherings) a **guest expertship**. This will help facilitate our conceptual and empathic familiarity with suffering and wellness by bringing the “lived experience” of struggle in an area of relevance or interest for you. Take a look at the schedule and do some deep thinking about an area of struggle in which you may want to “specialize.” Dwell as much as you can in the biographical (and only vicariously autobiographical, by virtue of your nurtured empathy) experience of this struggle, gather any other material (films? song lyrics? paintings?) that grabs your interest or that might be helpful for the class, and feel free to meet with me with any questions. When the time comes to discuss that category of struggle in class you will bring the lived experience in a way that will be rich and wonderful. Please see the “Guest Expertship” guidelines on CourseDen. You may earn up to **50** points of credit for this assignment, graded according to the guidelines criteria.
4. **Quizzes.** We will have weekly quizzes to hold us accountable to the material and to one another. Each quiz will be due on TUESDAY by 9:00 AM (no tardy or make-up quizzes will be accepted), as follows:
Quiz 1 Tuesday, July 7th
Quiz 2 Tuesday, July 14th
Quiz 3 Tuesday, July 21st
Each quiz will be worth **25** points, for a total of **75** points.

5. **Topical paper.** We'll talk together about how to craft a final paper assignment that will be helpful to you in consolidating your sense-making for the term. This component of the class will be worth **50** points.

Evaluation:

The total possible point allocations are as follows:

Participation	50
Guest Expertship	50
Quizzes	75
Topical paper	50

I will compute and assign grades using the traditional criteria:

- A: 90% or above, of possible points
- B: 80 – 89% of possible points
- C: 70 – 79% of possible points
- Etc.

I welcome each of you of course to visit with me whenever you choose regarding your progress in the class.

Please refer to and read this common language for course syllabi:

<https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php>.

I look forward to our work.

Tentative Schedule

The topical schedule that follows reflects my initial sense of how I might be helpful to you in (a) grounding our discussion about various psychological disorders in relevant theories of health and struggle (five meetings), (b) spending some time on models of diagnosis and classification (one or two meetings), and (c) acquainting you with various categories of disorders (the remaining nine or ten meetings).

<u>Date(s)</u>	<u>Topical Question(s)</u>	
6-26	What is suffering? What is wellness?	<i>Sacred Shapings</i> Kunkel Ch. 1, 2, 16
6-29	Stories about suffering and wellness: Biology Behaviorism	Kunkel Ch. 3 Kunkel Ch. 4
6-30	Stories about suffering and wellness: Continued	Kunkel Ch. 5
7-1	Stories about suffering and wellness: Psychoanalysis	Kunkel Ch. 5
7-2	Stories about suffering and wellness: Humanistic-Existential- Transpersonal	Kunkel Ch. 6
7-3	No class. "Independence Day."	
7-6	Stories about suffering and wellness: Culture-Context Critical Psychologies	To be distributed
7-7	Quiz 2, due 9:00 Assessment and Diagnosis and Suffering and Wellness	"
7-8	Anxiety Suffering and Wellness	"
7-9	Mood Suffering and Wellness	"
7-10	Somatoform Suffering and Wellness	"
7-13	Substance Suffering and Wellness	"
7-14	Quiz 2, due 9:00 Food Suffering and Wellness	"
7-15	Sexual Suffering and Wellness	"
7-16	The Schizophrenias Suffering and Wellness	"
7-17	Personality Suffering and Wellness	"
7-20	Developmental Suffering and Wellness	"
7-21	Quiz 3, due 9:00 Resilience, Coping, Hardiness, Grit	"
7-23	Final gathering, to share a virtual meal and presentation of your topical papers	

Let's use our last meeting (7-25) to discuss our papers, and maybe enjoy a celebratory meal together.