

Psychology 6785/8584

Topics in Suffering, Wellness, and Intervention

TTh 9:00 – 10:50
Melson 207

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Office Hours: Mostly by appointment, but I'm around a lot

Course description and objectives:

This is a horizon seminar, and as a seminar we will decide together about relative areas of emphasis and a best working alliance process around them. My best guess about how things might go is that we will organize our seminar time together around considerations of “big questions” in suffering, wellness, and intervention. I have some preliminary and hard-won notions about what these questions might be, but I hold the principles of seminar work far too sacred to assume that I know now better than we will come to know along the way what matters, specifically, about struggle and wellness. So, this syllabus map is a preliminary and tentative guide to our beginning a journey, okay?

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.” We’ll decide along the way how much to emphasize each of these themes, and give attention to what is most interesting to us. And I hope we’ll do plenty of work in intervention, too, along the way, both in what we talk about and how.

Of course, all of this is ridiculously ambitious for a short semester; at best we will hope for an emerging acquaintance with what might matter. 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 will provide some readings to get us started, and will also provide extensive links to on-line resources for additional exploration. There will be a lot of reading. And each of you, in conjunction with your facilitation days (see below), will also hunt down and pass along some readings for us.

The other emphasis of the class, and the other data source for our tour of suffering and wellness and intervention, will involve echoing, amplifying, and celebrating the generous and courageous perspectives of those struggling with life in various categories of struggle. We’ll do a lot of this each time we gather, and you will be doing some of this work individually in preparation for your facilitation 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 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:

1. **Attendance and Participation:** I wish fervently that I did not have to obligate graduate students' presence to our ostensibly shared learning, but it has come to that. In recent semesters it has been a rare student who has along with me attended all class meetings, and many miss four or five or six and still expect As. Well, this isn't a class like that. We only have 29 or so opportunities for you to get your money's worth. We have work to do. This is one of those classes that for most of us will be shining a new light on something we already own and know, but shining that light in a new and startling and afflicting and comforting way. So, there is no alternative to preparation for a new conversation, and to participation in a way that locates the material, and the processes around it, in our personal experience, but from an informed perspective. Each of us is expected to read thoroughly the material for each day, and come prepared to contribute meaningfully and well to class interactions.
2. **Response to the ideas, and to the response of others.** What I'm up to as a teacher is encouraging participation in a NEW conversation (after all, if we keep saying the same old things, or keep not communicating at all, why bother?). My best guess about how to do this is to borrow something that I have done in two other classes recently. I'll keep notes along with you in class, and I'll post the notes as a google doc for the week each Thursday night. These notes will serve as an elaboration and discussion platform for our additional work. As illustrated in the sample doc I've posted to our shared google drive, our work on that google doc can be a rich and worthy outgrowth of our course gathering. So an additional class requirement is to consider thoughtfully your response to our class work, and to add your voice.

And as you'll see in the sample doc (I'm the pink guy), I give lots of individual feedback (we call that "shaping" in the behaviorist business) to persuade us in the direction of critical self-awareness. I'll try to spend less than my customary two or three hours daily in that document this semester. I'll fail miserably.

3. **Facilitation Days** in which each of you will help facilitate our discussion of selected topics by:
 - a. reviewing the syllabus and the first days' notes to identify areas of suffering or wellness or intervention that are of particular interest to you;
 - b. informing me of your interest in our gatherings so that I may compile a topical schedule;
 - c. dwelling as much as you can in the specificity of your interest. Read like mad. Do everything you can to compile three or four pithy and helpful points of access to the topic of your passionate pursuit. Then post these readings or media links to our shared google drive a few days in advance of our scheduled gathering around that topic. That way we'll all be prepared for your...

- d. facilitating an informed and empathic conversation/seminar interaction around your topic. Don't lecture us, but shepherd us through the material. At a minimum, on each day of your facilitation please prepare and distribute (in advance of our gathering or at our gathering, according to your sense of what would be most helpful for us) five discussion questions for us to consider together; and
 - e. compilation of notes for your facilitation days to constitute an armature around which we might build our google doc work.
4. **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 semester. I'm thinking 15 pages (for MA students) and 20 pages (for PhD students) will be about right.

Evaluation:

I will compute and assign grades using the traditional criteria:

- A: exceptional work
- B: adequate work
- C: less than adequate work
- 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:
http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf

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 suffering and wellness and intervention in ethics (b) considering various theories of wellness and suffering, and what they imply about intervention, and (c) sheperding some discussion around specific topics in suffering, wellness, and intervention that are interesting to us

<u>Date(s) and Facilitator</u>	<u>Topical Question(s) and Reading(s)</u>
1-9, 1-11 MK	Ethics of gathering Big questions Specific interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kunkel (2017) <i>Psychological Suffering and Wellness</i> ● <i>Allegories</i> annotated table of contents ● LOTS of links
1-16 MK	Demarcation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kunkel (2017) <i>Psychological Suffering (again)</i> ● Kunkel (2017) Sirens and Masts
1-18 MK	Theoretical foundations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kunkel (2017) <i>Theory in Psychology</i> (on our google drive)
1-23 MK	Diagnosis and Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/saving-normal/201306/my-12-best-tips-psychiatric-diagnosis ● http://bjp.rcpsych.org/content/204/2/93 Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● http://unitycarepsychologists.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/CollaborativeAssessemntArticle.pdf ● https://www.therapeuticassessment.com/docs/FinnTonsaGer2002.pdf ● a sample evaluation of mine (on our google drive)
1-25 Kurt	Meaning of suffering as lived
1-30 Meghan	Existential anxiety: ordinary and adaptive
2-1 Lynn	Coping, adaptive and maladaptive
2-6 Philip	Suffering in silence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Pearson and Kunkel</i> (2016) thesis (on google drive)
2-8 Blake	Embodiment 1: Chronic illness and its companionship
2-13 Hope	Embodiment 2: Embodiment and suffering
2-15 Charlotte	Embodiment 3: Terminal illness and right living
2-20 Carl	Embodiment 4: Embodiment, suffering, and relationality
2-22 Holly	Suffering and resilience in children
2-27 Lisa	Sexuality, suffering, and wellness
3-1 Brian	Technology, suffering, and wellness

Our remaining 14 class meetings (as follows) will be devoted to topics we select.

3-6

3-8

3-13

3-15

spring break

3-27

3-29

4-3

4-5

4-10

4-12

4-17

4-19

4-24

4-26

5-3?

So far, some of our topics of interest include:

- [Working Surface](#)
- Contain and catalyze
- [Working alliance](#)
- Close-captioning and empathy and decoding
- Presence as lactation
- Necessary and sufficient conditions (Unconditional positive regard, Acceptance, Genuineness, Transparency, Warmth)
- Abstinence
- Licensure and credentialing
- Persuasion (expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness as branches of what this group of researchers call [social influence](#) in counseling and psychotherapy)
- Temporality and [the frame](#) and how long we work
- Self-disclosure (always “I’m aware of...”)
- Establish rather than assume presence
- How can we tell when these processes are happening
- [Common factors](#)
- Project of understanding and the role of intuition and knowing
- Source of understanding
- Embodiment and affirmation
- Listening

- Systems work and inner family systems and history
- Understanding → Intervention
- Caring and compassion
- Vulnerability
- Personhood and our vocation
- Transactional Analysis
- Evaluation of efficacy and efficiency
- Therapeutic outcome
- Self-care in therapeutic ways of being