Instructor
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Course description
This course is an introduction to the assessment skills required for professional social work practice in mental health and other practice settings. It focuses on assessment as described in the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders IV-TR (2000) and other assessment tools. The course will also critically analyze the DSM in light of social work values, ethics, and theoretical models. Students will become conversant in the clinical descriptions used in mental health diagnosis and will master the basic assessment skills required of social workers in a variety of settings. Assessment will be conceptualized broadly to include a person-in-environment perspective and a strengths-based framework for a holistic understanding of clients’ functioning.

Course rationale
Effective social work practice is based on careful assessment of the client’s presenting situation, current and past level of functioning, psychosocial stressors, coping abilities, strengths, resources, and solutions. Social workers need to competently and ethically apply the DSM, within the scope of their training, to make assessments without losing sight of the client’s interpersonal, socioeconomic and cultural contexts.

Learning objectives
1. Apply major categories and many sub-categories described in the DSM using all five axes.
2. Understand the ethical dilemmas involved in the assessment process.
3. Demonstrate ability to make appropriate assessments within cultural, social, and gender contexts.
4. Demonstrate ability to assess and utilize client strengths and community resources.
5. Describe when referral to other professionals is needed.
6. Demonstrate ability to assess suicidal/homicidal risk and assess other risk factors.
7. Demonstrate ability to conduct and critically evaluate standard mental status exam.
8. Apply assessment to treatment planning.
9. Assess the reliability and validity of the assessment process.

**Required texts**


Other readings may be assigned.

**Assignments**

*Quizzes: Mid-term and Final, 20% of grade each*
The first quiz will cover course material presented in class and readings up to but not including the day of the quiz. The second quiz will cover material from that class session to the end of the course. They will cover concepts presented in class and in the readings. Each will include case studies for which the student must give a DSM-IV-TR multi-axial diagnosis and use other forms of assessment (risk, suicidality, etc).

*Assessment paper, 30%*
The paper will cover an area of interest to the student regarding assessment. Examples: controversies about a diagnosis, ethical dilemma regarding diagnosis, cultural concerns, researching a diagnosis of clients a student is treating in practicum, writing a new form of assessment, etc. Paper topic must be approved by the instructor. The paper should be 7-9 pages in length, APA format. A minimum of five sources from research journals in the field must be used. Note: Wikipedia is *not* an academic source, nor, generally, are websites about disorders written by non-professionals. See the instructor if you have questions.

*Class presentation, 20%*
Each student will present to the class a disorder from the DSM-IV-TR. The presentation should cover: general description of the disorder, differential diagnoses, culture/age/gender considerations, prevalence, course, review of symptoms, and some brief considerations about treatment (ie, which therapy/ies work effectively for this disorder). The presentation should be 15-20 minutes in length.

*Class attendance and participation, 10%*

**Course outline**
First session, Oct 2
Overview of course
Brief history of clinical social work
What is assessment?
  The role of the one assessing
  The involvement of the one assessed
  Expertise, skill, goals of assessment
  Assessment in the complete treatment process
Ethical considerations
Types of assessment in clinical social work: case study
  Biopsychosocial (handout: agency assessment instrument)
  Genogram
  Ecomap
  Risk factors
  Suicide/homicide
  Psych testing
  Drug/alcohol (inc. co-occurring disorders)
  Spirituality/religion
  Strengths and coping
  Mini-mental status exam
The DSM-IV-TR
  History
  “pros and cons”
  Current uses in practice

Assignments: Erikson & Kress: ch 2; DSM-IV-TR: pp 1-38; 429-485; 679-684;
Morrison: introduction, ch 6 and 14.

Second session: Oct 9
Ethics and assessment (Erikson and Kress)
Use of DSM (multi-axial Dx, etc)
Anxiety disorders and Adjustment disorders
Presentations: topics chosen/assigned

Assignments: DSM-IV-TR: 345-428; Morrison, ch 5

Third session: Oct 16

Mood disorders
Risk factors
Presentations

Assignments: DSM-IV-TR: 39-134; Morrison ch 16
Fourth session: Oct 23

Disorders of infancy, childhood, or adolescence
Spirituality/religion
Presentations

*Assignments:* DSM-IV-TR: 191-296; Morrison ch 3

Fifth session: Oct 30

Quiz
Substance-related disorders
Drug/alcohol and co-occurring disorders assessment
Presentations

*Assignments:* DSM-IV-TR: 297-344; Morrison ch 4

Sixth session: Nov 6

Psychotic disorders
Strengths/coping
Presentations

*Assignments:* DSM-IV-TR: 135-180, 485-534; Morrison ch 1 and 7

Seventh session: Nov 13

Cognitive disorders, somatoform disorders
Presentations

*Assignments:* DSM-IV-TR: 513-534; Morrison ch 8 and 9; Erikson and Kress, ch 3

Eighth session: Nov 20

Factitious disorders, dissociative disorders
Multicultural issues
Presentations

*Assignments:* DSM-IV-TR: 685-730; Morrison ch 15; Erikson and Kress, ch 4

Ninth session: Nov 27

Personality disorders
Mini mental status exam
Feminist challenges to DSM
Presentations
Assignments: DSM-IV-TR: 181-190, 535-678; Morrison ch 2, 10, 11, 12, 13

Tenth session: Dec 4

Papers due
Quiz
Mental disorders due to a general medical condition,
Sexual and gender identity disorders, eating and sleep disorders,
Impulse control disorders not elsewhere classified