

**CULTURE AND MENTAL HEALTH**  
**WINTER TERM, 2008**  
**MW 10-11:20**  
**146 Straub**

( Note: This syllabus is provisional. You are responsible for checking <http://blackboard.uoregon.edu/> for updates)

**Instructor: Pam Birrell**

Office: 205 Straub Hall

e-mail: [pbirrell@darkwing.uoregon.edu](mailto:pbirrell@darkwing.uoregon.edu)

Phone: 346-4932

**Teaching Assistant: Sopagna Eap**

Office: 320 Straub

e-mail: [seap@uoregon.edu](mailto:seap@uoregon.edu)

Phone: 346-4990

**Course Assistants (for contact information and office hours, see Blackboard):**

Susan Burton

Alex Poling

Anna Spece

Adam Reed

Josh Harris

Tyler Chipman

Anna Carl

Ashley Teeters

**For Office Hours, see Blackboard!**

## **Overview**

*"As powerful an influence as the culture of the Hmong patient and her family is on this case, the culture of biomedicine is equally powerful. If you can't see that your own culture has its own set of interests, emotions, and biases, how can you expect to deal successfully with someone else's culture?"*

--medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman, quoted in *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*

*Culture and Mental Health* is a class that explores the role of culture in the definition and maintenance of mental health and "mental illness". We will be exploring what our culture and various cultures of the world have to say about mental health, mental illness, and treatment of mental illness. We will be addressing questions like the following:

- What is a mental illness? Do different cultures define it differently? What is meant by culture, anyway?
- Are there different kinds of mental illness in different cultures of the world?
- Does depression look different in China than it does here?
- Does Schizophrenia occur all over the world?
- How do different cultures approach the healing of mental illness?

## **Contact Hours and Class Attendance**

We will meet each Monday and Wednesday in 146 Straub and your attendance is expected. This is not a course to take if you think you will miss more than one class meeting, as class discussion, exams, and exercises are crucial to your success in the course. Also, you will be working in a small group in class and asked to complete various activities in your small group. Your participation is part of the course requirements. I also recommend that you check the course website at Blackboard at least twice a week, as I may post important course information.

## **Required Readings**

Readings are assigned on a weekly basis. Readings are to be completed BEFORE the Monday class meeting for which they are assigned. There are two required text books, available at the bookstore, along with on line readings available on the Blackboard website. This course has a serious amount of reading and you will not be able to do well on the quizzes or essays if you do not do the reading.

### **Required Texts:**

Castillo, Richard J. (1997) *Culture and Mental Illness: A Client-Centered Approach*.

Brooks/Cole.

Duran, E. (2006) *Healing the Soul Wound: Counseling with American Indians and Other Native Peoples*.

Teacher's College Press.

### **Grading:**

Your grade will be computed by combining your scores in the following overall categories for a total of 250:

Points	Course Work
100	4 Quizzes, 25 points each
80	Discussion Essays (8 essays; each worth 10 points)
50	Final Paper/Project
20	Participation (in-class small group and email)
250	<b>Total</b>
(EC)	Also up to 20 points extra credit potential (see below)

Final letter grades will be approximately determined from point totals as follows:

points	letter grade
225-250	A
200-224	B
175-199	C
150-174	D
Below 150	F

Based on the actual distribution of final grades, *this criterion might be relaxed, but not stiffened*.

### **Quizzes: 100 points**

Four Quizzes will be given. Each exam will be worth 25 points. The exams will be structured to assess your knowledge of the readings, in-class films and lectures, and class discussions. They will be short answer exams that will primarily pertain to the readings assigned for the weeks in which the exam is given. Other questions will pertain to the previous weeks' readings, classroom discussion, lecture, and/or demonstrations. Sometimes a question will refer to material covered earlier in the course, or issues discussed in our class email discussion. If you have been to class, done the readings, and written the essays, you should be in good shape for the quizzes.

### **Discussion Essays 80 points**

Written essays must be typed (or computer printed) and one essay must be turned in on the 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 9<sup>th</sup> Mondays at the beginning of class. If you absolutely cannot type or computer-print your essay, you must write it very neatly on nice paper (e.g.: no pages written from a spiral notebook!). Each essay should show you have put thought into the reading material, and be designed to stimulate thoughtful class discussion about the reading and/or related issues. Think of the discussion essay as an opportunity to think about the readings, to reflect on the meaning of the material to you and your life and how it might

affect society in general. I will provide some specific topics to write about for each week. Each essay will be worth up to 10 points. ***A point will be subtracted for each day late, starting with Monday after class. Do not email essays or slip them under my door. Please turn late essays into the main psychology office, room 131 Straub!***

See Guideline for essays posted on the assignments section of Blackboard for specific information on writing the essays.

### **Final Paper/Project: 50 points**

Your final paper/project for this class will be one of three things:

(1) You are working in a community mental health clinic in an area that has a lot of people from a different culture (you get to pick what culture, e.g., Hispanic, Asian, Hmong, Puerto Rican, etc.). The psychiatric staff is not aware of the effect of culture on the patients' mental state. Your project is to design some sort of educational intervention for the staff. It might be a brochure or newsletter; an outline for a workshop; an internet learning experience; etc. Use your imagination!

[You can work on this one in pairs, if you prefer.]

OR

(2) Write a 5-7 page paper, with at least 5 references (in addition to the texts) on the role of self and culture in a *specific, culture-bound mental illness*. For example, you might choose anorexia, susto, or neurasthenia.

OR

(3) A case study of a person with a culture bound illness, and how the person might be seen from other cultural settings.

***THE FINAL PROJECT IS DUE ON MONDAY, MARCH 11 AT CLASS!***

### **Participation 20 points**

Participation is crucial in this course. *Participation includes in class discussion and on-line discussion on Blackboard.* You are not *required* to post anything on the on-line discussion, although you may earn participation credit by posting valuable contributions. You are required to read the Discussion boards at least twice a week. In-class participation will largely be in the form of small groups. You will work with a group throughout the quarter and assigned activities will be turned in to track attendance.

#### **On-Line discussion**

We will have an electronic discussion as part of this course on the Blackboard discussion forum. You are expected to read the on-line discussions. Posting your own messages is optional, but will count for participation credit if your messages are thoughtful and original. However, in order to avoid having the on-line discussion become unmanageable, watch your postings! Keep postings succinct and don't dominate!

### **Extra Credit Up to 20 points**

Extra Credit can be earned in a variety of ways up to 20 extra points total. If you make especially valuable contributions to class discussion, or if you make especially valuable contributions to the email discussion, you may earn extra points. Or you can get extra credit for a particularly terrific project. This might include a special presentation, if you are interested. In general, if you do something creative, special, contributive, and above-and-beyond the course requirements, you may earn extra credit.

### **One further note on psychiatric medications**

You will find in this course many different ways of thinking about and treating what we call mental "disorders". Many approaches to mental illness do not emphasize medications the way that our culture does. I recognize that many of you may be taking such drugs, and if you feel that you need to question or change your regimen, you must do so **ONLY** with consent and cooperation of the person prescribing the medication.

## Weekly Schedule: Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines

- Week 1 readings are to be completed before the January 10 class. Week 2-9 readings are to be completed *before* the Monday class that week.
- *RC* is the Castillo text; *ED* is the Duran Text

Week 1: Introduction: Why Culture? What is Mental health and Mental Illness?		
day	Topics	Assignments
1/7	Introduction: What is Culture? What is Mental health? How do they interact?	
1/9	What is a psychiatric diagnosis? Modernism and Postmodernism	<i>RC</i> : Chapter 1 <i>ED</i> : Introduction, Chapter 1 <i>On-line readings</i>
Week 2: How culture interacts with clinical reality		
day	Readings	Topics and activities
1/14	Social relations and cultural meanings Personality and Self: Independent or Relational?	<b>Essay #1 due (over readings from weeks 1 and 2!</b> <i>RC</i> : Chapter 2 and 3 <i>On-line readings</i>
1/16		<b>QUIZ#1</b>
Week 3: Clinical assessment across cultures		
day	Readings	Topics and activities
1/21	<b>NO CLASS—Martin Luther King day!</b>	
1/23	The psychiatric interview: Expert opinion or individual lived experience?	<b>Essay #2 due</b> <i>RC</i> : Chapter 4 <i>ED</i> : Chapter 2 <i>On-line readings</i>
Week 4: Treatment and Healing		
day	Readings	Topics and activities
1/28	What does culture have to say about healing and distress? Healing and healing professions across cultures; the role of symbols in healing	<i>RC</i> : Chapter 5 <i>ED</i> : Chapter 3 <i>On-line readings</i>  <b>Essay #3 due</b>

1/30		
<b>Week 5: Personality; Gender and sexuality</b>		
<b>day</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Topics and activities</b>
2/4	Gender Identity “Disorder” and Two-spirit people; Borderline personality disorder as cultural artifact	<b>RC:</b> Chapters 6 and 7 <b>Essay #4 due</b>
2/6	Gender Identity Disorder and Transgender	<b>Quiz #2</b>
<b>Week 6: Eating disorders and Substance Abuse</b>		
<b>day</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Topics and activities</b>
2/11		<b>RC:</b> Chapters 8 and 9 <b>ED:</b> Chapter 4 and 5 <i>On-line readings</i> <b>Essay #5 due</b>
2/13	Anorexia and Bulimia as culture-bound disorders	
<b>Week 7: Anxiety, Somatoform Disorders, and Depression</b>		
<b>day</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Topics and activities</b>
2/18	Depression and suicide	<b>RC:</b> Chapter 10, 11 and 12 <b>ED:</b> Chapter 6 <i>On-line Readings</i> <b>Essay #6 due</b>
2/20	Depression and social stress; powerlessness and social roles	<b>Quiz #3</b>
<b>Week 8: Dissociation and PTSD</b>		
<b>day</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Topics and activities</b>
2/25	The role of fear inducing trauma and social betrayal?	<b>RC:</b> Chapter 13 <i>On-line readings</i> <b>Essay #7 due</b>
2/27		
<b>Week 9: Psychosis and Schizophrenia</b>		
<b>day</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Topics and activities</b>
3/4	What is psychosis, and how does it differ from schizophrenia?	<b>RC:</b> Chapter 14 <i>On-Line readings:</i>

		<b>Essay #8 due</b>
3/6		
<b>Week 10:</b>		
<b>day</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Topics and activities</b>
3/11	Bringing it all together: How do we understand mental health, and how do we make it available for all?	<b>RC:</b> Chapter 15 <b>ED:</b> Chapters 7, 8, and 9 <i>On-Line Readings</i>  <b>Final Project due</b>
3/13		<b>Quiz #4</b>

### **Guidelines for Teaching and Learning at the University of Oregon, Department of Psychology: A Statement of Best Practices and Expectations**

As members of the Department of Psychology at the University of Oregon we all share responsibility for creating an atmosphere conducive to learning. A collaborative learning environment both in and outside of the classroom involves the active participation of instructors (including faculty members, adjuncts, and GTFs), teaching assistants, and students. This environment requires:

- the best effort on the part of both instructors and students to enhance the learning experience for the benefit of all persons involved;
- the recognition that all present play important roles; all participants in the learning experience deserve respect for what they bring to it, and all should be sensitive to the importance of others in this process;
- an atmosphere in the classroom of mutual respect for all persons.

See <http://psychweb.uoregon.edu/guidelines/> for more information.

### **Psychology Peer Advisors**

The Psychology Peer Advisors are available for academic advising most times of most days. You can find them in room 141 Straub Hall, so be sure to go by to say hello and get advice on courses for psychology majors.

## **Additional Notes**

### **Using Blackboard**

The web site for this course was constructed using "Blackboard" software. This allows the web site to be extensive and interactive. On the web site, you will find general announcements for the class, all documents for the course (including this syllabus), lecture notes, on-line discussions, links to relevant web sites, and more. We hope that this web site will be a useful tool for you in learning the material for this class, and in further exploring topics you find interesting. You can get to the course web site by going to <http://blackboard.uoregon.edu>. If you need help logging in or using Blackboard, see <http://blackboard.uoregon.edu/local/usingbb/>. Also you can get help starting by going to the library [Information Technology Center](http://libweb.uoregon.edu/kitc/faq/blackboard.html#help) (ITC) and/or see <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/kitc/faq/blackboard.html#help>.

### **Policy on Email**

Make sure that the email address listed for you on duckweb/blackboard is correct. You will need to check this account frequently because I may communicate with you outside of class. If the address you have listed on duckweb/blackboard is not the account that you regularly use, you can change your primary email address by going to <duckweb.uoregon.edu>, selecting <personal information>, selecting <change email address> and then following the instructions. **YOU WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL INFORMATION THAT IS SENT TO YOU VIA EMAIL.**

### **Academic Honesty**

All work submitted in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. For the consequences of academic dishonesty, refer to the Schedule of Classes published quarterly. Violations will be taken seriously and are noted on student disciplinary records. If you are in doubt regarding any aspect of these issues as they pertain to this course, please consult with the instructor before you complete any relevant requirements of the course. (Text adopted here as recommended from the UO web site regarding academic honesty at: <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~conduct/>).

### **Students with Directory Restricted Access**

This course includes required on-line participation (electronic mail and World Wide Web). If you have restricted access to your directory information and wish to have special arrangements made for this course, please notify the instructor immediately.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with the instructor soon. Also please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying your disability. [Counselor for Students with Disabilities: Hillary Gerdes, 346-3211, TTY 346-1083, [hgerdes@oregon.uoregon.edu](mailto:hgerdes@oregon.uoregon.edu)]