



Mental Health Consequences of Terrorism and Mass Violence

Syllabus

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Course Description:

EOH-578 Mental Health Consequences of Terrorism

Drawing on assigned readings in the disaster psychiatric literature from well studied terrorist events such as the Oklahoma City bombing, and 9/11 in America, as well as the Nairobi bombings, the 2005 Tsunami and ongoing terrorist events in Israel, this course will provide the learner with an understanding of the burden of disease levied by the mental health consequences of terrorism and mass violence. The learner will be given tools to distinguish normal responses such as distress from abnormal responses, such as the common post-disaster mental health

diagnoses, and become familiar with different public health approaches to each. Sources of psychological resilience to disaster and terrorism related trauma exposure will be reviewed, as well as tools for psychological screening, assessment, and planning for services.

This course has been developed out of a recognition that while mental health consequences of disaster are reducible through evidence based treatments, and are often preventable, mental health assessment tools, treatments, agencies and constructs are typically viewed as vague, unwieldy and not “user friendly” . Accordingly, this course has been structured to provide the future biosecurity professional with a working knowledge of the more clearly understood mental health consequences of trauma and disaster, risk and resilience factors, and an orientation to the stakeholders, agencies and instruments which need to be considered when attempting to incorporate mental health preparedness planning, to perform surveillance, needs assessments and plan services.

The course will, through a set of readings, discussions and sectional assignments explore mental health aspects of disasters, including their psychological and organizational impact, as well as current approaches to needs assessment, planning and provision of disaster mental health services. A public health emergency caused by a catastrophic terrorist attack or a natural disaster poses systemic and individual mental health challenges similar in scope to a pandemic, therefore principles will be drawn from recent terrorist events and disasters such as the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombings, the September 11 attacks, and the 2004 South Asian Tsunami. Section assignments have been designed to provide the student with examples of the practical application of the material under study.

Course Goal:

Through the process of studying the mental health consequences of recent disasters, and reviewing the disaster mental health responses, the learner will gain a contextual understanding of the complexities of contemporary planning necessary for the management of psychological consequences of a large scale terrorist event, a natural disaster, or a pandemic.

Course Objectives:

At the conclusion of this course a student will be able to demonstrate:

1. Ability to succinctly and accurately characterize common distress reactions after a disaster, to differentiate these from the less common disaster related mental illnesses, and to identify sources of risk and resilience in individuals and communities.

2. Familiarity with several different organizations and agencies (including but not limited to FEMA, and the American Red Cross) that have conceptualized, funded, organized and provided individual and community disaster mental health services in the short and long term in recent terrorist events and natural disasters in the US and abroad.
3. An understanding of principles governing post-disaster mental health needs assessments and services planning, awareness of the existence and controversies surrounding psychological screening tools and surveillance methods, cultural competence and service provision.
4. Ability to critically assess disaster mental health response programs developed for deployment in recent disasters.

Course Format: Presentations, seminar discussions, and readings.

Evaluation of Performance:

Participation in online seminar discussions.....	15%
Section assignments	65%
Final Presentation: evaluation of a MH response:.....	20%

According to the Saint Louis University Graduate School, the only final grades allowed are:

- A (≥ 93 points)
- B+ (90 – 92 points)
- B (83 – 89 points)
- B- (80 – 82 points)
- C (73 – 79 points)
- F (≤ 72 points)

Course Policies:

All class-associated email communication should take place through the course WebCT email.

The week for class readings, assignments, and seminar discussion is defined as Monday through Sunday at midnight.

Seminar discussions should begin early in the session to allow for maximum interaction.

On the weeks for which there is a seminar discussion assignment, students are expected to access the WebCT seminar board at least twice a week unless you notify the instructor in

advance of a schedule conflict. This will allow discussion of relevant topics in the electronic seminar.

The standard for the course professor will be to login to the course at least 3 days of the week.

Responses to all individual comments are not possible although answers to specific questions will be given.

Students should notify the course professor early if they are unable to participate in a scheduled seminar or assignment during a specific week.

Students must notify the instructor in advance if some life event or obligation precludes them from submitting an assignment on time. Project due dates are very flexible for military personnel that are deployed; please discuss this with the instructor.

It is at the instructor's discretion to allow students to make-up missed assignments.

All University, Graduate School, and School of Public Health policies and procedures are in effect, including, but not limited to, academic standards, course withdrawals, and course incompletes. Please refer to the:

- [Catalog of the Graduate School](#)
- [Office of the Bursar](#) (Student Accounts)
- [Office of the University Registrar](#) (Student Services)
- Institute for Biosecurity Policy Statement on Academic and Professional Integrity. Details on the Biosecurity Policy Statement on Academic and Professional Integrity are provided in the Academic Integrity link to the left of your WebCT course page and in the MS in Biosecurity Student Handbook.
- More information, policies, and guidelines relevant to your education are available on the School of Public Health web site at: [SLU School of Public Health](#). It is your responsibility to become familiar with all information available through this and the Web sites above.

Required Texts:

- 1) Ursano, R., Fullerton, C. & Norwood, A. (2003) *Terrorism and Disaster: Individual and Community Mental Health Interventions*. Cambridge University Press. ISBN # 0-521-53345-7
- 2) Murakami, H. (2001) *Underground: The Tokyo Sarin Attacks and the Japanese Psyche*. Vintage, New York. ISBN # 0-375-75280-6
- 3) Pandya, A. & Katz, C., eds (2004) *Disaster Psychiatry: Intervening when Nightmares Come True*. The Analytic Press, Hillsdale NJ. ISBN #0-88163-418-2

Texts may be purchased from any online vendor. Examples include Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, and ecampus.com. The ISBN numbers listed above are associated with the paperback version of the books but students may purchase the hardcover versions if desired.

Course Outline:

For organizational purposes the course has been divided into the following sessions.

Distress vs. Diagnosis: the fundamentals of human psychological responses to trauma, disaster and terrorism, Weeks 1 & 2 (Tuesday, January 17th-Sunday, January 29th, 2006)

The Mental Health Consequences of the 1995 Bombing of the Alfred P Murrah Building in Oklahoma City: Short term response Week 3 (Monday, January 30th- Sunday February 5th)

Mental Health Consequences of the Oklahoma City Bombings II: Long Term Responses and the Relevance of Research Week 4 (Monday, February 6th – Sunday February 12th)

Special Populations, the Oklahoma City Bombings and the The Nairobi Embassy Bombings. Week 5 (Monday, February 13– Sunday, February 19)

The Attacks of September 11: Short term responses: Focus on Surveillance, Needs Assessment Week 6 (Monday, February 20 – Sunday, February 26th)

September 11, 2001: Short and Longer Term Mental Health Responses: the Family Assistance Center and “Project Liberty” Week 7 (Monday, February 27 – Sunday March 5th)

Volunteer Agencies Active in Disaster and Federal Agency Disaster Mental Health Programming Week 8 (Monday, March 6th – Sunday, March 12^h)

SPRING BREAK Monday March 13 – Sunday March 19

September 11, 2001: Long term responses, special populations and special programs: the idea of the “Responder”. - Week 9 (Monday, March 20th – Sunday, March 26^{th*})

Psychological Issues and the Anthrax Attacks of 2001 – Week 10 (Monday, March 27th – Sunday, April 2ndth)

Psychosocial Issues Raised By the SARS epidemic of 2003 – Week 11 (Monday, April 3 – Sunday, April 9)

Cultural Competency revisited: The Asian Tsunami of 2005. What is the relevance of “Western” mental health constructs to the “East” Week 12 (Monday, April 10th- Sunday April 16th)

Student Presentations: Week 13 (Monday April 17th – Sunday April 30th)

Seminar Discussions:

For each session, there will be a threaded discussion question or series of questions and each student is expected to participate in that discussion. All opinions stated in the seminar discussions must be backed up by fact and accompanied with an abbreviated citation.

You must follow the guidelines for participating in threaded seminar discussions.

Seminar guidelines:

Students must email (through WebCT course email) their answer to the seminar question(s) to the instructor by Wednesday at midnight of the week that the question is posted.

All student initial answers (that were emailed to the instructor) should be posted to the seminar discussion board by Thursday at midnight of the week that the question is posted. Student must NOT post their answer until Thursday at 12:01 am at the earliest. This time gap allows the instructor to receive all answers before students see other students’ answers. To receive full points for seminar discussion interaction, students must respond to at least one other student’s posting. Interaction responses should be posted by Sunday at midnight of the week that the question is posted. Comments should make a valuable contribution to the discussion by offering new insights or information. A simple “I agree” or some form thereof is *not* considered a sufficient posting for this class. Postings should be concise and consist of a minimum of one short paragraph and a maximum of three short paragraphs.

All posts should be maintained under the initial posting started by the instructor for that week/session. This is accomplished by hitting “Reply” or “Quote” rather than “Compose message”. This will allow for the week/session’s postings to be compiled under one post initiated by the instructor. Do not start a new post.

Section Assignments:

For each session there is a “Section Assignment” which will consist of readings, review of video and web materials, and preparation of presentations and papers. Please check the due dates on each of those section assignments. Except where noted these are due on or before the next week’s session. You may work ahead as much as you wish and you may submit any assignment as soon as you have it completed. For all section assignments requiring a power point-based presentation you are strongly encouraged to divide the labor for developing the background portion (required slides) of the presentation among your classmates. However, you are solely responsible for the body of the presentation. Section Assignments must include appropriate grammar and spelling (hint: spell check in Word before copying and pasting the text into Power Point).

Most assignments have been developed so that when you finish the course you will have a set of presentation slides that you can easily modify and use for future speaking engagements. You must follow the PowerPoint Guidelines as outlined in the Technical Recommendations; these are available on the left hand side of this WebCT course page. These guidelines were developed by Professor William Stanhope and will serve as criteria for a pedagogically sound presentation; grading will be partially based on your compliance with the recommendations. Noncompliance with these guidelines will result in either re-working the presentation or assigning you a zero for the assignment. Presentations will also be evaluated for their technical accuracy and creativity.

Details on the section assignments are provided in the Assignments link to the left of your WebCT course page.