



McMaster Divinity
College

MS 3XP3/5XP5/6XP6

When Something Goes Wrong: Understanding Trauma and Psychopathology

Cathryn Harris, Ph.D. C.Psych.

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Fall 2019

Mon 9:00am to 10:50am

COURSE SYLLABUS

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will survey the broad categories and most common faces of psychological distress and dysfunction, with an emphasis on tracing the common theme and effects of trauma physiologically, behaviorally, emotionally, cognitively, and relationally. A strong emphasis will be on understanding the brain-behavior connection in human psychological distress, as well as exploring the relationship between modern conceptualizations of mental illness and biblical descriptions of sinful behavior and the concept of “evil”. Therefore, systems of integrating psychology and theology will also be briefly considered. The goal of the course is to understand ourselves and others better as we grapple with the consequences of “when something goes wrong” in life and in relationships, and deepen compassion for ourselves and others as we try to heal those consequences through relationship and faith, in contexts of both pastoral counseling and wider church ministry.

Trigger Alert: By necessity, this course will include discussions of some very graphic traumatic situations. Since we cannot hope to help others, if we are not in a healing journey ourselves, this course will also encourage self-disclosure at the level of comfort of the participant. Two participation assignments will be surveys of traumatic and stressful events. They will not be handed in to the instructor, and do not need to be shared with anyone else unless the student wishes. The aim is to encourage self-evaluation consistent with the themes of the course. If any student has concerns about this course, please contact the instructor privately.

SPECIALIZATIONS: Counselling and Spiritual Care, Church and Culture, Christian Worldview,

Doctor of Practical Theology students who wish to apply for this course as an Advanced Elective for their degree program must consult with the Program Director of the DPT and the course instructor in order to develop an Advanced Elective approach to the course that fulfills the specific elements required by the DPT program. Once the elements of the Advanced Elective have been agreed upon by the student, the Program Director, and the instructor, a formal application can be made for an Advanced Elective in connection with this course. Once the

application is accepted, DPT students can proceed with the course as part of their degree program.

2. COURSE FORMAT

Class sessions will include didactic instruction, video presentations, class discussion and case studies as appropriate. Readings are assigned for all sessions, and it is expected that they will be completed prior to class. Lectures will summarize and emphasize the main points of the reading, but add additional perspectives and encourage class discussion and interaction. Short reaction papers or short assignments based on the reading are due at most sessions and are included in the class participation grade. Students are expected to participate in discussions, incorporating the class readings and lectures.

3. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through required and optional reading, lectures, class discussion and exercises, and the completion of assignments, the students should fulfill the following course objectives in their specialization:

Knowing

- To understand psychopathology and mental illness through a bio-psycho-social-spiritual lens
- To understand how psychopathology and mental illness is particularly related to adaptation to various types of trauma, especially developmental trauma

Being

- To increase comfort with self-disclosure, within one's own sense of safety and boundaries, and as appropriate to the assignments and class discussion
- To practice empathic and respectful listening and reflection during class discussions
- To increase tolerance in hearing others' pain and being open to the experience of one's own pain.

Doing

- To read about contemporary descriptions and categories of psychopathology, and perspectives on how psychopathology might be understood through a scriptural lens
- To develop perspective and a "working theory" on how we understand mental illness in the context of scripture, and how it might be related to sin, demonic activity and evil
- To identify possible symptoms of mental illness that may need referral to and intervention by a medical or mental health professional
- To reflect on how we can promote compassionate awareness of and dialogue with the mentally ill in our congregations and communities
- To reflect on how our own Christian world view, culture, and personal experiences have influenced our views of mental illness

4. COURSE TEXTS

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

- A. **Required Textbook:** McRay, B.W., Yarhouse, M.A., and Butman, R.E. (2016) Modern Psychopathologies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal, 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. (486pp,
- B. **Required Supplemental Reading:** Choose M. Scott Peck, (1998) People of the Lie, 2nd ed. New York: Simon & Shuster. OR M. Scott Peck, (2005) Glimpses of the Devil, New York: Free Press.
- C. Other supplementary texts and articles may be recommended based on class discussions and individual student interests.

5. INSTRUCTOR

Biography: Cathryn Harris, Ph.D. is an Adjunct Professor (part time) at McMaster Divinity College. She is a Registered Psychologist (CPO) with competencies in both Clinical and Counselling Psychology, a Registered Marriage and Family Therapist and Approved Supervisor in Marriage and Family Therapy with AAMFT and CAMFT, and a Certified EMDR Therapist. For 34 years, and currently fulltime, she has provided psychotherapy and psychological assessments to individuals, couples, families, children and adolescents in outpatient private practice. She has also worked in inpatient and day treatment programs, and provided consultation to pastors, teachers, and business professionals on individual and organizational issues. She has been continuously involved in the training and supervision of Christian mental health professionals for over 30 years, beginning as Adjunct Professor at Rosemead School of Psychology, and Fuller Graduate Seminary for a short while, and for the longest time as Clinical Supervisor for a Christian counselling ministry that placed counselling interns in churches throughout Southern California. It has also been her privilege on a few occasions to provide counselling skills training specifically to Pastors, and looks forward to being able to do more of this at MDC. Dr. Harris has been married for over 30 years to another psychologist, and has one adult daughter who has managed to survive that experience.

Contact and Availability: Dr. Harris is available for one-on-one consultation briefly after class and during breaks on the day class is scheduled. Otherwise, students may contact her at drcathrynharris@gmail.com.

6. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Class Participation - 20% of grade

Attendance, participation in class discussions, completion of brief reaction papers to readings, (one page in length, not graded) , and two brief surveys are included. Participation will also be assessed on the basis of the student's ability to demonstrate familiarity with the readings and texts, apply the course material in specific situations and to respect others in their interactions.

B. Assignments

i. Midterm Paper - 40% of grade:

12-15 pages, double spaced, not including references.

All students:

- a. Choose one disorder to research and review in depth, including characteristics, proposed etiologies, and common treatment methods. Use at least 10 professional sources (books, book chapters, journal articles – NOT websites).
- b. Include consideration of what Biblical texts and other theological sources are relevant to understanding and addressing this disorder. Integrate these considerations into your discussion of objective A above.
- c. Additionally, choose one of the following:
 1. Discuss how this disorder has some personal relevance for you and/or your church community and counselees, and describe how your experiences compare to your research. Then, discuss how you will incorporate your research into a plan to address your personal needs or the needs of your community and counselees. Include additional references as necessary.
 2. Evaluate how this disorder might impact your ministry communities, including how cultures within your ministry communities define and attempt to address this disorder. Include additional references as necessary. Then, discuss how you would translate your research into a culturally relevant plan to meet the needs of those cultural communities.
 3. Evaluate and discuss how different secular views of this disorder compare or contrast to a Christian view of the behaviors involved in this disorder. Can these views be integrated? Are there issues that can't be reconciled? How does your research on this disorder inform your perspective on the relationship between "Sin" and "Psychopathology"? Are these independent, parallel, overlapping, synonymous, or conflicting constructs? Include additional references as necessary to support your perspective.

ii. Final Paper - 40% of grade:

12-15 pages, double spaced, not including references.

In addition to your choice of M. Scott Peck's work, read at least five other sources on the relationship between sin, evil, and mental illness, including demonic possession and/or demonic oppression. Include sources by Christian Psychologists, Pastoral Counselors, and Practical Theologians in the field, including some differing perspectives.

- a. Which of these perspective resonate with and/or challenge your own experiences in your personal life and/or your community?
- b. Evaluate what system(s) of integration these authors are using and how they relate mental illness to sin, evil, and demonic possession, then develop your own conclusion and perspective- how do you support your position?
- c. Additionally, choose one of the following:
 1. Propose how your developing perspective will impact your counselling style and approach.
 2. Propose how you would use your developing perspective to influence dialogue about mental illness in your ministry communities, as well as increase outreach to the mentally ill in your communities, including cross-cultural interpretations and translations that might be required.
 3. Evaluate how your particular Christian world view and culture has shaped your view of mental illness until now. Has this view changed as a result of this course, and why? How does your developing perspective impact your dialogue with the mentally ill in your communities?

7. COURSE ADMINISTRATION

College Style for Submission of Written Work: All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <http://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

Statement On Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>

Gender Inclusive Language: McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be

respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

Submission of Written Work: All assignments are due by the beginning of class on the day indicated. Assignments must be submitted online through Avenue to Learn or hard copies must be handed in at the beginning of class. Students unable to submit their paper by the beginning of class are requested to speak with the instructor to discuss when and how they plan to submit their assignment. ***Late submission of assignments will be deducted two grade points for every late day beginning 5 pm the day after the assignment was originally due, and must be submitted online.***

Length: Students are expected to adhere to the page count. If a paper exceeds the page count, grace will be accorded for the first 10%. However, the grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade for each additional 10% a paper exceeds the stipulated page count.

Cell Phone/Computer Policy: Students are to refrain from texting or conducting cell phone conversations while class is in session. Should you need to maintain contact with family members and/or your church or ministry, please turn off the ringer so as to avoid disturbing others; upon receipt of an urgent call, you may discretely excuse yourself from the classroom. The same policy applies to all computer generated sound schemes or other electronic annunciation systems.

Copyright: ***This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.***

8. COURSE OUTLINE – See attached/following



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COURSE OUTLINE - READINGS AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE *(Due on class date indicated)*

Monday, Sept 9th: *Introductions and Introduction*

Lecture Topics: Goals and Expectations of the Course

Myths of Mental Illness

Introduction to Systems of Integration

Class Discussion: How do you define “mental illness”? What, up until now, has led you to this definition? What relevance does understanding this subject have for ministry?

Monday, Sept 16th: *Definitions and Classification Systems of Mental Illness*

Reading Assignment: McRay et al, Chs. 1, 2, 6 (70pp)

Reaction Paper and Class Discussion: Where would your first definition of mental illness (last week) fit into the pastoral and/or psychological classification systems outlined by McRay et al? Which of these classification systems do you find most useful for your area(s) of ministry and why?

Lecture Topics:

What is psychopathology? What is it not?

DSM-V as Behavioral Categorization vs. Understanding Etiology

Loss vs. Trauma

Monday Sept 23rd: *Biological Foundations of Mental Illness I*

Reading: Chs. 3, 13 (47pp)

Reaction Paper and Class Discussion: Are we essentially good, essentially evil, or both? How is your theology of human nature relevant to understanding psychopathology? If some or all of mental illness is biological in nature, how does this impact our understanding of human choice and sin?

Lecture Topics:

The Nature-Nurture Problem in Psychology

The Mind-Body Problem in Psychology

A Biblical and Holistic model of Human Nature and the ABC's of Experience

A Glimpse Inside the Brain: SPECT imaging and diagnosis

Eg. **Problems of Psychosis** – The Diathesis-Stress Theory

The Effect of Marijuana on the Brain

Monday Sept 30th: *Biological Foundations of Mental Illness II: Trauma and the Brain*

Reading: Chs. 8, 10 (67pp)

Lecture: The Survival mandate & The “Danger-Danger!” System of the Body
Adaptive Information Processing and the Brain - How we remember
Egs. **Problems of Anxiety, Problems of Trauma (PTSD)**
Categories of Trauma
Trauma as the foundation of Psychopathology

Discussion: TBA

Monday Oct 7th: *Sociocultural Foundations of Mental Illness*

Reading: Chs. 4, 16 (33pp)

Reaction Paper: How is our culture and society creating mental illness from your point of view?

Lecture Topics: Family Systems Theories

Multicultural Theories

“Post-Modernism” Systems Theories

Egs. **Problems Stemming from Societal Pathology (Eating Disorders)**

Revisiting Psychotic Disorders

Discussion: How has the culture of the church typically responded to mental illness?
How has the culture of the church created mental illness?

Monday Oct 14th: *THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY – NO CLASS*

Monday Oct 21st: *Cognitive and Behavioral Theories of Mental Illness*

Reading: Ch. 9 (36pp)

Reaction Paper: TBA

Lecture Topics: Behavioral Theories of Mental Illness

Cognitive Theories of Mental Illness

Cognitive filters and templates- Adaptation vs. Accommodation

Eg. **Problems of Mood – Depression, Bipolar Disorder**

Grief, Sadness vs. Depression - What is the value and meaning of life after loss?

Discussion: TBA

Monday Oct 28th: *Developmental Foundations of Mental Illness I*

Reading: Ch. 7 (35pp)

Reaction Paper: TBA

Lecture: Problems of childhood and adolescence as biologically driven
vs. relationally driven vs. learning driven

Eg. LD, ADD, Autism

Object Relations: The dance of Attachment vs. Separation-Individuation

Boundaries, boundaries, boundaries!!

The importance of Attachment Styles in lifetime mental health

Discussion: As you think back to your childhood, what do you think your attachment style is? With what attachment styles do you think you would have the most problem relating?

Monday Nov 4th: *Developmental Foundations of Mental Illness II*

Reading: Ch. 11 (35pp)

Paper: MID TERM PAPER DUE

Assignment: Adverse Child Events Scale completed. (Don't hand in)

Lecture Topics: The impact of ACE: The trauma factor

Types of Trauma and the Continuum of Response

Putting it all together - Eg. **Problems in the Development of Self**

Discussion: Thinking about the survey, to what extent have you seen ACE affect you or others you know over one's lifetime? How would ACE affect the church body as a whole over time?

Monday Nov 11th: *Sin and Psychopathology*

Reading: Ch. 5 (28pp) and other articles TBD

Reaction Paper: To what extent do you agree and/or disagree with McRay et al's view?

Lecture: Systems of Integration of Psychology and Theology - "Rosemead Style"!

Discussion:

Into which system of integration does your original definition of mental illness fit?

**Monday Nov 18th: *When Something Goes Wrong But Its NOT "Mental Illness"? – Part I
Sin or Psychopathology?***

Reading: Ch. 12, 14 (57pp)

Reaction Paper: Do these problems represent sin or mental illness? Why or why not?

Lecture: Problems of Addiction, Problems of Sexuality and Gender

Discussion: (same as reaction paper)

**Monday Nov 25th: *When Something Goes Wrong But Its NOT "Mental Illness"! – Part II
Phase of Life Challenges***

Reading: Ch. 15 (34pp)

Assignment: Holmes-Rahe Life Events Stress Scale completed (don't hand in)

Lecture Topics: Loss and Adjustment throughout the Lifespan

Eg. **Problems of Older Adulthood**, Neurocognitive Disorders

"Adjustment Disorders", "V-Codes and Z-Codes"

Discussion: Evaluate your Life Events Stress Scale score. How do you think your score has been affecting your life lately?

Monday Dec 2nd: *When Something Goes Wrong But Its NOT "mental illness"! – Part III*

Abuse, Violence, and The Problem of Evil

Reading: TBD

Reaction Paper and Class Discussion: Has the church historically contributed to the evil of abuse? What response to abuse should the church have now? How does this fit in with your theology of marriage and the family?

Lecture topics: Types of Abuse
Signs and Symptoms of Abuse – the Violence Wheel
The Cycle of Abuse

Monday Dec 9th: FINAL PAPER DUE

Reading: None

Reaction Paper and Class Discussion: How has your definition and understanding of mental illness changed (or not) as a result of this course? What have you learned in this course and how will it be of use to you? What was most valuable to you in the course? What was least valuable and/or the most difficult?

Lecture: WRAPPING UP - A Case Study

In groups: What symptoms, signs or issues are of concern to you?
What would you do about them from a Pastoral perspective?

Course Evaluation