SYLLABUS

Psychology 5620: Stigma: ABCs and PHDs (Fall, 2013) T, 3:10pm-5:50pm
(Affect, Behavior, Cognition, and Physical Health Disparities) Room 426, Rogers-Stout

Instructor: Stacey L. Williams, Ph.D. Office: Room 414, Rogers-Stout
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Office hours: Office hours T 1:00pm-3:00pm, R 2:00pm-3:00pm, and by appointment.

Additional primary source articles (provided).

Course Summary and Objectives:
The experience of stigma or devaluation is common when one casts a broad net to include a wide variety of identities and include constructs experiences such as bullying, ostracism, rejection, and intergroup relations. At one point or another, for some reason or another, most of us encounter devaluation. This course focuses on the “ABCs and PHDs” associated with stigma experiences—in other words, the impact of stigma on Affect, Behavior, Cognition, and Physical Health Disparities.

Stigma has recently been described as a fundamental cause of health disparities. Indeed the experience of stigma is related to increased physical and mental health problems. The National Institutes of Health have put emphasis on the study of stigma and its reduction along with disparities in health. The Institute of Medicine and the Healthy People 2020 initiative both call for attention to social determinants of health, such as stigma.

Incorporating the most current findings and systematic literature reviews in the field, this course delves into the experience of stigma for individuals with stigmatized identities and explains how stigma-relevant processes (social, cognitive, and emotional) can explain health disparities. Whereas the Diversity in the Psychological Sciences course focuses on “upstream” or structural mechanisms that lead to stigma (e.g., race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status), this course explores “downstream” mechanisms that explain how the external event of stigma becomes internal, or “gets under the skin”, to influence health.

Specific course topics will include the meaning of stigma, why people stigmatize, the physiological, cognitive-affective and social behavioral processes linking stigma and health, and moderators of stigma. During the course students will be exposed to well known researchers in the field (both through interaction with material as well as direct interaction with invited speakers) and their work in the area of stigma. Course activities will include reading and discussion of novel research and reviews, as well as research design, with an eye toward grant proposals and designing studies. As this is a graduate level course, students are expected to critically analyze and integrate theory and research, preferably making the material relevant for students’ own research and/or teaching goals. Given a major purpose of the course is for you to develop projects it also will be wise to ask questions of the invited speakers that will aid in your development of research studies and project ideas.
Learning Outcomes
At the completion of this course, students will be able to:
- define stigma and its many definitions and associated identities.
- identify the ABCs and PHDs associated with stigma
- design research studies to examine current conceptualizations of stigma
- appreciate the complexity of the stigma construct and reaching stigmatized populations in research studies

Reading and Discussion:
Attendance is expected. It is in your best interest to come to every class. If you do not attend class, you remain responsible for all material covered and any announcements made in class. I do not accept late assignments; therefore, attendance is crucial. Attendance is considered within the participation grade. Since this is a graduate seminar, students are expected to actively participate in, and take a major role in class discussions. I expect you to do all the required reading, and to be prepared to discuss the major issues raised by the readings. In addition to your participation to class discussion, you will be required to provide a written response to the readings by way of a set of detailed and interpretive discussion questions. Since this course is arranged as a discussion and writing seminar, classes will revolve around discussion of topics and readings. To help stimulate discussion, students will bring in interpretive questions (typed). Each question should address a different reading. Questions should not be yes/no questions; instead, questions should be “thick”—multi-layered as opposed to single sentences, thoughtful and relevant. Questions should include a brief synthesis of points made in the readings but should focus more on your own original and critical responses. Questions should address content, rather than stylistics, of the readings. You should avoid simple informational questions (i.e., what does x mean?) Sample interpretive questions from a class on childhood at MIT may be found at the following webpage: http://web.mit.edu/cms.871/www/questions.html. In discussions, you should be prepared to respond to your own questions as well as others (though you don’t have to write the response). In general, you should be proactive in prepared for class. Discussion preparation strategies might include: reading and reacting to your own (or others) interpretive questions; expanding on points made in the readings with additional reading/research; connecting readings w/ concepts discussed in class; and integrating current events relevant to the readings. You may be asked to ask your questions during class to facilitate discussion or to share your questions with your peers. If during discussion I get the impression that students are not reading, I reserve the right to quiz students on the material.

Group Research Design:
In this course you also will have the opportunity to gain experience with designing research studies on stigma and health-relevant topics. There will be three or four points during the semester where the readings and discussion will culminate in a group work experience, which may be additionally facilitated by a speaker or panel discussion. This group work will work best when integrating the research literature and/or responding to specific RFAs from NIH. Students are also expected to design the study methodology, which can be completely novel or borrowed from methods used in prior published work. I will make every effort to allot enough time during class for this group work. It is possible that student groups will need additional time to complete the research design outside of class time. The result of the group work should be a 2-4 page (typed) document that each of you will turn in that summarizes the research aim based on a brief background literature, hypotheses and
proposed methodology to test the hypotheses. Additionally, each of you should include in this
document an evaluation of your research design group and your group process. Your personal
participation in this group work is of utmost importance and your grade can be reduced if group
members indicate you did not contribute enough.

**Personal Project and Presentation:**
The remainder of the final grade will be based on a personal project that you will undertake. This
project could take the form of one of the following: a literature review; research proposal; grant
application; extensive presentation. I encourage you to consider which of these options would be
more fruitful for you in your future career endeavors. For example, if you believe stigma is
your main area of interest, it may be wise to propose a study that you could actually conduct, or
choose the grant proposal option whereby you write specific aims and propose studies to address
the aims. You may even find that some of the group work inspires a particular idea for a project.
By contrast, if stigma is not at all relevant to your own research interests, you may want to opt
for the extensive presentation which would translate well to future teaching activities (e.g., social
psychology lecture in an Intro to Psychology course). Regardless of the choice made, each
student is expected to contribute a unique document to the field or literature of social psychology
of stigma. That is, even if the extensive presentation is chosen, a unique perspective must be
taken or innovative activity demonstrated in order to make a contribution (i.e., you cannot simply
summarize definitions and research findings). An additional benefit of the project is that you will
get instructor and peer feedback which can always maximize the utility of your research or
teaching product. If the extensive presentation option is chosen, students must turn in a copy of
their presentation (slides and notes) as well as a full reference list documenting citations.

**Importantly, students MUST get instructor approval of project option and topic prior to
moving forward.** It may become apparent once the project is started that a different option is
more appealing. **Any change in project option or topic must have instructor approval.** All
written products must be written in APA style. A rough draft can be turned in for comments one
month prior to the final draft due date. All students will present their personal projects (10 min.
for regular presentations; 30 min. for extensive presentations) on the last day of class. Written
final documents are due by midnight of the last day of class as noted on the course timeline.

**Grading**
Discussion Questions and Participation (7 classes X 20 points) = 140 possible points
Group Work Documents and Participation (3 X 50 points) = 150 possible points
Personal Project and Presentation = 160 possible points

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Total Possible Points = 450

*Grades are assigned using the university’s system: 95-100% = A; 90-94% = A-; 86-89% = B+;
83-85% = B; 80-82% = B-; 76-79% = C+; 73-75% = C; 70-72% = C-; 65-69% = D+; 60-64% =
D; 59% and below = F. However, in order to pass, graduate students are expected to attain at
least a 3.0, which equates to a ‘B’.*

**Other**
Any student who may need an accommodation based on a disability must make an appointment
to see me during my office hours early in the semester. A Faculty Accommodation Form from
Disability Services authorizing your accommodations is required.
COURSE AND READING OUTLINE
Instructor reserves right to change timeline and readings as needed.

Part I: Setting the Stage

8/27 Topic: Introduction to Course

Articles:
NIH/healthy People 2020
Models of health disparities (social aspects of health, from applied textbook)

Part II: What is this thing called stigma?

9/3 Topic: Stigma Theories

Articles:
Goffman (Chapter 1)

9/10 Topic: Stigma Theories

Articles:
Goffman (Chapter 2)

9/17 Topic: Why Do We Stigmatize?

Articles:


Part III: Impact of stigma

9/24 Topic: Physiological Impact of Stigma

Articles:


Kemeny, M. E., Gruenewald, T. L., & Dickerson, S. S. Shame as the emotional response to threat to the social self: Implications for behavior, physiology, and health.


10/1 Topic: Dr. Sheila Smith (ETSU) to speak on stigma and healthcare (to prepare, read an article on conducting focus groups)

Articles:
Durso, L. E., & Meyer, I. H. (2013). Patterns and predictors of disclosure of sexual orientation to healthcare providers among lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. Sexual Research and Social Policy, 10, 35-42.

10/8 Topic: Panel discussion and study design proposal group work (write up assigned)

10/15 NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

10/22 Topic: Cognitive-Affective Impact of Stigma

Articles:


10/29  **Topic:** Dr. Ilan Meyer to speak on minority stress theory, and Study Design Proposal Group Work (write up assigned)

**Articles:**


11/5  **Topic:** Impact of Stigma on Social Interactions

**Articles:**


11/12  **Social Moderators of Stigmatization**

**Articles:**


11/19 **Topic:** Dr. Stephenie Chaudoir to speak on concealable stigma, disclosure, health, and Study Design Proposal Group Work (write up assigned)

**Articles:** TBA

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**Part IV: Integration**

11/26 **Topic:** Integration of Models of Stigma and Physiological, Cognitive-Affective, and Social Impact

**Articles:**

12/3 **Topic:** FINAL PROJECTS DUE AND PRESENTATIONS GIVEN

* Additional readings may be added or deleted as instructor deems necessary.