

The Impact of Trauma on Individuals and Society
PSYC 394-02
Fall 2022
Wednesday 7:00-10:00 PM
OLRI 370

Professor: Tracey Wilkins, MSW, LICSW
Email: twilkins@macalester.edu (best method of reaching me)
Office hours: 10:30AM-12:00 PM Tuesdays
By appointment either in my clinic office or Zoom

We ask that you take a moment to honor that we are on Dakota land. Macalester is situated on the ancestral homeland of the Dakota people, particularly the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands, who were forcibly exiled from the land because of aggressive and persistent settler colonialism. We make this acknowledgement to honor the Dakota people, ancestors and descendants, as well as the land itself.

Course description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the impact of psychological trauma at both the individual and societal level. We will draw on research and applications from the growing field of traumatic stress with an emphasis on interpersonal trauma. Students will become familiar with the impact and nature of a wide variety of traumas including: childhood abuse, racial trauma, violent crimes, life threatening illnesses such as COVID-19, domestic violence, and war and genocide. Students will also develop a greater understanding of the experiences (biological and social) and needs of those recovering from trauma. We will explore the impact of trauma on society by studying the economic and social costs of trauma. This class will include lectures as well as large and small group discussions.

We will often have intense material to be reviewing. Most of the intense material will be in class so that you will experience it together in community. Students will watch and listen to case accounts of traumatized individuals as well as watch films that depict the impact of trauma. Students will also read classic texts written by trauma experts as well as professional journal articles.

You will find the schedule and topics in Moodle.

Course objectives:

The following objectives are consistent with the learning goals and outcomes of an undergraduate major in psychology, according to the American Psychological Association. The specific learning goals identified by the American Psychological Association's Board of Educational Affairs are noted in parenthesis after each objective.

1. Describe the symptoms, behavioral patterns, and underlying psychological and biological changes associated with child and adult psychopathology that are

associated with trauma as identified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders-IV (APA Learning Goal 1: Theory and Content of Psychology).

2. Explain how the trauma related disorders have been conceptualized and treated over history (APA Learning Goal 1: Theory and Content of Psychology).
3. Encourage students to think critically about how cultural, historical and individual differences influence how individuals and society respond to trauma (Learning Goal 3: Thinking Skills in Psychology; Learning Goal 8: Sociocultural and International Awareness).
4. Develop students' awareness of the broad-ranging influence of trauma across history and cultures (Learning Goal 3: Thinking Skills in Psychology; Learning Goal 8: Sociocultural and International Awareness).
5. Help students build tolerance and understanding of those with trauma related difficulties through careful, balanced discussion of both the deficits and strengths of those afflicted by trauma-related conditions. (Learning Goal 5: Values in Psychology).

But let's be very clear about my goals for this course. My goal is that you learn and that you leave at the end of the semester with a better understanding of how trauma impacts people and the world in which we live. I also want you to leave this course with an understanding of HOW to take in traumatic material and mitigate its negative impact on you. We will learn how to metabolize intense material and engage in self-care practices. I want you to have a foundation that you can take into the next chapters of your life. I believe that all graduates with a psychology, social work or related degree should have a foundation in this area. It will matter regardless of the area of work you intend to pursue.

Required Texts:

Herman, J. L. (2015). *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence from domestic abuse to political terror*. Basic Books.

Menakem, Resmaa (2017). *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathways to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*. Central Recovery Press.

Perry, B. & Szalavitz, M. (2017). *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*. New York: Wiley.

Van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Viking.

Student engagement

I will hold regular office hours in my office in OLRI 325 10:30am-12:00pm on Tuesdays. There may be times I am unable to be there for part or all of that time as a result of my practice. If that happens, I will put an announcement on Moodle to this effect so best to check that before coming over. You are always welcome to stop in or request time as this class may be challenging for a number of reasons. I am also available by appointment and happy to work around my schedule. We can use Zoom or, if you have transportation, you could come to my Willow Tree Healing Center office at 1025 Selby Ave, Suite 101. On occasion I may be able to be on campus to meet. We'll figure it out together.

Assignments

Journals

Self-care plan

Reflection Essays

Final group presentation and group paper

You will find the full descriptions for each of these assignments in Moodle at the top. The due dates will be in Moodle in the weekly schedules

Grading

We will use a version of the 'contract for B' grading method. When I have taught this course before, I have believed that a point system just doesn't seem to get to what I want you to learn. I want to grade you on what you are learning and the effort you are putting into learning and that's really hard to put a number score on so we're going to do it this way. I am open to feedback. This explanation is also on Moodle.

You are guaranteed a B if you:

1. Attend class regularly—not missing more than one class.
2. Meet due dates and writing criteria for all assignments.
3. Participate in all in-class discussions, exercises and activities, including giving thoughtful and respectful feedback. Leading a mindfulness exercise will be given consideration as participation.
4. Complete and turn in a self-care plan..
5. Complete and turn in 10 of the weekly journal assignments, making sure the questions have been fully answered.
6. Choose, complete and turn in 4 of the Reflection Essays.
7. Complete the final group presentation and paper while working faithfully and collaboratively with your group. The presentation will fully address the question and adequately demonstrate the knowledge you have gained through your research with each member of the group participating in the presentation. The paper will need to be written in APA style with appropriate use of citations. The expectation on this paper will be good use of grammar and punctuation while fully answering the question.

If you are interested in upgrading your grade to an A:

1. Do all of the above.
2. Turn in two more weekly journals.
3. Write one additional Reflection Essay.
4. Write the optional addition to the final paper.
5. Demonstrate excellence on writing assignments. By this, I mean thorough and rigorous examination of the topic.

6. You will receive feedback on Essays and Final paper. You will have the opportunity to make amendments and resubmit if the paper is less than an A level paper.

Student Wellness

Here at Macalester, you are encouraged to make your well-being a priority throughout this semester and your career here. Investing time into taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. Remember that beyond being a student, you are a human being carrying your own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities with you. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, financial, etc., and how they can have an academic impact. I encourage you to remember that you have a body with needs. In the classroom, eat when you are hungry, drink water, use the restroom, and step out if you are upset and need a break. Please do what is necessary so long as it does not impede your or others' ability to be mentally and emotionally present in the course. Outside of the classroom, sleep, moving your body, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you support your personal sustainability at Macalester. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please don't hesitate to contact me and/or find support from other resources. If you are unaware of the resources available, I am happy to help you get connected.

Accessibility

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I am committed to ensuring access to course content for all students, including those with disabilities. If you have a disability, please meet with me early in the semester to discuss your accommodation plan. If you have not yet obtained a plan or are unsure if you have a disability that requires accommodation, please contact Disability Services: disabilityservices@macalester.edu, or call 651-696-6275.

Attendance

Attendance plays an essential role in learning; you are warmly invited, encouraged, and expected to attend all class meetings (whether in-person or virtual), especially since we are meeting only once a week, missing one class session becomes a lot of material. Attendance will be important not only for your learning, but also for our ability to build a community together and maintain a sense of connection and commitment to one another during the semester. Your presence in class matters.

I am strongly committed to the health and safety of all of you, myself, and everyone in our respective communities and beyond. When we are in class together on campus, we will follow the college's [Face Coverings Policy](#).

If you do not feel well for any reason or are exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19, please do not come to class. If you are well enough and able, please talk with a classmate about live streaming the class for you to minimize what you may miss. If that is not an option, please talk to me about what accommodations we can make.

Students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during the semester. If you have a religious observance/practice that conflicts with your participation in the course, please contact me before the end of the second week of the semester to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Participation

Participation is distinct from attendance and is also an essential part of this course. In-class discussions and responses to brief ungraded writing assignments, etc. will be factored into your participation grade. Engaging with the classroom space — including by helping to create an environment where all of us can learn and think well about one another — will also be factored into participation. It is important to remember that we all have different styles of expression.

If you have not been able to participate in a class discussion for any reason but want to demonstrate your active engagement, please send me an email after class with a comment or an idea you had that you would have liked to share, but were not able to during class.

Students with any concerns, questions, or need for consideration for flexibility should connect with me as soon as possible to determine an appropriate plan.

Leading a mindfulness activity during the semester will also be a way that you engage with the class and will receive due consideration in your participation for the course.

Harassment/safety

Macalester is committed to providing a safe and open learning and living environment for all students, staff, and faculty. Any community member experiencing sexual harassment, sexual violence, relationship violence, or stalking, is encouraged to seek help and support.

Please be aware that as a faculty member, I need to report disclosure about sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, relationship violence, and stalking to the Title IX Office. The purpose of this report is to ensure that anyone experiencing harm receives the resources and support they need. I will keep this information private and it will not be shared beyond this required report.

Content warning

Course lectures and reading assignments will frequently reference experiences that are painful for all of us and particularly challenging for some of us. These include, but are not limited to, suicidal thoughts and behavior; sexual violence; racism and other forms of discriminatory behavior; substance use and abuse; and childhood trauma. These topics are fundamental to understanding distress, dysfunction, and disorder, and our efforts to understand their impact will be crucial for the course. Because these themes will arise so often, I cannot provide specific alerts. I encourage you to engage in self-care; trust your judgment about when you need to skip part of a reading or step out of a class. If you anticipate that you will need to step out frequently, please choose your seat accordingly so that you can do so easily.