SC 563 – Trauma, Culture & Coping

Spring 2009

Professor:  C. Shawn McGuffey, Ph.D.    mcguffey@bc.edu
Office:  McGuinn 509      Office Hours: T, Th 9-10 a.m.
and by appointment

Classroom and Time:  McGuinn Hall 531, Th 4:30 – 7:00

This seminar will introduce students to various approaches to trauma and traumatic impact. The course is designed for students who seek a scholarly understanding of trauma, as well as those who plan to provide direct services (e.g., therapists, social service workers, etc.) and/or to inform policy. We will examine the sociological, psychological, and service oriented and policy implications of these approaches. Multiple types of trauma will be conceptualized and investigated; from interpersonal level traumas like child sexual abuse and rape, to mass level traumas such as the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack against the U.S. and Hurricane Katrina. Larger socio-cultural forces will be examined in analyzing both the exposure to and recovery from traumatic events. The seminar will be highly attuned to differences based on race, class, and gender.

The course is divided into three parts. Part I interrogates both the classical and emerging perspectives on trauma and recovery. In Part II the course will use these perspectives to examine specific forms of interpersonal traumas. Last, in Part III, we shift our focus to collective traumas.

To help tackle these issues this reading and participation intensive seminar will center on the following guiding questions: What is trauma? Is trauma primarily a personal or social phenomenon? Does culture shape trauma, trauma shape culture, or both? What are the implications of a Universalist vs. Cultural Competency approach to trauma? What do race, class, gender and sexuality tell us about the direct services and policy implications of trauma? Can trauma be “undone”?

Course Expectations and Evaluation:
1) This is a reading and participation intensive course. Readings are due on the date they are listed. Come to class ready to discuss them.

2) If you miss class, you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate. Missing three classes will constitute failing the course. A doctor, school administrator, or other certified official must verify an absence in order for it to be excused. Notes from parents or legal guardians will not be accepted.

3) You will be evaluated in the following four areas:
a. Class Participation (15%): This includes contributing to class discussions, respecting the views of others, and a presentation of your final paper at the end of the semester (which will be discussed more below). Students are encouraged to critique all the assigned readings and to dissect the debates within them. Also, the guiding questions posed on the first page of this syllabus should be addressed, in one form or another, in every class discussion.

I have found that students often have a tendency to over generalize their own personal experiences to the overall population. This tendency is especially striking in courses that address sensitive topics. This course is positioned firmly in C. Wright Mills’ “sociological imagination” which highlights the connections between history, social structure, and personal biography. The organization of this course nurtures the sociological imagination through its emphasis on multiple perspectives and how history and social structure converge to impinge on the life chances of different types of people. Class participation should do so as well.

To help us achieve this goal, discussions will focus on the readings and pertinent current events. Personal anecdotes should be kept to a minimum. Personal experience should only be used to illuminate theoretical or policy oriented points. Relying too heavily on your own experience or straying too far from the topic of conversation will negatively impact your participation grade.

If you do need to talk about traumatic issues there is a list of Boston College, city, and state resources on the last page of this syllabus. Please do not hesitate to use them. Also, if there are any services that you need, or you think may be helpful to others, which are not on the resource page please let me know so that I can include them.

b. Class Presentation (25%): You will also lead a class presentation based on a particular day’s assigned readings. You are encouraged to include outside material, but this is not required. Class presentations can take a variety of forms and can incorporate a range of presentation aids (e.g., film, interpretive dance, lecture, poetry, posters, trauma kits, etc.) Leave approximately 20 minutes at the end of class to allow the professor to highlight key points. Your presentation will be carefully evaluated based on the following rubric:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Class Presentation Rubric</th>
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<td><strong>Is the class session well organized?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Relates material to previous readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides internal summaries and transitions</td>
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<td>Maintains continuity in the discussion/presentation</td>
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<td>Summarizes main points at end of presentation</td>
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<td>Paces class session appropriately</td>
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| **How is the content presented?** |
| Presentation aids are useful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Presents background information for ideas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Explains difficult terms and concepts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Integrates readings and discussion/presentation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Helps clarify material | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Is the presenter credible?

Appears well-prepared  1  2  3  4  5
Understands the material  1  2  3  4  5
Is able to admit insufficient knowledge  1  2  3  4  5
Speaks audibly and clearly  1  2  3  4  5
Communicates enthusiasm  1  2  3  4  5

How is the presenter’s rapport with the other class members?

Encourages participation  1  2  3  4  5
Responds constructively to class members  1  2  3  4  5
Treats members equitably  1  2  3  4  5
Recognizes when others are confused  1  2  3  4  5
Shows respect for other’s viewpoints  1  2  3  4  5

NOTE: I recognize that some class sessions require a heavier reading load and/or involve more complex ideas and concepts. I will take this into consideration when evaluating class presentations.

c. Weekly Statements (25%): A weekly statement will be due every Wednesday by 11:59 p.m. via email to the professor and/or class presenter. These statements should be focused on the assigned readings and address one or more of the guiding questions on the first page of the syllabus. Although it is not imperative to directly mention each reading, statements should at least tackle the ideas presented in all of them.

Statements will be evaluated based on the following criteria: (a) an introduction that distinctly states your topic and why it is important; (b) responses should have a logical flow with supporting evidence from the readings and lecture; (c) a succinct critique of the pertinent issues; (d) and all papers should be typed, double spaced, and NO MORE than two pages. Your final evaluation of your weekly statements will come at the end of the semester and will be based on improvement over time. At the end of the semester you will neatly organize and hand-in a portfolio including each of your statements and a final paper (which will be discussed more below) in a portfolio.

d. Final Paper (35%): The last fraction of your final grade will consist of an 18-25 page paper (12 point font, double spaced, one-inch margins). The page limits include text, end/footnotes, charts and graphs, and references. The paper should focus on a particular aspect of trauma, incorporate outside sources, and should draw from the course readings. Sample topics include, but are not limited to: a theoretical analysis of various models of trauma; gender, race and class differences in responses to trauma; how sexuality shapes the availability and usability of social service programs for trauma survivors; the pros and cons of cultural competency frameworks of trauma; the impact of trauma on immigrant communities; and trauma and social policy. The last two days of the course will be dedicated to presenting final papers to the other class members. Plan to spend about 10-15 minutes on these presentations.

Although the topic of the paper is of your own choosing, the paper must address two or more of the course’s guiding questions and must include ample material from the course. You can also incorporate your weekly statements into the final paper. In fact, once you’ve decided on your topic you should start to craft your weekly statements with your final paper in mind. This will greatly assist in completing the final paper. Topics, a rough outline, and a tentative reading
list must be submitted to the professor by February 26th. These materials should also be included in your final portfolio. The final paper is due April 30th at 4:30 p.m. Late papers will not be accepted.

**Grading Scale:**

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<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>82-85</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>78-81</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>74-77</td>
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<td>70-73</td>
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<td>66-69</td>
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**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a standard of utmost importance in this course. Guidelines for academic integrity in written work are posted on the Boston College website at:

www.bc.edu/integrity

If you have any questions pertaining to the academic integrity guidelines, please come and talk with me for more clarification. If you are caught violating Boston College’s policies on academic integrity, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment and the appropriate Dean will be notified in accordance to the rules set forth by Boston College.

**Books**

*Required:*


*Recommended:*


*The professor reserves the right to incorporate additional readings throughout the course.*
Reading Schedule:

Part I: Theorizing Trauma & Traumatic Impact

Thinking About Trauma


Conceptualizing Coping and Recovery

Jan 29: Herman, Judith. 1992. Trauma and Recovery. (Read the Entire Book)
Part II: Inter-personal Trauma

Domestic Violence


Child Abuse


Child Trauma & Social Policy

Feb 26: DUE – Topic, rough outline, and a tentative reading list for Final Paper

**Child Sexual Abuse**


**Adult Sexual Assault**


Part III: Collective Trauma

September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attack Against the U.S.


Hurricane Katrina: The History and Demography of Disaster

April 2: Hartman, Chester and Gregory D. Squires. (Eds). 2006. *There is no such thing as a Natural Disaster: Race, Class, and Hurricane Katrina*. Read chapters 2 - 8.

Hurricane Katrina: Urban Planning, Social Policy and the Rebuilding of New Orleans


Class Presentations

April 23: Project Presentations

April 30: Project Presentations Continued / Final Papers Due at 4:30!!! (Last day of regularly scheduled classes)
Health Service Resources

**Boston College Resources**

**Health Services**, 119 Cushing Hall  
552-3225  
Emergency (24 hours): 552-3227

**Counseling Services**, 108 Gasson Hall  
552-3310

**Women’s Resource Center**, 213 McElroy Hall  
552-3489

**Sexual Assault Network**  
552-BC11

**BC Police Dept.**  
Emergency: 552-4444  
Non-emergency: 552-3475

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**Boston Area Resources**

**Boston Area Rape Crisis Center**  
617-492-7273

**Battered Women’s Hotline**  
617-661-7203

**Casa Myrna Vazque**  
English/Spanish Hotline  
617-521-0100

**Gay Men’s Domestic Violence Project**  
Serves gay and bisexual men, men who have sex with men & transgendered men  
Hotline: 1-800-832-1901  
Office: 617-354-6065

**Mass. Coalition for Battered Women**  
1-800-799-SAFE  
617-248-0922

**The Network/ La Red**  
English/Spanish Hotline  
Serves lesbians and bisexual women, women involved with other women, and transgendered individuals (MTF & FTM)  
Hotline/Linea de Crisis: 617-742-4911  
TTY: 617-227-4911

**Victim Rights Law Center**  
617-399-6720

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**New England Area Resources**

**New England Learning Center for Women in Transition**  
413-772-0806