

New Honors Course! Just Added!

Honors 290 (6) The Psychological Experience of Illness

MWF 10:00

Kathryn Kogan, Psychology Department

This course will examine the biopsychosocial factors that shape our response to chronic, disabling or life-threatening medical conditions, mental illness, and addiction. We will study the phenomenological aspects of illness, in other words, the psychological, social and spiritual experience of patients, their families and care providers and how illness shapes their life course and well-being. We will explore the role that culture and society play in the illness experience, including the influence of the medical model, the medical and psychiatric care systems, and the role of medical and psychiatric professionals in both shaping and responding to these crises in living. We will also consider the effect of illness on families and care givers, as well as how the family system itself influences the illness career of the patient. Our approach will be to look at illness as a multidimensional experience, influenced by multiple factors, thus we will take an interdisciplinary approach that draws from psychology, medical sociology, medical anthropology, medical ethics, and existential philosophy.

Class meetings will include lecture, discussion, film, and guest speakers. Readings will include research articles, scholarly writings, an illness memoir, and articles from The New York Times and other sources. Because of the emphasis on discussion, attendance and participation are mandatory. Students will be invited to share stories from their own experience and those of their families to work towards a deeper understanding of the psychological impact of chronic illness. Students will keep a reading response/personal reflections journal and will complete an interview paper (6-8 pages), an analytic review of a memoir (6-8 pages), and a research paper through which to explore a topic of particular interest (10-12 pages). Students will attend an illness-related self help group in the community and write an essay on the experience.

This course can be used to fulfill a Social/Behavioral distribution (SB).