Psyc E-2010: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):
Disentangling Myth from Fact

Fall 2014

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Office hours: By appointment

Please never hesitate to contact me, no matter the issue. I will respond to your emails within a matter of hours. Also please feel free to approach me before and after class.

Course Overview
Welcome to Psyc E-2010! The clinical picture of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has been discussed in the medical literature for over 200 years. However, for the past 30 years, ADHD has been subject to rigorous scientific and clinical investigation accompanied by fierce debate in popular culture. ADHD has received a tremendous amount of media exposure especially with regards to stimulant medications such as Ritalin. Myths and judgments have started to mix with scientific fact, as terms such as “overdiagnosis” or “overmedication” are often used in this context. Furthermore, some have claimed (including certain scientists and clinicians) that ADHD is not a disorder but rather a powerful concept that allows society to control behavioral irregularities. These notions and others will be discussed in this course. We will cover a broad range of subjects, from the history of ADHD to the assessment and diagnostic criteria, from epidemiology and evolutionary origins to views about the legitimacy of ADHD.

Course Goals
The ultimate objective of this course is to use cutting-edge knowledge to educate students regarding multiple aspects of ADHD, employing this knowledge to critically assess an array of statements from popular media and scholarly articles. At the end of this course, students will possess an evidence-based comprehension of ADHD and will understand the complexities associated with this disorder. Furthermore, students will have gained the ability to independently assess information about ADHD and other disorders.

Student performance will be evaluated on the basis of active participation and graded assignments.
**Course Policies and Expectations**
To effectively familiarize yourself with the course materials and so that this learning experience may extend into your future educational endeavors, I encourage you to do the following:

*Read the articles before we talk about them in class.* It’s difficult to participate in class discussions or learn without reading the relevant articles beforehand. On my part, I handpicked papers that balance readability and importance and assigned a reasonable number of papers for each week (see below). It is important to realize that being prepared contributes to the overall learning experience of the class. I will highlight the most important papers to read each week at the end of every class.

*Participate.* The quality of this course depends in large part upon your level of engagement in the class with your fellow students. Classes will involve group discussion as well as in-class experiential exercises and debates, requiring committed participation from you all. Thus, your participation enhances the class experience not only for yourself, but for your fellow students as well (and for me, as I am genuinely interested in what you have to say!).

*Complete and submit each assignment on time:* The course includes two assignments intended to facilitate your exploration of ADHD. Written assignment grades will be reduced for late submissions. In addition, explicit instructions regarding content and format will be provided for each assignment, and your grade is dependent, in part, upon following these instructions. Extensions will not be permitted except in unusual extenuating circumstances.

*Ask questions and ask for assistance if you need it:* This is important. Teaching is my passion, and it is extremely important to me that concepts be made clear and accessible. Therefore, please do not wait or hesitate to ask questions or ask for help. Whenever you ask questions, you give me a rich opportunity to do my job.

**Materials and Access**
Reading materials (detailed below) will be available on the course website.

**Assignments and Grading Procedures**

**Class participation (10%):** Grades will be based on your attendance and participation in class discussions.

**Short Assignment (30%): ADHD Researcher: Short research proposal.** Choose one or more of the articles from the reading list and use it to generate a research proposal. Identify a question left open by the article’s results and propose a study to examine it. Specify your research question, hypothesis, proposed method (including participants, procedure, and measures), and expected results. Conclude your proposal with what contribution your study will make to the field. Paper length: 3 pages. Detailed instructions and guidelines will be provided.

**Due date: 11-12-14**
Final Paper (60%): For your final paper (8-10 pages in length), you will have a choice of two options. For all of these options, please use APA style throughout your paper.

Due date: 12-17-14

1. Discuss the argument that ADHD is not a real disorder. Describe in detail at least one argument supporting this statement, and one argument against this statement. Express your own opinion and use references to support your argument.

2. Choose one myth regarding ADHD. Describe the myth using references. Provide at least two arguments (with references) why this is a myth. Describe the contrasting evidence. Express your own opinion about why you think this myth is common in popular culture.

Specific requirements for Graduate-Credit Students only:

Short Assignment: Your research proposal needs to be innovative (conduct a literature search to make sure that your exact proposed research has not been published). Please note, changing one parameter from an existing research is not considered innovative. Minimum number of references = 5.

Final Paper: Minimum number of references = 8. For the 1st choice (argument that ADHD is not a real disorder), discussion should include the perspective of neurobiology (“disorder of the brain”), antipsychiatry, and traditional psychiatry. For the 2nd choice, graduate-credit students need to email me the idea and obtain approval prior to writing the assignment.

Summary of Assignment Due Dates

November 12th 2013 Short Research Proposal
December 17th 2013 Final Paper

Academic Integrity: On Plagiarism

Don’t do it--there are several reasons why it’s a very bad idea. First, it detracts from a major component of the learning process, which is to develop your ability to engage in a critical, mindful thought process, and to creatively and intelligently generate ideas that are your own. Second, from a purely pragmatic perspective, you are likely to get caught. Plagiarism is easier to spot than you might realize, and if you are caught, the consequences are serious. Finally, not only is academic dishonesty not worth the loss of knowledge or the risk of getting caught, it’s also not worth undermining your ethics and dealing with a guilty conscience. Thus, whenever you are referring to someone else’s ideas or work, give credit to that person. If you have any doubts, it is always good to err on the side of caution and cite.
If you would like to learn more about how to properly cite sources or about Harvard’s policy on academic dishonesty, you can refer to the following links:
http://www.extension.harvard.edu/exams-grades-policies/student-responsibilities#integrity

Please note that collaboration and ongoing discussions between students is highly encouraged. However due to the nature of this course (encouraging active assimilation of knowledge together with the development of critical thinking abilities), written assignments should be done individually.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities (mandatory on all syllabi)**

Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term. *(fill in specific date).* Failure to do so may result in the Course Head's inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although Faculty are invited to contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation.

**Course Schedule**

READING ITEMS MARKED WITH AN ASTERISK (*) ARE OPTIONAL.

**WEEK 1 READINGS (September 3rd)**

**Course Introduction/Discussion of Issues in ADHD (Controversies; ADHD in pop culture; How can we tell a myth from a scientific fact?)**


Think about: What is your view on ADHD?

**WEEK 2 READINGS (September 10th)**

**History and epidemiology**

**History**

**Epidemiology**


**WEEK 3 READINGS (September 17th)**

**Diagnostic criteria and diagnostic procedures**


WEEK 4 READINGS (September 24th)

**Neurobiology of ADHD**


This class will start with an experiential in-class activity: “How does it feel to have ADHD?”.

WEEK 5 READINGS (October 1st)

**Neuropsychology of ADHD**


WEEK 6 READINGS (October 8th)

**Additional symptoms and characteristics associated with ADHD**


**WEEK 7 (October 15th)**

**Comorbid conditions**


**WEEK 8 READINGS (October 22nd)**

**Etiology**


**WEEK 9 READINGS (October 29th)**

**ADHD from Childhood to Adulthood**


**WEEK 10 READINGS (November 5th)**

**Pharmacological Treatment**


**WEEK 11 READINGS (November 12th)**

**Psychological Treatment (and Alternative Treatments)**


WEEK 12 READINGS (November 19th)

**What is psychopathology? What is madness?; The antipsychiatry movement: Half a century of stimulating debate and the case of ADHD as a ‘real’ disorder…**


WEEK 13 READINGS (November 26th)

**NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK**

WEEK 14 READINGS (December 3rd)

**ADHD an evolutionary perspective**


WEEK 15 READINGS (December 10th)

**Gender differences in ADHD & Disentangling myths from scientific findings**

**Gender differences in ADHD**


*Biederman J; Petty CR; O’Connor KB; Hyder LL; Faraone SV (2012) Predictors of persistence in girls with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: results from an 11-year controlled follow-up study. Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica 125, 147–156*

**Disentangling myths from scientific findings**

We will cover the most common myths concerning ADHD as well as complex and important questions (e.g., why do we see a constant rise in diagnosis of ADHD?). We will then examine these myths using our newly acquired knowledge.

**WEEK 16 READINGS (December 17th)**

ADHD: what do we know (and especially) where do we go from here; Generalizing critical thinking on psychopathology; conclusions, future directions and take home messages.

ADHD case studies. In this class we will examine a number of clinical cases for which we will discuss and explore an entire process: from the assessment through treatment.

**Suggested Additional Reading:**


