COURSE NUMBER: SOWO 766, Section 001
COURSE TITLE: Dialectical Behavioral Therapy: Theory and Practice
SEMESTER & YEAR: Spring, 2016
INSTRUCTOR: Marilyn Ghezzi, MSW, LCSW
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919-962-6490
mghezzi@email.unc.edu
OFFICE HOURS: 12-2 Mondays or by appointment

COURSE WEBSITE: is available through https://sakai.unc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course provides an introduction to Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), exploring both its theoretical underpinnings as well as its practical application.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Understand the theoretical underpinnings of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), including its roots in cognitive and behavioral theories, mindfulness and the biopsychosocial model.

2. Understand the characteristics of borderline personality disorder, the basics of the DBT approach for treating borderline personality, and issues of stigma related to the diagnosis.

3. Using a DBT framework, be able to formulate, articulate and develop a written case plan for a client, including specific interventions and therapeutic strategies.

3. Develop skills for conducting both individual DBT therapy and the DBT skills group that can be applied to clients presenting with a variety of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, eating disorders, substance use disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

4. Analyze DBT’s evidence base and applicability to clients presenting with a range of issues, including different DSM diagnoses as well as diverse characteristics and backgrounds, including age, disability, ethnicity, GLBT status, race and socioeconomic status.

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5. Evaluate how well DBT fits with social work values and ethics, as well as the current mental health climate, including issues of social justice such as access to services.

**EXPANDED DESCRIPTION:**

This course provides an introduction to Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). The aim of this course is to increase a student’s theoretical understanding of DBT and their ability to apply the model to clients with a variety of mental health issues, focusing on treating borderline personality disorder. Through course assignments and in-class activities, students will have an opportunity to practice DBT specific skills in order to gain confidence in their ability to both recommend and implement these skills in clinical social work practice.

**REQUIRED TEXTS/READINGS:**


Other assigned readings will be posted on our Sakai site

**CLASS PARTICIPATION AND TEACHING METHODS**

Class participation counts for 20% of your final grade. Participation is a higher percentage for this class due to the emphasis on experiential methods. Everyone will receive a standard score of 20 for participation, in recognition of a norm of attendance, contributions to small group activities and informed participation in class discussion. Informed participation means that you clearly demonstrate that you have completed assigned readings and can offer analysis, synthesis and evaluation of written material. In order to fully participate in and benefit from each class session, students must complete required readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. Excellent participation also means that your comments are thoughtful, focused and respectful. Points will be deducted from the base score if you miss class, are late, leave early, disappear for long periods on break or are unprepared. Please turn off cell phones during class.

This class will use a variety of teaching and learning methods to cover the content. These different methods include: small group activities; role plays; lecture; videos; and class discussions. The development of a supportive learning environment is fostered by respectfully listening to the ideas of others, being able to understand and appreciate a point of view which is different from your own, clearly articulating your point of view, and linking experience to readings and assignments. If you will
not be able to attend a class, it is your responsibility to obtain handouts, information about class content, and information about announcements, etc., from your classmates.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Refer to description of assignments at the end of this syllabus.

1. Paper or presentation assignment: 30%
2. Final paper: 50%
3. Class Attendance and Participation: 20%

In accordance with the Graduate school, letter grades are assigned to the following numeric ranges:

- H = 94 and above
- P = 80 to 93
- L = 70 to 79
- F = 69 and below

SUBMITTING WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND POLICY ON INCOMPLETES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

A course grade of “Incomplete” will be given only in extreme extenuating circumstances and in accordance with SSW and University policy.

All papers and assignments are to be submitted electronically to the Drop Box on our Sakai site and are due at the beginning of class on the dates noted on this syllabus. Ten percent will be deducted from your grade for each day that a paper is late. If you have a situation arise that may prohibit you from completing the assignment on time, any request for an extension on the papers must be done in advance of the due date (at least 24 hours) for the paper. Approved delays will not affect the grade.

*Your cover sheet for the paper should contain your name, PID# and honor code pledge. Do not put your name in the body of the paper that you submit to Sakai, instead use your PID# as a running head on each page.*

POLICY ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students are expected to conduct all academic work within the letter and spirit of the Honor Code of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which prohibits the giving or receiving of unauthorized aid in academic processes.

Please refer to the *APA Style Guide*, The SSW *Manual*, and the SSW *Writing Guide* for information on attribution of quotes, plagiarism and appropriate use of assistance in preparing assignments. All written assignments should contain a signed pledge from you stating that, "I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in preparing this written work." In keeping with the UNC Honor Code, if reason
exists to believe that academic dishonesty has occurred, a referral will be made to the Office of the Student Attorney General for investigation and further action as required.

**POLICY ON ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities.

All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. In the first instance please visit their website [http://accessibility.unc.edu](http://accessibility.unc.edu), call 919-962-8300 or email accessibility@unc.edu. Please contact ARS as early in the semester as possible.

**USE OF LAPTOPS OR OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Please turn off all cell phones or other devices that would disrupt the learning environment of the classroom. Laptops are allowed during lecture only or when being used for a class activity. Laptops should be closed during class discussion and other activities that do not require the use of a laptop.

**APA AND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

The School of Social Work faculty has adopted APA style as the preferred format for papers and publications. The best reference is the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition (2009) that is available at most bookstores. The following web site provides additional information: [http://www.apastyle.org/apa-style-help.aspx](http://www.apastyle.org/apa-style-help.aspx)

Students are strongly encouraged to review the materials on the School of Social Work’s website [http://ssw.unc.edu/students/writing](http://ssw.unc.edu/students/writing). This page includes numerous helpful writing resources such as tutorials on understanding plagiarism, quick reference guide to APA, writing tips and ESL materials. Students are also strongly encouraged to review the section on plagiarism carefully. All instances of academic dishonesty will result in disciplinary measures pre-established by the School of Social Work and the University.


**COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS**

**Class One-- March 1**

- Overview of the course and discussion of syllabus
- Understanding borderline personality disorder
- Understanding basics of DBT approach
- How does DBT fit with social work values and ethics?

**Readings:**

Linehan textbook: Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 3-65.


**Class Two-- March 8**

- Understanding experiential avoidance
- How do characteristics of borderline personality and the nature of experiential avoidance relate to the treatment methods of DBT?
- Individual therapy in DBT -- what is validation?


Linehan textbook: Chapters 3 and, pp. 66-119


**March 15 -- No class- Spring Break**

Watch Marsha Linehan video sometime before Class Three – March 22
https://ctiv.alexanderstreet.com/view/1779085
This link is also on Sakai. Be aware that you may only be able to access this video from one of the School’s computers or when you are logged into the UNC website on your laptop.

Class Three -- March 22

Bree Kalb, M.A. guest speaker (mindfulness)
• Understanding core mindfulness
• How does mindfulness help?
• Case formulation

Readings:

Linehan textbook: Chapter 5, pp. 120-164

Linehan workbook: Chapter 7, pp. 151-230 Don’t panic about the length of this reading. Much of it is reviewing worksheets, giving you teaching notes for the skills training classes, summarizing research points, so you can skim a lot of it. I just want you to get the general idea and see some examples of mindfulness activities and explanations.


Class Four—March 29

• Presentation of Emotion Regulation Module
• Continued discussion of individual therapy

Readings:

Linehan textbook: Chapters 6 and 7, pp. 165-220.

Linehan workbook: Chapter 9, Emotion Regulation Skills, pp. 318-415 Again, this is a huge amount of material, but feel free to skim it and read the parts that are most interesting to you. Look for activities you might use with clients right now at your field placement. We will be taught this module by our presentation groups.

**Class Five—April 5**

Case Formulation Paper Due

- Presentation of Distress Tolerance module

Readings:

Linehan textbook, Chapters 8 and 9; pp. 221-291

Linehan workbook: Chapter 10, Distress Tolerance Skills, pp. 416-492. *Same caveats noted above apply to this reading*

**Class Six—April 12**

- Presentation of Interpersonal Effectiveness module

Readings:

Linehan textbook, Chapters 10, 11, 12; pp. 292-398

Linehan workbook: Chapter 8, Interpersonal Effectiveness, pp. 231-317. *Same caveats noted above apply to this reading*

**Class Seven—April 19**

- Evaluation; preparation for final paper
- Wrap up


**Final paper due on Friday, April 22nd at midnight. Upload to Dropbox on Sakai.**

**SUPPLEMENTAL READING**


**ASSIGNMENTS**

**First Assignment - Choice of paper or presentation**

**Presentation option:** In this assignment, you will teach our class for 45 minutes as though we were a DBT skills training group. Use Linehan’s workbook to learn the lecture points, exercises, discussion points, etc. for a particular training module. Choose one of the three modules, Distress Tolerance, Interpersonal Effectiveness and Emotion Regulation to teach to the class. Devise your own examples, decide how to structure the time, keep us engaged, and clearly convey the material just as you would in leading an actual skills training group. We will have 6 of these 45 minute presentations spread over our March 29, April 5 and April 12th classes. **Only 6 students can choose this option so if more than 6 students are interested, we will need to draw names out of a hat to determine the 6.**

**Grading rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Points possible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarity of presentation- Student conveyed the material in a clear and concise manner</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity of presentation- Student used creative examples and exercises to convey the material</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depth of understanding of the material- Student demonstrated a thorough understanding of the material as evidenced by answers to questions, examples used, lecture coherence</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engagement- How well did student engage the class during the presentation</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Time limit- Stayed within 45 minute time limit and covered the necessary material</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
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**Paper option: Due on April 5** In this 5-7 page paper, you will choose a client case from your field placement or other social work practice setting and will conduct a DBT case formulation. In a case formulation, assess the presenting problems/symptoms of the case and then explain these problems/symptoms through a particular theoretical lens. A formulation is a way of understanding your client’s problem and is informed by the theory with which you are working. This understanding then guides your treatment plan and treatment targets. In this paper, explain the client’s symptoms/presenting problems using the DBT theoretical approach.

The paper includes:

1. **Presenting problem and brief psychosocial history** - In this section of the paper, please explain client’s presenting problem and history, including information about family of origin, presenting symptoms and current stressors, any relevant childhood history or history of trauma. This section should also report the DSM diagnosis. (About 2-3 pages). *Please take steps to ensure client confidentiality by altering or leaving out identifying information. See guideline on Sakai about disguising case material. All client names should be changed.*

2. **Formulation section**: In this section you will describe the symptoms and presenting problem using DBT as an explanatory model. List the client’s main presenting problems and symptoms and then explain those problems or symptoms using the DBT model. *If you have not done a case formulation yet in your graduate school career, I will provide you with additional materials to guide you in this process.* (This section should be about 3-4 pages).

An example of explaining a symptom using the DBT model is given on p. 335 of your Koerner chapter. I am paraphrasing it as follows: A client Don cuts himself. This would be listed as one of his major symptoms. In a DBT formulation we know that cutting is a way for clients to get relief from emotional distress. In order to analyze Don’s specific case, he seeks relief from intense anxiety by cutting himself. Often after he cuts his parents take care of him and this may in fact perpetuate his cutting behavior.

You might want to further specify what tends to precipitate Don’s cutting episodes, such as fights with his girlfriend, or flashbacks or feeling incompetent at work, etc. So, formulation is a way of taking the general theory about why a symptom or problem is happening and adding in client specificity, i.e. Why is this client having this symptom or problem and why now?

Your paper will **not** need to include a treatment plan or discussion of treatment. The paper should be 5-7 pages total and should follow APA guidelines. No references should be needed for the paper.
Grading Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The presenting problem, history and DSM diagnosis are clear and thorough.</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Each of the symptoms and/or presenting problems in the case are listed with a thorough and clear explanation using the DBT model.</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The formulation takes into account client specific factors, including issues of diversity such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. Psychosocial history was complete and linked to formulation.</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Formulation was thorough, complete and showed critical thinking about the case.</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The explanation shows a good understanding of the DBT model.</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. The paper is clearly written with no writing errors and APA formatting is followed.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
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Final paper: Due on Friday April 22

This final paper is a combination of research and reflection. Students will need to research a topic related to DBT that fits with their plan of study. Papers should be 7-10 pages and should use at least 5 references that were not on the course syllabus. Additional references from the course syllabus may be needed.

Topics include: Adapting and applying DBT for a particular population such as older adults, adolescents, SPMI, incarcerated populations, etc. OR the paper could focus on adapting and applying DBT for disorders other than borderline personality. These disorders could include PTSD, eating disorders, substance use disorders, or mood disorders. If you would like to explore a topic not reflected here, please discuss this with me ahead of time.

You should address the following issues in the paper:

1. Explain the major adaptations or change in emphasis that is needed to use DBT with your population of interest or disorder. Cite the relevant literature.

2. Review and summarize the research about the efficacy of this adaptation.
3. Given what you know about evidence based practice, how compelling is the research evidence for this adaptation or application?

4. Given what you learned about DBT during this course and your review of the literature, what is your assessment of this adaptation? How well do you think DBT would work for this particular population or problem. (I am asking for your informed opinion here.) This section should be about one page of the paper.

**Grading Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The paper clearly explains what changes are needed to implement DBT with the population or disorder of focus and cited relevant literature.</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a clear and comprehensive summary of the relevant efficacy research on this topic.</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a thoughtful discussion of the quality of the evidence.</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a discussion of the student’s view of this adaptation that shows critical thinking.</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>At least 5 scholarly resources were used which were not assigned course readings.</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>The writing was clear with NO errors and APA formatting was used throughout the paper.</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
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