The Bob Shapell School of Social Work at Tel-Aviv University

MA in Coping with Stress, Crisis and Trauma

An Integrative Scope of the Mind-Body: Implications for Stress, Health, and Well-Being

Semester I, 2014-2015
DAY, HOURS

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COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Today’s western society is characterized by a dualistic view of the mind and the body. The body is referred as a ‘container’ for the self, rather than an integral part of it. However, and partially due to the assimilation of ancient eastern ideas in western culture, new ideas call for the need to reattach the dualistic Cartesian mind-body structure. More specifically, a growing body of knowledge demonstrates an inherent link between bodily and emotional experiences, and its implications in stress, trauma and daily life. These notions exemplify the need of integrating physiological, psychological, and social schools of thought in the aim of improving the understanding of human experience, health, and well-being.

This course is designed to promote knowledge and understanding of the correspondence between the mind and the body. For this purpose, three main scopes will be presented and discussed: a) Theoretical explanations for the inherent link between the mind and the body in developmental and interpersonal processes b) Somatic implications of stress and trauma and its correspondence with the psychological ramifications of trauma c) Cultural and political forces that shape the way we refer to the body and its experiences. Finally, a few integrative mind-body interventions will be discussed.
**Course Goals:**
- Gain knowledge and tools to explore and evaluate diverse human experiences through an integrative mind-body perspective
- Learn about the psychophysiological ramifications of stress and trauma
- Explore practical directions for implementing an integrative mind-body perspective in interventions

**REQUIREMENTS**

**Attendance and participation** - Attendance is mandatory. Active involvement in class discussion is encouraged.

**Reading** – Mandatory readings prior to each class is presented in the "required reading". All materials are accessible through the course website.

**Questionnaire** – During the first week of the semester, an electronic questionnaire will be sent to all students via email. We will be looking at the class data in Lesson 7 to illustrate correlations between concepts that will be discussed in class.

*Please note:* *Questionnaires are filled anonymously *The objective of this exercise is educational. Results will only be used for this exercise *Results are analyzed and presented in class as overall scores of all participants, and not individually *Participation is not mandatory

**A reflective experience and report (due for lesson 9)**
Throughout one week, students will report in a diary associations, thoughts, feelings, and experiences that relate to the question ‘How does it feel in my body?’
*This diary is yours, and will not be submitted or presented.*

Based on this diary, report the following:
- a. Provide a short summary of your impressions, and describe your experience of writing the diary (up to two pages).
- b. Discuss your experience, and analyze it according to one of the following perspectives: social, developmental, or interpersonal explanations for the mind-body association (up to two pages).
Final paper

The following list exemplifies phenomena that involve both bodily and emotional aspects. These phenomena are considered to be linked with exposure to stress and/or trauma.

Choose one of the following phenomena:

- Hypochondriasis
- Somatoform disorders
- Eating disorders
- Self mutilation
- Panic disorders
- Alexithymia
- Fibromyalgia
- Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Students may suggest other related phenomena. These require prior approval.

a. Provide a general overview of the chosen phenomenon. Present definitions, diagnosis, epidemiological aspects, and the correlation with exposure to trauma.

b. Analyze the link between the mind and the body and how it may be understood in regards to the chosen phenomenon. For this purpose, relate to the following perspectives that were discussed in class:

- Developmental and interpersonal
- Psychophysiological
- Cultural and political

c. Present an intervention that is offered for individuals who suffer from this phenomenon. Analyze whether and how the correspondence between bodily and emotional experiences is incorporated in this intervention, and offer improvements.

Papers should not exceed 14 pages (double space, not including references). All papers should be submitted in accordance with the APA format, 6th edition.

The final paper should be printed and handed in by January 21st, 2015.

EVALUATION

Grading will be based upon attendance and participation (10%), reflective report (20%), and final paper (70%).
Lesson 1

Topics

- Historical and philosophical scopes on the mind-body construct:
  - Monism and dualism in western society
  - Organic food, monitored exercise, and daily meditating: Reconnecting the mind and the body (Do they really?)

Required reading


Lesson 2

Topics

- Developmental processes 1: The self as embodied in the bodily experiences

Required reading


Lesson 3

Topics

- Developmental processes 2: The experience of the body as self-knowledge

Required reading


Additional Reading


**Lesson 4**

**Topics**
- Arousal and regulation: The psychophysiology of stress

**Required reading**


**Additional Reading**


**Lesson 5**

**Topics**
- “The body remembers”: Ramifications of trauma on the mind-body

**Required reading**


**Additional Reading**


**Lesson 6**

**Topics**
- From body to mind: Somatic illness as a stressful and/or traumatic event

**Required reading**

Additional Reading


Lesson 7

Topics

- From mind to body: Awareness, attention, and orientation to bodily experiences

Required reading


Additional Reading


Lesson 8

Topics

- Mindfulness: Implementing Eastern ideas in Western society

Required Reading


Additional Reading

Lesson 9

Topics

- Medicalization and objectification of the body: Cultural and political influences on how we perceive our body

Required reading


Additional Reading


Lesson 10

Topics

- Pain as case study: Fibromyalgia, phantom pain, and self-mutilation from an integrative point of view

Required reading


Additional Reading

• Interventions 1: Overview of current intervention methods for treating the traumatized mind-body

Required reading


Additional Reading


Lesson 12

Topics

• Interventions 2: Critical and integrative view of the mind-body: implications for designing interventions

Required reading


Recommended additional course reading


