

COUNSELING IN NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES: PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

CPSY 521
2 semester hours

[term taught]
[classroom, day and time]

[instructor]
[contact information]

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is the formal offering of the Indigenous Ways of Knowing curriculum designed particularly for graduate students preparing to be community counselors; marriage, couples and family therapists and school psychologists. Based in the interests and concerns of contemporary Native American communities, the content and activities of this course assist counselors in developing deep understanding and capacity for supporting the mental health of Native American individuals, families and communities. Through careful consideration of the research bearing on contemporary Native American experience alongside stated concerns of regional and global indigenous leaders, this course explores in detail the practices and sensibilities that support cultural and personal health.

PRIMARY AUDIENCE: Advanced graduate students in the Counseling Psychology Department and others interested in better supporting the well being of Native American individuals, families and communities in rural and urban settings.

RATIONALE: Few graduate counseling, addictions, MFT or school psychology programs in the Pacific Northwest are preparing practitioners for work with Native American individuals and communities in the context of their distinctive needs. Contemporary conditions for many Native people and communities link with generational trauma linked to the historical violence of U.S. Indian Wars, removal of tribal peoples from traditional lands, suppression of language and culture with both public policy and mandated boarding schools, and numerous other policies and practices arising from the dominant culture's weak understanding of Tribal Sovereignty. Especially devastating has been the denial of spiritual beliefs and ways of knowing resulting from encounter between the U.S. government and Native communities. Counselors, therapists and school psychologists who work with these populations need to understand the multiplicity of factors that have contributed to Native Americans' negative experiences of state-supported public services. This understanding alongside careful consideration of the interests and concerns of contemporary Native peoples can guide mental health services that are more congruent with Native communities and beliefs.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- Describe and critique the history of Native American social services since contact with European settlers with particular attention to the way that federally-supported services have been used as a tool for cultural suppression and domination.
- Describe and critique traditional counseling, therapy and educational practices of the prevailing (i.e., post-contact) culture encountered in rural and urban indigenous communities across the Americas and elsewhere.
- Summarize findings from studies that examine factors and related interventions or programs that contribute to wellness in Native American communities.
- Apply theories of cultural resistance to case studies regarding the experience of Native American students in public and boarding schools, youth and adults in the criminal justice system, and individuals and families referred to public health services (including foster care and Indian Child Welfare services).
- Describe and critique a variety of contemporary community service agencies created by indigenous peoples and their supporters with particular attention to the identification and support of natural helpers and traditional approaches to addressing individual and community well being.
- Describe and critique contemporary political and social conditions (e.g., trust reform, public health and housing, sovereignty) as they influence the mental health of indigenous individuals and communities in North America and elsewhere.

COURSE OUTLINE:

- I. History of traditional and contemporary wellness practices in and with Native American individuals and communities.
- II. Cultural transmission and mental health in a sample of indigenous societies.
- III. Wellness practices from a theoretical perspective: Cultural congruence and/or decolonization.
- IV. Indigenous mental health--definitions in practice.
- V. Implementing indigenous wellness programs on the reservation or in diverse urban communities with an emphasis on place-based and culturally responsive approaches.

- VI. Unique challenges facing counselors, therapists and school psychologists working with indigenous students: Language, land, and spirituality.

Texts (chosen from):

Cohen, Alex. (1999). *The mental health of indigenous peoples*. Geneva: Department of Mental Health, World Health Organization.

Duran, Eduardo & Duran, Bonnie. (1995). *Native American postcolonial psychology*. Albany NY: SUNY Press.

Duran, Eduardo. (2006). *Healing the soul wound: Counseling with American Indians and other Native peoples*. New York: Teachers College Press.

French, Laurence. (2000). *Addictions and Native Americans*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Maracle, Brian. (1993). *Crazywater: Native voices on addiction and recovery*. Toronto: Viking.

Waldram, James. (2004). *Revenge of the Windigo: The construction of the mind and mental health of North American aboriginal peoples*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Weaver, Hillary, Ed. (1999). *Voices of First Nations people: Human services considerations*. New York: Hayworth.

Films:

Hitting Sticks, Healing Hearts; The Drums of Winter; DVD about STAR School; *The Fringe Dwellers* (available through Amazon)

FORMAT: This course will include a variety of large and small group discussions about topics raised in readings and films, extensive reflective writing, work with outside resources, and fieldtrips to programs that serve Native American individuals and communities in the Portland area. Outside speakers who have worked as mental health service providers with Native American populations will be invited into the course to describe their experiences and insights. A day-long fieldtrip to a Northwest tribal community will provide opportunities for students to speak with Native elders about their concerns, hopes, and dreams for the wellness of Indian peoples.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/EVALUATION: Completion of reading assignments; response papers to books, articles, and films; reflective essays; exams; and

group-designed units that link intended students more firmly to their own cultures and communities.

GRADES: Letter grades with credit/no-credit option. Evaluation will be tied to discussion about the way grading practices can contribute to the establishment or definition of “normative” behaviors that may or may not match students’ ways-of-being.