

Psychology 376

Seminar in Experimental/Cognitive Psychology: Addictions

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Office Hours:

If none of these times are convenient for you, other times may be arranged. Please feel free to call me to set up an appointment that will work for you.

Classtime: Monday & Wednesday 10:20 – 11:30

Course Description

This course will explore the nature of addiction. We will discuss substance abuse as well as other emerging categories of addiction (such as gambling, eating, sexual, internet, and shopping). We will examine each of these addictions in the context of four perspectives: biological, psychological, historical, and cultural. Special emphasis will be placed upon the neural mechanisms of addiction.

Course Requirements

1. Chemical Dependency Papers/Presentations:

The class will be divided into small groups—each group will focus on a specific psychoactive substance (ie., Cocaine, Heroin, and Cannabis). Each member of the group will write an individual paper which examines their substance from a variety of different perspectives: History of the substance, biological mechanisms (drug action), drug effects and side effects, demographic variables (special populations), social impact, and drug treatment. Make certain you divide your paper into sections – a header for each topic listed above.

Groups will present their findings to the class in a 30 -minute presentation on the date(s) listed on the schedule below. Presentations must be well coordinated to minimize the presentation of overlapping material – with each student presenting a portion of their papers.

2. Discussion Leader:

Students will lead two class discussions on pre-selected topic (see syllabus for topics). You must present your topic in a way that is interactive with the class as a whole. The discussion leader dates are listed on the outline below. (See the *Format and Tips for Leading a Discussion* document in your class folder for additional details regarding this assignment). You will be evaluated on an individual basis – and receive feedback from me as well as your classmates.

3. Writing Assignments:

Several of the topics on the course outline below have writing assignments (WA) associated with them. These assignments are meant to be brief (1-2 page) reaction papers to the readings or topic for the day. The writing assignments are due on the date listed below. You must submit FIVE writing assignments in total. In addition, you cannot submit a WA on a day that you are leading a discussion.

Late writing assignments will NOT be accepted - that includes e-mailed assignments after class!

4. Excessive Appetite Paper:

An addiction is an excessive appetite. Your Excessive Appetite paper should take a psychological view of the origins and nature of addiction. You are to select a psychological factor that is linked to addiction and conduct a literature review on your topic. For example, you may want to select a psychological theory and apply it to addiction or select a personality trait or characteristic and link it to addiction. Your Excessive Appetites Paper topic is due on DATE and your final paper is due on 4/18. Students will present the highlights of their papers on 4/18 & 4/20.

5. A Book Review: Beautiful Boy: A Father's Journey Through His Son's Addiction (by David Sheff):

Select 5 out of the following 13 questions for your review.

1. In the introduction, Sheff writes, "I have felt and thought and done almost everything an addict's parent can feel and think and do" (p. 13). Which of his experiences, thoughts, and actions were most affecting to you? Which could you relate to and which were totally foreign?
2. Sheff begins his story with the statement, "We are among the first generation of self-conscious parents. Before us, people had kids. We parent" (p. 20). What does it mean to parent, as opposed to just having kids? At the end, Sheff writes, "I wish I had gotten here quicker, but I couldn't. If only parenting were easier" (p. 310). What does he learn about "parenting" over the course of the book?
3. Discuss Nic's upbringing. What privileges did he have? What disadvantages? Did Sheff seem to you a "good parent"?
4. How does the integration of pop culture references—quotes from literature, song lyrics, movie dialogue—contribute to the book? Look particularly at what Sheff used as the epilogues to each section of the book: John Lennon, Kurt Cobain for Part I, Shakespeare for Part II, etc. Why might Sheff have chosen these particular passages? How do they help your understanding of events, and of Sheff's mindset?
5. What is the extent of David Sheff's own drug use? What is your philosophy of discussing drugs with kids? Would you be—or have you been—honest about your past with your own kids?
6. Discuss Nic's descent. At what point do you think you would have noticed Nic had a serious problem and needed help? Were there times you disagreed with David Sheff's course of action? What might you have done differently?
7. When David smoked pot with Nic, what was your reaction?
8. A friend of David's expresses surprise at Nic's addiction and says the Sheffs don't seem like a dysfunctional family. Sheff responds, "We are dysfunctional.... I'm not sure I know any 'functional' families" (p. 14) How would you define a functional family? Which are the Sheffs? How would you describe your own family?
9. On page 195, Sheff explores the idea of what it means to have a "normal life," concluding, "Now I live with the knowledge that, never mind the most modest

definition of a normal or healthy life, my son may not make it to twenty-one.” How would you define a “normal life”? How do these socially-accepted definitions—a normal life, a functional family—contribute to, or hinder, Sheff’s ability to understand and accept his son’s situation? How have these definitions affected some of the decisions you’ve made about your own life?

10. In his suicide note, Kurt Cobain quoted Neil Young and wrote “It’s better to burn out than to fade away.” When Sheff interview John Lennon, Lennon said, “I worship the people who survive. I’ll take the living and the healthy” (p. 118). Who do you agree with, Cobain or Lennon? Why does society glamorize those rock stars and other artists who burn out? Nic Sheff’s glamorization of alcoholics and drug-addicted artists ostensibly contributed to his own downfall. How should we counsel children and young adults on the dangers of idolizing such people?

11. Much of chapter 15 is devoted to the exploration of the disease of addiction. What is your understanding of addiction as a disease? Do you think of it as a behavioral or a brain disorder?

12. Many of the counselors and family members of addicts tell David and Karen, “Be allies. Remember, take care of yourselves. You’ll be good for no one—for each other, for your children—if you don’t” (p. 132). Do Karen and David take care of one another? Does David take care of himself?

13. A recovering addict tells Sheff, “You will believe in God before this over” (p. 133). Later, Sheff quotes John Lennon, “God is a concept by which we measure our pain” (p. 256). What does this last statement mean? How do David and Nic each come to believe in a higher power?

6. Movie Analysis: Requiem for a Dream:

Requiem for a Dream is a movie about several people whose lives change dramatically because of their particular addictions.

Reflection Assignment

Write a 1-page reflection on the following question(s).

- One of the themes in this movie is the pursuit of the American Dream. In what ways is this portrayed in the film and how does it become distorted?
- In an interview with the director, he describes the film in the following manner: “... this film is about addiction versus the human spirit. And it’s a one-way ticket into the sub-sub-basement of Hell...” Discuss the quote in relation to the film.
- If you cannot answer either of the previous questions, consider this: What did

you learn from this film? Try to think deeply about this, and explore beyond what is on the surface.

Remember this is a reflection paper -- these questions can be very personal and opinion-based. You will not be evaluated on your opinion, nor will anything you write be shared with anyone else. You will simply be graded on the quality of the content.

7. Class Participation:

Attendance is expected and participation is highly encouraged. . You will evaluate your own class participation for each class session.

Our guest speakers are giving their time and expertise to facilitate student learning. Please treat them with courtesy and respect. Most will offer an opportunity for a question and answer period. Please take advantage of this as it can only help your learning (and your class participation grade).

Evaluation

Your grade in this class will be based upon your performance on the following assignments:

Chemical Dependency Presentation	5%
Chemical Dependency Paper	15%
Discussion Leader	15%
Movie Analysis	5%
Book Review	10%
Writing Assignments	15%
Excessive Appetites Paper	20%
Class Participation	<u>15%</u>
	100 %

"Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Ms. Elaine Mara, Assistant Director of Academic & Disability Support, located on the first floor of Monocacy Hall (extension 1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic & Disability Support office."

Course Readings

(R&F) Rosenberg, K.P. and Feder, L.C. (2014). Behavioral Addictions: Criteria, Evidence, and Treatment. Academic Press.

(RR) Reserve readings are listed below and will be put on reserve in Reeves Library or can be found in your folder.

(DS) Beautiful Boy: A Father's Journey Through His Son's Addiction

Addictions Course Outline (subject to change – due to weather)

Week 1 (1/13 & 1/15)

Introductions and Syllabus Review (1/13)

Film: *Intervention Episode (1/15)*

Week 2 (1/20 & 1/22)

MLK DAY (1/20) No Class – A Day of Service

The Nature and Spectrum of Addictions
& *Trauma, Personal Inclination, and Culture (1/22)*

Readings:

Coombs Chapters 1 & 2

Dayton, T. (2000). The Connection Between Trauma and Addiction.

(WA: What connections are apparent to you between the

Intervention episode we watched last class and the readings
You have done so far for class?)

Week 3 (1/27 & 1/29)

Mind, Brain, and Drug: An Introduction to Psychopharmacology
(1/27)

Readings:

Hedges & Burchfield, (2006). The Neurobiological Basis of
Psychotropic Drug Action. Pages 1-63.

A personal story of Addiction and Recovery: Guest Speaker (1/29)

Week 4 (2/3 & 2/5)

Library Instruction and Research Time: Chemical Dependency
(2/3)

Co-Dependency (2/5)

Readings:

Beattie, M. (1992). Codependent No More

(WA: Does detachment seem like a “better way” as Beattie refers to
it? Does it seem cruel and uncaring?)

Week 5 (2/10 & 2/12)

Twelve Step Programs (2/10)

* **Note: Attend an Open 12 Step Meeting Prior to April 7th**

Readings:

Power Point Slides on Twelve Step Programs

Chen, G. Social Support, Spiritual Program, and Addiction

Addictions and Shame – Guest Speaker - Jane Pennington 2/12

Week 6 (2/17 & 2/19)

Chemical Dependency Presentations:

Cocaine & Alcohol
Heroin & Cannabis

Chemical Dependency Papers Due (2/19)

Week 7 (2/24 & 2/27)

Film: Requiem for a Dream

Week 8 (3/3 & 3/5)

Recess – Be safe and enjoy!

Week 9 (3/10 & 3/12)

Movie Analysis Due (3/10)

Discussion Leader Topics: Sex and Love Addiction (3/12)

Readings:

Coombs Chapters 7 & 8

(WA: Discuss some of the interesting findings regarding gender and sex and love addiction.

Week 10 (3/17 & 3/19)

Discussion Leader Topic: Compulsive Gambling 3/17

Readings:

Coombs Chapters 5 & 6

(WA: What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a casino move into a community?)

Film: Second Skin – Gaming Addiction (3/19)

Week 11 (3/24 & 3/26)

Snow Day – Just allowing for one since it is the Spring semester ☺

Book Review and Discussion - Beautiful Boy (by Sheff) – (3/26)

Week 12 (3/31 & 4/2)

Discussion Leader Topic: *Body Modification and Self-Harm. (3/31)*

Readings:

Favazza, A. Bodies Under Siege: Chapter 9 – Understanding Self Injury and Chapter 11 - Treatment

(WA: It has been said that “What is carved in human flesh is an image of society” – how does this quote correspond to what is reflected in society with respect to self harm?)

Discussion Leader Topic: *Eating Disorders. (4/2)*

Readings:

Coombs: Chapters 9 & 10

(WA: Although an addiction model may help explain some eating disorder behavior, the models fail to address the extreme weight and body image issues, struggles with food and dieting, as well as other related symptoms that are intrinsic to all eating disorders. These symptoms are among the most basic issues that preoccupy persons with eating disorders. Discuss.)

Week 13 (4/7 & 4/9)

Discussion Leader Topic: Compulsive Buying – Understanding, and Treating (4/7)

Reading:

Coombs Chapters 13 & 14

(WA: How does our culture of mass consumption play into compulsive buying?)

Working the Steps – A Discussion of Your Experiences at Twelve-Step Meetings. (4/9)

(WA: Twelve-Step Meeting Experience Write-Up Answer the Questions Below – EVERYONE MUST SUBMIT THIS WA!!)

Name, Address, Time and Type of meeting you attended:

Why did you choose this meeting over other possibilities?

What was talked about? (e.g., if it was a speaker what was their story).

What was the most important thing you got out of the meeting you attended and why?

Was religion/God stressed in the meeting? How did you feel about it?

Was there anything that were discussed that will affect you in your personal life?

What questions still remain?

Week 14 (4/14 & 16)

Excessive Appetites Paper Presentations on 4/14 and 4/16

All papers are due on the 4/16.

Week 15 (4/21 & 23)

No Class – (4/21)

Closure and Course Evaluations (4/23)