

Psych 430
Child Sexual Abuse Seminar
Class Syllabus and Calendar

Meredyth Goldberg Edelson

Fall, 2006

M W 2:30-4pm

Office Hours: M W F 9:00-10am; F 1:50-2:50pm and by appointment

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This seminar is designed for advanced students in psychology who wish an extensive study of child sexual abuse. We will cover a variety of topics all of which will hopefully broaden your understanding of child sexual abuse, its ramifications, and issues of treatment and prevention. Because of the nature of the topic, I realize that there may be a personal reason why some of you have chosen this course (you know someone who was sexually abused, you have been sexually abused yourself, etc.). Please be aware of your feelings as you participate in the course, and feel free to talk to me at any time should the course or a specific topic cause you discomfort. Although the course may be especially attractive to you due to a personal reason, remember it is more important to take care of yourself and your feelings than to take this course should things become too uncomfortable!

Given that, I also want to acknowledge that a seminar like this runs the risk of becoming a therapy session for individuals whose lives have been affected by sexual abuse. Although I understand the importance of discussing personal experiences and feelings with regard to this students need to be aware that this is a seminar and not therapy. Therefore, I encourage students who wish a more therapeutic approach to this topic to contact the counseling center or to set up informal debriefings/support groups with other students outside of class. I will certainly be open to talking with students about issues raised by the content of the course, but the ultimate goal of the seminar is to approach the topic of child sexual abuse from a research-based perspective.

Because we will cover the topic of child sexual abuse in a seminar format, everyone will share in the responsibility for presenting specific topics to the class. Each presentation is worth **75 points**. As part of this responsibility, students will work on 3 topics of interest to them (you can work with up to two additional students), assign readings (2 empirical articles or chapters per topic; I will provide many possible sources for these readings or you can find your own sources in the library), write an outline of the topic to be presented, and lead the class discussion on the topic. This is not a lecture class, but a discussion class, so you will not have to lecture to the class; your task is to structure and guide the discussion given the readings assigned and extra readings you do as part of your preparation. Students will choose their topics on the first day of class. Students need to bring copies of their articles for distribution to the class the Monday of the week prior to their presentation. Additionally, to facilitate the shared responsibility for discussion, each class students will be required to submit discussion questions and responses

based on that class session's reading. These will be worth **5 points** per topic (you will automatically get the 5 points for your topic when you present). If you are not in class, you still need to do the discussion questions (in order to pass the course) but you will not earn any points for them. See note about class attendance below.

In addition to presenting 3 topics, there will be two paper assignments. The first is worth **75 points**. In a paper of no more than **1000 words** (roughly 4 pages), discuss the components of a forensic interview with children who have been suspected of being sexually abused. This paper will be in response to an observation of a forensic assessment at Liberty House. You will be required to observe one evaluation and then, based on your observation, discuss issues related to the process of assessment, the components of a medical assessment and interview, and your reactions to witnessing the evaluation. Be sure that as you write this paper, you protect the confidentiality of the child you observed (see Liberty House protocol). The forensic assessment paper is due: **at class time**.

The second paper assignment is worth **180 points**. Choose any topic related to child sexual abuse. Review at least 12 scholarly sources (which may include the sources you've already read for class on that topic), and write an integrated summary of the topic. What is known about the particular topic you've chosen? What does the research say on the topic? What is not known or is lacking in the literature at this point? What avenues for further research do you feel are important to pursue on this topic? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the research you reviewed? This paper should require you to incorporate and integrate information from a variety of sources as well as speculate on new directions which could be pursued. **YOU MAY CHOOSE TO WRITE ABOUT A TOPIC ON WHICH YOU ALREADY PRESENTED!** The paper should be approximately **4000 words** (roughly 16 pages). The review of the literature paper is due: **Our final exam date**.

PLEASE NOTE AND ENJOY: THERE WILL BE NO EXAMS IN THIS COURSE!

GRADES:

Grades will be determined in the following manner. Based on your presentation and the outline you submit, you can earn up to **75 points** for each presentation (**225 total points can be earned through presentations**). Presentations will be graded based on both the quality of the outline you submit as well as the quality of the discussion facilitation. It is possible for students sharing a presentation to be assigned differing amounts of points if the quality of the outlines and facilitation varies across students. The outlines should equally present information and have open-ended discussion questions that engage the class. Each student needs to prepare an individual outline even if working with other students. The forensic assessment paper is worth **75 points**; and the literature review paper is worth **180 points**. You will also receive up to **10 points** on each week's discussion questions and responses (**5 points** for each class session). The discussion questions will be graded according to how sophisticated and thoughtful the questions and responses are as well as how well they reflect a knowledge of the week's reading. In order to get a maximum number of points, questions need to be open-ended (do not write "Yes/No" questions) and they have to refer specifically to something in the reading (which is referenced in either your question or response). You can earn a total of **120 points** for discussion questions

and responses. On days where no reading is assigned, no discussion questions are required. Thus, there is a **total of 600 points** which can be earned in the course distributed as follows.

- ✓ Presentations (37.5% of the total grade)
- ✓ Review of the literature paper (30% of the total grade)
- ✓ Discussion questions and responses (20% of the total grade)
- ✓ Forensic Assessment paper (12.5% of the total grade)

In general, points for papers and presentations will be assigned based on: (a) thoroughness of your presentation/paper; (b) writing style (including appropriate APA formatting); (c) originality (when it applies); (d) organization; and (e) conceptualization. It should be noted that when grading papers, I give **equal weighting** to content and style. Stylistically, I look for: (a) appropriate grammar; (b) appropriate spelling and punctuation; (c) absence of awkward and incomplete sentences; and (d) appropriate referencing. Also, quotes are not to be used. You must write by paraphrasing other researchers' information, making sense of it in your own voice!

Once all points have been assigned, final grades will be determined using the following system:

(a) Total points earned are computed and a frequency distribution will be calculated

(b) The top 2 students' mean number of points will be computed. Grades are then assigned according to the scale below.

- 95% of mean (of top 2 students)=Lower limit of A
- 85% of mean (of top 2 students)=Lower limit of B
- 75% of mean (of top 2 students)=Lower limit of C
- 65% of mean (of top 2 students)=Lower limit of D

(c) This is a modified form of an absolute grading system rather than "grading on a curve." The percentage of A's, B's, C's, D's, and F's are not determined in advance. It is possible for all students to be within 95% of the mean of the top 2 students' average number of points and thus, earn an A. Your grade depends on what you achieve, and you are not competing with other students for the "A slots."

(d) As you can see from the distribution of points above, nearly 60% of the points earned for the class is related to class participation (either doing presentations or writing discussion questions). Therefore, class attendance is vital. Students who do not come to class will likely find that their grade will be adversely affected. Finally, because this course relies heavily on student participation in discussion, your final grade may be lowered if you do not participate in the class discussions often and in meaningful ways throughout the semester. Conversely, for students on the border between two grades, their grade may be raised if they participate frequently and in meaningful ways to the class discussion.

(e) Because your actual grade cannot be determined until all 600 points are earned, I cannot tell you what your grade is at any given time. I will provide "estimates" of your grades throughout the semester.

To be fair to all students, all late assignments will be graded down according to how many days they are late. For each day an assignment is late, 15 points will be deducted from the total. Once an assignment is so late that all points are lost (e.g., after 4 days for the forensic assessment paper), the assignment must still be turned in to avoid getting an "F" for the course. You will be given a "0" for the assignment, but you will receive your grade for the course depending on where you fall on the final curve. However, since losing a lot of points will obviously affect your grade in a negative way, I encourage you to talk to me if there are extenuating circumstances which interfere with your ability to complete an assignment on time. If this is the case, please see me before the assignment is late. If you haven't talked to me and you do not turn your assignment in when it's due (at class time), I will consider it late. Computer problems are not acceptable excuses for why something is late—plan to print out your paper well in advance of the due date to avoid any last minute printing problems. Medical excuses for late papers require a medical provider's note or they will not be accepted. Also, it is your responsibility to keep a hard copy (not just a disk copy) of all written assignments turned in. In that way, any misplaced assignments can be reproduced with ease.

A NOTE ABOUT PLAGIARISM:

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated by the Psychology Department. Students are sometimes unsure of what constitutes plagiarism. Therefore, to avoid any confusion, we'd like to explicitly state what plagiarism entails. Please refer to this section as you write your paper assignments. The following are considered instances of plagiarism.

1. Any time one **reproduces another's words or ideas without giving proper credit**, this is plagiarism. Thus, even if one paraphrases the ideas of another author without using the author's own words, that author must still be cited.

**Citations are needed any time one makes a statement of fact which was discovered or reported by someone else and isn't common knowledge, even if this statement of fact is paraphrased from the author you read

**If another author's words are used verbatim, these must be in quotation marks and be properly cited.

2. Any time one **presents an idea as an original idea which is not**, this is plagiarism. Thus, **Aborrowing** an idea from a classmate, representing an already existing theory or conceptualization as one's own, or reproducing someone else's paper or assignment and presenting it as one's own are all examples of plagiarism.

The above examples are not exhaustive of the types of plagiarism which could occur. It is expected that students will display academic integrity when completing assignments. Thus, if a student is unsure of whether something is or is not plagiarism, it is his/her responsibility to check an appropriate resource to determine this. It is a good bet that if you are questioning

whether something you have completed does or does not involve plagiarism, it probably does or you would not likely question this yourself. If you would like more detailed examples of what is and is not plagiarism, please see any of the Psychology Department faculty.

Students who are found to have engaged in plagiarism will receive a **A0@** for the assignment in question and may receive an **AF@** for the course. Additionally, as per University policy, a report will be made to the Dean's Office.

The course calendar follows which outlines the topics we will cover, when we will cover them, and when the assignments are due. I will be responsible for leading the seminar for the first few weeks giving those who choose to present an early topic time to do so. I will also be responsible for presenting the topics on forensic assessment, the Rind et al. controversy, and the nature of offenders; presenting topics not selected; and/or being a partner to students who need or want one for a particular topic. In general, we will cover two topics per week (one on Monday and one on Wednesday).

COURSE CALENDAR

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic(s)</u>	<u>Presenters</u>
Aug. 30	Intro to course, choosing topics	Meredy
Sept. 4	NO CLASS: Labor Day	—
Sept. 6	Definition of child sexual abuse/Background information; statistics FIRST DAY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ARE DUE	Meredy
Sept. 11	Male vs. Female child victims	Meredy
Sept. 13	Societal influence which contribute to child sexual abuse	Meredy
Sept. 18	Incest vs. nonfamilial abuse and the effects on the child;	Ken
Sept. 20	Impact of abuse on siblings, non-offending parents, family members	Mariah & Shanley
Sept. 25	Child sexual abuse of special populations (e.g., autistic, MR, learning disabled, etc.);	Sharon
Sept. 27	Abuse by clergy	Meredy
Oct. 2	<i>VIDEO: Close to Home</i>	
Oct. 4	<i>VIDEO: Close to Home</i>	
Oct. 9	Forensic assessment	Meredy
Oct. 11	Process of disclosure in child sexual abuse	Josh & Jordan
Oct. 16	Issues of mandated reporting	Josh
Oct. 18	Children as witnesses in sexual abuse cases	Mariah & Josh
Oct. 23	Ritual abuse FORENSIC ASSESSMENT PAPER DUE	Sharon & Jordan

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic(s)</u>	<u>Presenters</u>
Oct. 25	Dissociative Disorders	Ken & Shanley
Oct. 30	Short-term effects of sexual abuse	Laura & Karen
Nov. 1	Can sexual contact between children and adults not be harmful (the Rind et al. controversy)?	Meredy
Nov. 6	PTSD	Karen
Nov. 8	False vs. Repressed memories	Shanley & Karen
Nov. 13	Prevention of child sexual abuse	Laura
Nov. 15	Treatment of abused children	Meredy
Nov. 20	Long-term effects of sexual abuse: Adult Survivors of child sexual abuse	Ken & Sharon
Nov. 22	NO CLASS: EARLY THANKSGIVING BREAK	
Nov. 27	Guest speaker: Medical assessments of children suspected of being sexually abused	Dr. Lauren McNaughton
Nov. 29	The nature of offenders <i>VIDEO: Oprah Winfrey Show</i>	Jordan
Dec. 4	Treatment/incarceration of offenders	Laura & Karen
Dec. 6	Cycle of abuse (why some sexual abuse victims are revictimized and why some become offenders)	Mariah
TBA (Final Exam Date)	LITERATURE REVIEW PAPER DUE	