



Harm Reduction:

Promoting Health or Abusing the System?

Public Health 3850

Fall 2009

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Course Description:

This course will introduce students to the concept of harm reduction and its underlying principles. Societal tensions related to harm reduction practices will be explored, as will the perspectives that inform them. Students will critically examine current evidence regarding the role of harm reduction in public health practice.

Course Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. articulate the principles and models of harm reduction;
2. critique the various perspectives of harm reduction and its role in public health practice;
3. discuss the chain of events that may lead to situations (e.g. psychoactive substance use and addictions) to which harm reduction strategies are applied;
4. discuss the linkages between and among, and the application of, concepts such as social justice, criminal justice, determinants of health, addiction, prohibition, and harm reduction;
5. describe and critique community- or population-level approaches used to address issues of substance use and addiction and the social concerns that accompany them;
6. analyze current legislative and public policy regarding substance use and harm reduction; and
7. critique and synthesize the current evidence regarding harm reduction and its theoretical underpinnings and practices.

Learning Approaches:

An inquiry-based approach will be used to encourage active participation by students in presentations, demonstrations, and discussions facilitated by course faculty and content experts. Students will be guided to seek appropriate literature and resources in preparation

for each class. Students will also engage in reflective writing activities in order to deepen their understanding of issues associated with harm reduction.

Course Resources:

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Websites, articles, and other resources as listed on Blackboard. As well, there may be readings available at the reserve desk in the library (students will be advised in class when such documents are available).

Students are also expected to locate and share additional resources to enhance and enrich personal and peer learning.

Assignments:

	Strategy	Due Date	Weighting (%)
1	Book/film/performance review	7 October	20
2	Literature synthesis	6 dates TBA♣	25
3	Major project	Part A	21 October
		Part B	18 November – 2 December
4	Final test	9 December	15

♣ Students have the option of submitting six (6) papers for evaluation, with the top five (5) marks being calculated into the final grade. Students must be present in class in order to take advantage of this option.

*****Please consult and submit a copy of the appropriate rubric (posted on BlackBoard) for each assignment*****

1. Book/film/performance review:

The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate your skills in the critical appraisal of a selected piece of literature, a film or a play related to harm reduction. The review is a brief description of the message portrayed by the author/playwright and an appraisal of your thoughts about the work. In addition, you will describe its relevance to public health using the lens of harm reduction.

Select and review one current book (fiction or non-fiction, published within the past ten years) of at least 100 pages or a feature-length film or play that is related to harm reduction. Choose something that matters to you, your life, your career, or that relates to a personal experience. This will be a work with which you were not familiar prior to taking this course. The review should focus on the work's purpose, content and relevance. The **text** of the review will be approximately five (5) double spaced pages and will include:

- A title page: see sample title page posted on Blackboard
- Complete bibliographic citation as per APA (author/producer/director, date, title, publisher, etc.)
- Introduction: include a 'hook' to capture the reader's attention and a statement of your central idea or impression about the book.
- Main body: Describe, explain, and evaluate why you think the author/playwright/director chose the material and why s/he wrote or performed as s/he did. *Clearly discuss the value of the work to a specific group/purpose associated with harm reduction and public health.* Use key examples from the work and remember to cite your sources using APA guidelines.
- Conclusion: A succinct, powerful statement of the value of the work and its application to public health.

This assignment will be submitted electronically to the Blackboard assignment drop box. Attach a copy of the rubric to the document and submit as **one file**. Be sure to select ***"keep source formatting"*** when pasting the rubric to the end of your assignment.

2. Literature synthesis:

You are expected to locate and read current literature in preparation for each class. In order to focus your reading and critical thinking about the material, you will be asked to write a brief synthesis of those readings at the beginning of class. This exercise will facilitate your ability to discuss with your peers the relevance and impact of your chosen articles.

The instructor will announce at the beginning of six randomly chosen classes that the synthesis is to be submitted for grades; the dates will not be announced in advance. You will have approximately 20 minutes to complete this assignment. You have the option of submitting any/all synthesis writings for instructor feedback in those instances when the writing is not to be graded.

The synthesis of the readings should succinctly address the following points:

- Author's main points in each of the articles
- Key ideas used to support author's points
- Brief comparison and contrast between and among the viewpoints of each article
- Insights, surprises, frustrations the articles provoke in you

Each submission will be a maximum of 600 words. Include citations for each article/document included. A minimum of two articles are to be reviewed each week.

3. Major project:

Individually or in pairs, choose a current issue, policy, or event related to harm reduction suitable for a scholarly presentation to your peers. This project comprises two parts: a proposal (Part A) and a class presentation (Part B).

Part A

Develop a brief proposal to clarify and justify your choice of topic; outline your assumptions as you begin to explore the topic; identify your specific questions about the topic. Describe your intended learning plan—what sources will inform your exploration of the topic?

Part B

Prepare and present to your peers a scholarly presentation on the topic. Address background information and the relevance of the issue to public health. Present and analyze current evidence that supports or rejects a harm reduction approach to the issue. Discuss your carefully considered conclusion with regard to the application of your topic to public health practice. The presentation will be an appropriate length, well-paced, professional, and will allow time for questions and discussion. You will submit a copy of your presentation at the end of the class. All students will provide anonymous, constructive feedback to presenters.

4. Final test:

The final test will be written during the final class period of the semester. Format will be discussed with students prior to the fall semester withdrawal date (13 November 2009).

General Guidelines for Assignments:

All assignments must be completed, submitted on or before the due date, and a minimum of 55% earned on each in order to pass the course.

All papers will be written in accordance with APA style (current edition), or another style if discussed with the instructor prior to the due date. Include a title page, reference list, and appendices (if needed). Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the format, particularly regarding citations, abbreviations, headings, and use of quotations. You are expected to demonstrate excellence in all elements of writing, including grammar, syntax, and spelling.

Identify your assignment by student ID number only; do not include your name unless so directed. **Submit a copy of the rubric with each assignment.**

Late assignments will NOT be accepted unless discussed with the instructor at least 48 hours in advance. A formal letter (i.e., on business letterhead) from a physician, registered nurse, or registered mental health therapist may be required.

Plagiarism Statement:

The University of Lethbridge subscribes to turnitin.com, a plagiarism detection service. Please be advised that student work submitted for credit in this course may be submitted to this system to verify its originality. Students must be able to submit both electronic and hard copy versions of their work upon request.

Grading Breakdown:

The grading system for this course is consistent with that established in the Faculty of Health Sciences, effective May, 2002.

Letter	GPA	Percent	Letter	GPA	Percent
A+	4.0	95 - 100	C+	2.3	71 - 74.9
A	4.0	91 - 94.9	C	2.0	67 - 70.9
A-	3.7	87 - 90.9	C-	1.7	63 - 66.9
B+	3.3	83 - 86.9	D+	1.3	59 - 62.9
B	3.0	79 - 82.9	D	1.0	55 - 58.9
B-	2.7	75 - 78.9	F	0	0 - 54.9

Accommodations for Students with a Disability:

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. If you have been diagnosed with a disability, there is no need to face the challenge of University without support. Please contact the Counselling Services/ Disabilities Resource Centre at 403-329-2766 <http://www.uleth.ca/ross/counselling/index.html> to set up an appointment. After registering with the Disabilities Resource Centre, your instructor will be notified by a formal letter of any accommodations you require. In addition, students are responsible for requesting accommodations from the instructor at least ***two weeks*** in advance of the evaluation date. The instructor and student are jointly responsible for arranging the resources needed for the evaluation process.