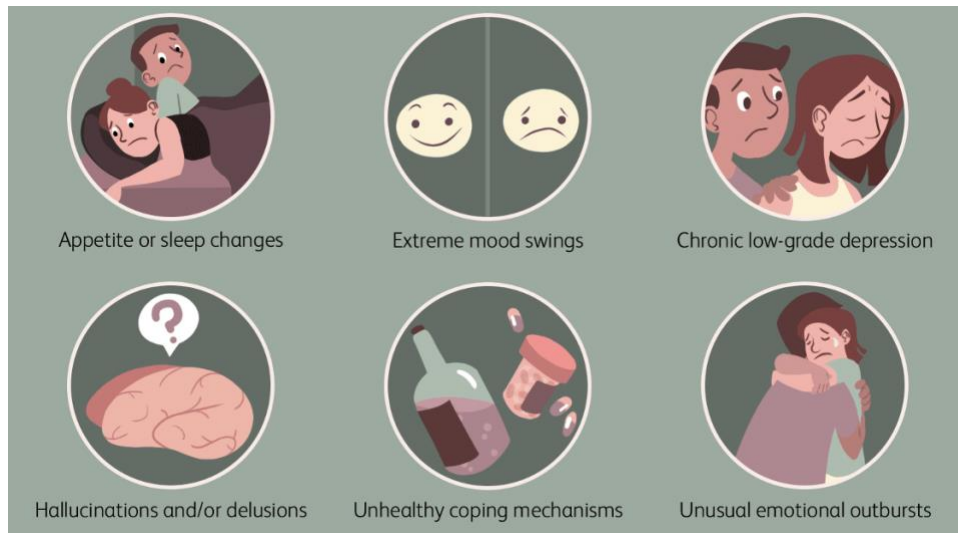




SOCW 4360: Mental Health and Substance Use

In Generalist Social Work Practice

Fall 2026



Instructor: Ericka Freeman, LCSW-S
Associate Professor in Practice and Distinguished Teaching Professor

Office: College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) 152B
Telephone Number: 817-774-8420 (voice and text)
Email Address (preferred method of communication): efreeman@uttyler.edu

In-Person Office Hours:

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and 2 - 3 p.m.

Other hours available by appointment only.

Virtual Office Hours via Zoom: By appointment only. Please email me directly and we can schedule a time that works best for you (unless I am teaching a class or attending a faculty meeting)!

Course Information

Section Information:
SOCW 4360-001

Time and Place of Class Meetings: T/TH 9:30 – 10:50 a.m. Room # CAS 210

Description of Course Content:

This is an introductory course that helps prepare bachelor level/generalist social work students with fundamental concepts of the intersectionality of mental health and substance use disorders (SUD). The focus of this course is to provide social work students with an overview of mental health across the life span, including the influence of family systems, intrapersonal awareness, policies, and community resources.

Students will examine the role of social work in mental health/substance use services. Students are introduced to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) as a framework to understand mental health, substance use, and co-occurring disorders. Because of the prevalence of mental health and SUD in social work practice with clients, evidence-informed strategies for engaging, assessing and intervening with individuals, families and communities will be covered. Prerequisite: SOCW 2361

Student Learning Outcomes for SOCW 4360:

Upon successful completion of this course, undergraduate students will be able to demonstrate the following beginning social work knowledge and skills, which are consistent with professional ethics, evidence-informed practice, applicable laws, the NASW Code of Ethics, and the person-in-environment perspective:

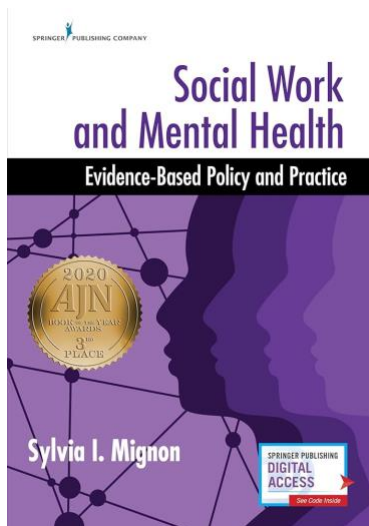
1. Describe the signs symptoms, terminology, and foundational concepts related to mental health, substance use, and co-occurring disorders across the lifespan.
2. Explain the role of generalist social workers in prevention, early identification, engagement, assessment, intervention, referral and recovery support for individuals experiencing mental health or substance use concerns.
3. Apply the person-in-environment perspective when examining the influence of family systems, community resources, health, policies, and environmental factors on mental health and substance use.
4. Demonstrate beginning skills in identifying strengths, professional ethics, needs, protective factors and barriers when considering intervention options for individuals and families.
5. Analyze how laws, policies, and service systems influence access to mental health and substance use services within communities.

Required Textbook and Other Course Material:

To purchase or rent:

Mignon, S.I. (2020). Social Work and Mental Health: Evidence-Based Policy and Practice.

Springer Publishing Company.



The remaining reading materials for this course are furnished to students **free of charge** through Open Education Resources (OER). The materials are embedded in this course and available for download. Students are not required to purchase the following textbook:

OER textbook for this course is:

Drugs, Health & Behavior



Additional course material, such as articles, podcasts and videos will be posted by the instructor on Canvas.

Descriptions of major assignments:

Major course assignments are intentionally designed to help students practice the knowledge, skills, values and cognitive and affective processes expected of beginning, generalist social workers. Rather than relying solely on traditional

Area of Interest Project (30% Final Grade):

Students, either alone, in dyads or small groups, will choose an area of interest related to a mental health diagnosis to learn more about over the course of the semester. This assignment will be scaffolded, meaning there are gradual steps for completion. Students will synthesize the information into a final project to present to the class as a teaching modality. Sign-ups for presentation day options provided at beginning of semester. Options for the project, as well as detailed instructions, are posted in Canvas.

Perspective Taking Paper (30% of Final Grade):

Students will select either a non-fiction book (or movie) from a list provided by the instructor that details an individual's struggle within the interaction between mental health and substance use. Permission to use another book will be granted on a case-by-case basis. After reading the book, students will write a 5-page paper demonstrating perspective taking on the author's barriers and strengths surrounding their struggle. Additional information and instruction on this assignment is posted in Canvas.

Psychological First Aid Certificate of Completion (20%):

Psychological First Aid (PFA) is an evidence-informed approach that is built on the concept of human resilience. PFA aims to reduce stress symptoms and assist in a healthy recovery following a traumatic event, natural disaster, public health emergency, or even a personal crisis. Submit the certificate of completion.

Knowledge Checks (20% Final Grade).

Throughout the semester students will take four (4) "knowledge checks." These assignments are designed as check points so that both the instructor can gauge progress of learning (or need to revisit) and students to demonstrate knowledge gleaned in small chunks. Each check is relative to its corresponding module's material and helps students further digest and explore a topic or resource related to mental health and substance use. The due date for each is listed in the course schedule.

Grading Information

Grading:

Assignment	Final Grade %
Area of Interest Project	30
Perspective Taking Paper	30
Knowledge Checks	20
Psychological First Aid Certificate	20
Total:	100%

Expectations for Grading

All written assignments must be grammatically correct using APA style. Assignments with many grammatical errors, misspellings, and/or evidence of plagiarism, including incorrect use of AI, will not receive a satisfactory grade. All written assignments will be due on the date listed on the course schedule.

Ten points will be deducted for late assignments.

No assignment will be accepted after five days late.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that work is completed on time and submitted correctly.

Academic Integrity

All work in this course is expected to be your own, completed by you for this class. If you receive help from an article, book, website, another person, etc., you must indicate that.

All written assignments must be grammatically correct using APA style. Assignments with many grammatical errors, misspellings, and/or evidence of plagiarism will not receive a satisfactory grade

AI Usage in SOCW 4360

We are going to promote the responsible use of AI as a learning tool for social work students and future practitioners, while keeping academic and professional integrity intact. Think of it as trying to ride a unicycle on a tightrope!

For each assignment or in class activity, the instructor will clearly outline the level of AI involvement allowed, which could range from "no AI at all" to "bring our AI to school day." When you do use AI, make sure to give it a shout-out, provide links to all the AI references and include your original work.

You'll need to stick to these guidelines and be ready to chat about how AI contributed. This policy is here to boost your proficiency in critical thinking and hone those vital social work skills. Remember, the aim is for everyone to learn and level up their skills. For more information, see UT Tyler's AI Statement in the "University Policies and Information" link at bottom of this syllabus.

Expectations for Out-of-Class Study:

Beyond the time required to attend each class meeting, students enrolled in this course should expect to spend at least an additional 9 hours per week of their own time in course-related activities, including reading required materials, completing assignments, preparing for quizzes, etc.

Attendance:

Engaged and timely participation and presence in all assignments and classes constitutes "attendance" for purposes of this course. As students cannot engage and participate without being physically present for class, attendance will be taken each class meeting unless otherwise announced by the instructor.

Each student is allowed up to two (2) absences without grade reduction penalty. Each absence after the second (2nd) absence will result in a 5-point reduction in final grade per absence. (e.g. absence #3 = 95, absence #4=90, etc.) In addition, it is important for students to come to class prepared to take part in class. Grades will reflect accordingly.

Students who miss more than 50% of the scheduled in-person class dates will not pass the class.

Stay off your cell phones or other electronic devices unless instructed to do so as part of an in-class assignment. As much as we want to believe we can "multitask" our attention is compromised when we do more than one brain activity at a time!

Grading Scale:

90 and Above =A
80 - 89.9 = B
70 -79.9 = C
60 - 69.9 = D

Below 60 = F

A grade of incomplete will not be given for this class.

Expectations for Out-of-Class Study:

Beyond the time required to attend each class meeting, students enrolled in this course should expect to spend at least an additional 9 hours per week of their own time in course-related activities, including reading required materials, completing assignments, preparing for exams, etc.

Course Schedule

Please see the course schedule below for due date reminders of each specific assignment. Assignments are due on a Sunday at 11:59 p.m., following the end of a module.

As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course. Any changes will be communicated in a timely manner through UT Tyler email and announcement(s) in Canvas.

Module	Class Meeting Dates	Topics	Learning Materials	Assignments Due
Getting Started	8/25 and 8/27	Course Overview	Syllabus, Assignments	
1	9/1 and 9/3	What is Mental Health? What is Recovery? Interdisciplinary Team, Introduction to Recovery Oriented Practice	Ch 1 Mignon Text, and assigned article	
2	9/8 and 9/10	What are drugs and how do They affect our bodies?	Chs 1, 2 Drugs, Health Behavior and assigned podcast;	Knowledge Check 1 due 9/13/26.
3	9/15 and 9/17	Historical/Contemporary Views of Mental Health and SUD	Chapter 2 Mignon and assigned video	Areas of Interest Scaffolding 1 due 9/20/26.
4	9/22 and 9/24	Mental Health and SUDs in Families	Ch 3,4 Mignon	
5	9/29 and 10/1	Illicit Drugs vs Psychotropic Mediations: Self Medicating	Chs 3, 4 Drugs, Health, Behavior And assigned podcast	Knowledge Check 2 due 10/4/26.
6	10/6 and 10/8	Policies on SUD	Ch 5 Drugs, Health, Behavior	Areas of Interest Scaffolding 2 due 10/11/26

			And assigned article	
7	10/13 and 10/15	SUDs and the justice system	Ch 8, 10 Mignon And assigned video	Psychological First Aid Certificate due 10/18/26.
8	10/20 and 10/22	Introduction to the DSM 5, Depressive Disorders, Co-Occurring Disorders, Screening Instruments	Chapter 5 Mignon And additional course materials posted on Canvas	Knowledge Check 3 Due 10/25/26.
9	10/27 and 10/29	Engaging as a mental health/SUD practitioner	Article and podcast posted on Canvas	Areas of Interest Scaffolding 3 due 11/1/26.
10	11/3 and 11/5	Assessing as a mental health/SUD practitioner	Article and video posted on Canvas	Knowledge Check 4 due 11/8/26.
11	11/10 and 11/12	Intervention as a mental health/SUD practitioner	Ch 6 Drugs, Health, Behavior Ch 12 Mignon	Areas of Interest Scaffolding 4 due 11/15/26
12	11/17 and 11/19	Areas of Interest Teaching by Students	Article and podcast posted on Canvas	
	11/24 and 11/26	Thanksgiving Break	NO CLASS	Perspective Taking Paper Due 11/29/26.
13	12/1 and 12/3	Areas of Interest Teaching by Students		
15	12/8 and 12/10	NO FINAL EXAM		

Institutional Information

For all updated UT Tyler student policies and information for the 2026-2027 Academic Year, please visit:

<https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/52073/pages/university-policies-and-information-4>