COURSE TITLE: Health Psychology

COURSE CODE: PSY 240

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Health Psychology is the study of psychological factors that affect health and illness. This course will apply a scientific and research perspective to the study of health promoting and health damaging behaviors. Using a biopsychosocial approach, behavioral patterns that result in cardiovascular disease, cancer, alcoholism, sexually transmitted diseases and other conditions will be explored. Course content will focus on stress and the immune system, stress management techniques, the health care system, risk taking, culture-bound syndromes, diversity issues, social support, and the role of the patient. Prerequisite(s): PSY 101. Credits: 3 (3,0)

PREREQUISITES: PSY 101, PSY 130 or PSY 131 or permission from the Department chairperson.

REQUIRED FOR:

ELECTIVE FOR: Applied Psychology Program, all curricula with upper level social science electives.

HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

Course Description
Health Psychology, a subfield of behavioral medicine, is the study of psychological factors important in the promotion and maintenance of health and the psychological factors contributing to illness and disease. This course is designed to apply a scientific and research perspective to the study of health promoting and health damaging behaviors. Modification of health-related behaviors will be explored, e.g., stress management strategies, injury prevention, management of illness, risk taking, decision making, social support. Using a biopsychosocial approach, the behavioral patterns resulting in cardiovascular disease, cancer, alcoholism, sexually transmitted diseases and other conditions will be explored. Course content will also focus on stress and the immune system, the role of the patient, diversity issues and culture-bound syndromes. Current information on health services will be presented including an analysis of the health care system, health policy formation, and the impact of health insurance and managed care.

Course Outline

I. Foundations of Health Psychology: Introduction, Historical Background and Current Perspectives
   § Mind-Body Interaction: From Hippocrates to Descartes
   § The changing nature of health and illness
   § Biopsychosocial approach
   § Preventable medical conditions

II. Biological Basis of Physical Health
   § Structure and function of the nervous system
   § Immunity
   § Behavioral genetics

III. Psychoneuroimmunology: Stress and Illness
   § Psychobiologic stress models
   § Appraisal and coping
   § Physiological aspects of the stress response
   § Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
   § Life events, stress and illness

IV. Psychological Factors Affecting Medical Conditions
   § Asthma, arthritis, ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome
   § Dermatological conditions
   § Types of headaches
   § Insomnia
   § Eating disorders
V. Behavioral Medicine: Risk Factors and Illness
- Cardiovascular disease and Type A behavior
- Essential hypertension
- Cancer
- Addictions
- HIV/AIDS
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Mental illness: psychological assessment

VI. Being a Patient
- Physician-patient interaction
- Personality, social and cultural factors
- Perceived risk and compliance
- Control, stress and health
- Attribution and learned helplessness
- Family and social support

VII. Culture-Bound Syndromes
- Multicultural aspects of symptomatology
- Ethnic/racial diversity and illness
- Gender and transgender issues
- Sexual orientation and health care

VIII. Treatment and the Health Care System
- The physician-patient relationship
- Chronic conditions
- Pain management
- Cognitive-Behavioral therapy
- Placebo effects
- Biofeedback

IX. Health Enhancing Behaviors and Wellness
- Stress management
- Exercise and diet
- Health education approaches
- Work site health promotion
Behavioral Objectives

1. Learn about the development of health psychology and behavioral medicine.
2. Discuss the biological basis of health and illness and the influence of genetic factors.
3. Define psychoneuroimmunology and describe the physiological aspects of the stress response.
4. Explain how the psychological aspects of stress affect health and behavior.
5. Research the etiology and treatment of psychophysiological disorders.
6. Demonstrate knowledge of the behavioral risk factors involved in cancer, heart disease, alcoholism, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection.
7. State what is meant by “pain behavior” and how this influences the treatment of chronic conditions.
8. Explain how patient behavior affects the outcome of the treatment process.
9. Define the following concepts: learned helplessness, patient role, patient compliance, perceived risk.
10. Discuss the importance of social support in maintaining wellness.
11. Explore the influence of culture bound syndromes and other cultural factors in understanding illness.
12. Explain how the concepts learned in health psychology might be applied appropriately to diverse populations.
13. Trace the history of the health care system in the United States and the positive and negative effects it has had on treatment and disease prevention.

Resource Information:

APA Health Psychology Web Site (http://www.apa.org/divisions/div38/home.html)

Journal of Health and Social Behavior

Journal of Health Psychology