

# APSY-UE 9005

## Community Psychology

### Instructor Information

- Professor Charity S. Akotia
- Phone: 020 812 7695
- Wednesdays 12 noon to 1 pm
- cakotia@ug.edu.gh

### Course Information

- Community psychology is a sub-field of psychology that is concerned with person-environment interactions and the ways in which society impacts on individual and community functioning. This course will introduce students to the field of community psychology with emphasis on theory and methods of community psychology within the context of the psychosocial needs of the Ghanaian society. We will focus on people's strengths and competencies, not just their deficits and pathology. Topics include: the history of community psychology; doing community research; prevention and health promotion; development of social and community interventions; community mental health, understanding communities and social and community change.
- Co-requisite or prerequisite: None
- Wednesdays: 9 am to 12 noon
- Classroom No.: Classroom 1

### Course Overview and Goals

#### Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the values and methods of community psychology and how they differ from other subfields of psychology
- Develop an understanding of the effects of societal, cultural and environmental influences on psychological and community well-being
- Explore the relationship between people and their environments and consider ways of improving this relationship
- Design innovative programs geared towards prevention and empowerment of disenfranchised groups
- Plan social and community interventions to solve community problems

# Course Requirements

## **Class Participation**

Attendance, preparation and class participation are required. Students should be prepared to discuss topics in the readings, and to answer and ask questions. They should also expect to relate what they learn in class to everyday life experiences, i.e. to discuss how the readings are related to their community and personal experiences.

## **Reflection paper**

You would be expected to write one reflection paper based on your own experiences. In the reflection paper, you should situate your experiences within class discussions as well as concepts and principles of community psychology. Indicate in your paper what aspects of community psychology relates to your experiences. The paper should be about 2-3 pages long.

## **Class Presentation**

You will be expected to select a topic that is related to any area of community psychology and present in class. This topic should first be approved by me before the presentation. In preparing for the (slides) presentation, you would be expected to do a literature search on the topic, and as much as possible situate it within the local context. You should build one or two class activities into your presentation. You should be innovative and creative in handling the presentation and class activity.

## **Class test**

There will be one class test as scheduled in the course outline. The format for the class test will be announced in class but will mainly be short answers and short essays.

## **Final exam**

There will be a final examination in the last week of class. The final exam will not be cumulative, rather it will cover only material that has been given since the previous exam.

## **Problem definition and intervention paper (6 – 8 pages)**

Each student is expected to write a paper on a social/community problem that is relevant to community psychology. In this paper, you should define and/or redefine a problem that you have identified in your “community”. You should do a thorough review of the literature focusing on the problem as well as what is being done to address it. You will be expected to discuss the problem making use of community psychology concepts, issues and philosophies and provide a critique of the various efforts and interventions that have been designed to address the problem.

### **Outline of the paper:**

- 1) State the problem (highlight the various social, community and individual effects (e.g. who is affected and how are they affected, why is it a problem, etc)
- 2) What are the possible causes of the problem? (not just on the individual level but also social and community levels).
- 3) Review the literature on the chosen problem, with emphasis on what is being done to address it
- 4) What innovative solutions/interventions do you have for the problem (considering the ecological nature of the problem). In other words, plan an intervention for the problem. Emphasize prevention and empowerment-oriented efforts in your intervention.
- 5) How would you evaluate the intervention?

### **Grading of Assignments**

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

<b>Assignments/Activities</b>	<b>% of Final Grade</b>
Class participation	5%
Reflection paper	10%
Class presentation	15%
Class test	20%
Problem definition paper	30%
Final examination	20%

### **Letter Grades**

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Explanation of Grade</b>
<b>A</b>	Clear evidence of understanding, plus the ability to apply knowledge and reflect on the student's own learning
<b>B</b>	Evidence of understanding and the ability to apply course content, but lacking reflectivity.
<b>C</b>	Evidence of good understanding, but lacking evidence of reflectivity and the ability to apply course content.
<b>D</b>	Evidence of understanding in a minimally acceptable way, and lacking reflectivity and the ability to apply course content.
<b>F</b>	Plagiarized, did not participate satisfactorily, did not hand in work, lack of understanding

	<b>GRADE CONVERSION</b>	
A	94-100	Excellent
A-	90-93	Very Good
B+	87-89	Good
B	84-86	Above Average
B-	80-83	Average
C+	77-79	Pass
C	74-76	Pass
C-	70-73	Pass
D	65-69	Concessionary Pass
F	Below 65	Fail

# Course Schedule

## Topics and Assignments

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Session 1 Feb 6	Introduction to community psychology	Kloos et al. Chapter 1  Nelson & Prilleltensky Chapter 1  Akotia, C. S., & Barimah, K. B. (2007). History of Community Psychology in Ghana. In S. M. Reich, M. Riemer, I. Prilleltensky, & M. Montero (eds.). <i>International Community Psychology. History and Theories</i> . Springer	
Session 2 Feb 13	Doing community research	Kloos et al. Chapter 3  Maiter, S., Joseph, A. J., Shan, N., & Saeid, A. (2012). Doing participatory Qualitative research: development of a shared critical consciousness with racial minority research advisory group members, <i>Qualitative Research</i> , 13(2), 198–213.	
Session 3 Feb 20	Understanding individuals within environments	Kloos et al., Chapter 5	
Session 4 Feb 27	Understanding communities	Kloos et al., Chapter 6  Volker, B., Flap, H., & Lindenberg, S (2007). When Are Neighbourhoods Communities?	

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
		<p>Community in Dutch Neighbourhoods. <i>European Sociological Review</i>, 23(1), 99–114.</p> <p>Mckenzie, K. (2008). Urbanization, social capital and mental health. <i>Global Social Policy</i> 8(3), 359–377.</p>	
Session 5 March 6*	Prevention and health promotion	<p>Kloos et al., Chapter 9</p> <p>Ostlin, 1, P., Eckermann, E., Mishra, U. S., Nkowane, M &amp; Wallstam, E. (2007). Gender and health promotion: A multi-sectoral policy approach, <i>Health Promotion International</i>, 21 No. S1.</p>	
Session 6 March 13	<b>Class Test</b>		
Session 7 March 20	<b>Spring Break - No class</b>		
Session 8 March 27	Field trip I		
Session 9 April 3	Guest Lecture I: Understanding Mental Health in Ghana		
Session 10 April 10	Gender, culture and mental health	<p>Sipsma, H., Ofori-Atta, A., Canavan, M., Osei-Akoto, I., Udry, C., &amp; Bradley, E. H. (2013). Poor mental health in Ghana: who is at risk? <i>BMC Public Health</i>, 13, 288.</p>	<b>Reflection paper due</b>

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
		Ofori Attah, A., Cooper, S. Akpalu, B. et al. (2010). Common understandings of women's mental illness in Ghana: Results from a qualitative study. <i>International Review of Psychiatry</i> , 22(6), 589–598.	
Session 11 April 19	Field trip II		
Session 12 April 24	Social and Community Interventions	Nelson & Prileltsensky Chapters 7 & 8	
Session 13 May 1	Citizen participation, empowerment and social change.	<b>Kloos et al. 13</b>  Sipsma, H., Ofori-Attah, A., Canavan, M., Udry, C., & Bradley, E. (2014). Empowerment and use of antenatal care among women in Ghana: a cross-sectional study. <i>BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth</i> , 14, 364.	<b>Problem definition and intervention paper due</b>
Session 14 May 8	<b>Class Presentations</b>		
Session 15 May 15	Guest Lecture II: The dynamics of domestic violence in Ghana		
Session 16 May 22	<b>Final Exam</b>		

# Course Materials

## Required Textbooks & Materials

- Kloos, B., Hill, J., Thomas, E., Wandersman, A., Elias, M. J., & Dalton, J. H. (2012). *Community psychology: Linking individuals and communities*. New York: Wadsworth.

## Optional Textbooks & Materials

- Nelson, G., & Prilleltensky, I. (2010). *Community Psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Moritsugu, J., Vera, E., Wong, F. Y., & Duffy, K. G. (2014). *Community Psychology* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.). New York: Pearson Educational Inc.
- *Note: Other relevant materials will be given in the course of the semester*

# Course Policies

## Attendance and Tardiness

- Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in harsher penalties including failure.
- Unexcused absences affect students' grades: In classes meeting once a week, a
- 2% deduction from the student's final course grade occurs on the occasion of the first unexcused absence.
- Absences are excused only for illness, religious observance, and emergencies.

**Illness:** For a single absence, students may be required to provide a doctor's note, at the discretion of the Assistant Directors of Academics. In the case of two consecutive absences, students must provide a doctor's note. Exams, quizzes, and presentations will not be made up without a doctor's note.

**Religious Observance:** Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their instructor and the Academic Office in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose. If exams, quizzes, and presentations are scheduled on a holiday a student will observe, the Assistant Directors, in coordination with the instructor, will reschedule them.

**Please note: if you are unable to attend class, you are required to email your professors directly and notify them.**

### **Late Assignment**

Late submission or work will be accepted only with justifiable reasons of health or family emergency.

### **Academic Honesty/Plagiarism**

*At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community.*

**Plagiarism:** *presenting others' work without adequate acknowledgement of its source, as though it were one's own. Plagiarism is a form of fraud. We all stand on the shoulders of others, and we must give credit to the creators of the works that we incorporate into products that we call our own. Some examples of plagiarism:*

- *a sequence of words incorporated without quotation marks*
- *an unacknowledged passage paraphrased from another's work*
- *the use of ideas, sound recordings, computer data or images created by others as though it were one's own*
- *submitting evaluations of group members' work for an assigned group project which misrepresent the work that was performed by another group member*
- *altering or forging academic documents, including but not limited to admissions materials, academic records, grade reports, add/drop forms, course registration forms, etc.*

*For further information, students are encouraged to check*

[www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html](http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html)

### **Disability Disclosure Statement**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

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### **Classroom Etiquette**

Laptops are not allowed in class unless they are for taking notes ONLY and permission is granted by the lecturer. Please refrain from using them for email or social networking during class hours. Mobile phones should be put on silence during class. I would expect that you refrain from talking among yourselves while class is ongoing. Also note that only snacks are allowed during class hours.

## **Instructor Bio**

Charity S. Akotia is an Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology and Dean of the School of Social Sciences, University of Ghana. She received her B.A. Psychology (Hons) from the University of Ghana, M.A. in Community Psychology from Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada and PhD from the University of Ghana. She teaches Community Psychology and Social Psychology at the University of Ghana. She is one of the pioneers of community psychology in Ghana. Her research interest is in suicide and suicide prevention, mental health and gender. She is currently the National Representative for the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) in Ghana. She is passionate about teaching and enjoys reading during her leisure hours. A few of my most recent publications are:

- Akotia, C. S., Knizek, B. L., Hjelmeland, H., Kinyanda, E., & Osafo, J. (2018). Reasons for attempting suicide: An exploratory study in Ghana. *Transcultural Psychiatry*. DOI: 10.1177/1363461518802966

- Anum, A., & Akotia, C. S. (2018). Do ethnicity and sex role ideology influence self-esteem among US and West African young adults? An exploratory cross-cultural study. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 28(6), 462 – 467.
- Osafo, J., Akotia, C.S., Boakye, K. E., & Dickson, E. (2018). Between moral infraction and existential crisis: Exploring physicians and nurses' attitudes to suicide and the suicidal patient in Ghana. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 85, 118 – 125.
- Osafo, J., Akotia, C. S., Quarshie, E. N., Boakye, K. E., & Andoh-Arthur, J. (2017). Police views of suicidal persons and the law criminalizing suicide in Ghana: A qualitative study with policy implications. *SAGE Open*, 7(3), DOI: 2158244017731803
- Osafo, J., Akotia, C. S., Ando-Arthur, J., Boakye, K. E., Quarshie, E. N-B. (2017). “We now have a patient and not a criminal”: An Exploratory Study of Judges and Lawyers’ Views on Suicide Attempters and the Law in Ghana. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, DOI: 10:1177/0306624X692059
- Akotia, C.S., & Anum, A. (2015). Gender, Culture, and Inequality in Ghana: An examination of socio-cultural determinants of gender disparity. In S. Safda & N. Kosakowska (eds). *The Psychology of Gender through the Lens of Culture: Introduction*, Springer.