Department of Justice, Law and Society
School of Public Affairs
The American University

Spring 2009

DRUGS, CONSCIOUSNESS AND HUMAN FULFILLMENT – JLS.301.001

Thursdays 2:10 PM to 4:50 PM
Ward 105

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Course Description

[From the catalogue: "Positive approaches to achieving alternative states of consciousness with and without drugs; the nonaddictive use of addicting drugs; a balanced assessment of the latest findings on the dangers and benefits of the most widely used nonopiate recreational drugs, such as marijuana, tobacco, caffeine, alcohol, quaaludes, and cocaine; choices for individuals and society regarding the use and control of the substances."]

Most people believe alcohol and illegal drugs cause "addiction." They believe addiction is involuntary and characterized by "loss of control" over alcohol and drug consumption. They also believe addiction is a "treatable disease." If you disagree and/or challenge those ideas, you are likely to be labeled ignorant at best and a heretic at worst. In this course, you will comprehend the fiction about drugs and addiction masquerading as fact, and the fact about drugs and addiction many people regard as fiction.

Together, we will examine accurate versus inaccurate definitions of addiction: You will understand the analytic and synthetic truth about addiction. We will review empirical evidence supporting the idea that people use drugs to change their perception of themselves and the world for existential and psychological reasons, not necessarily for chemical or biological reasons. We will investigate the scientific validity of the claim that addiction is a treatable disease.

We will also examine the religious, moral, and ethical bases of drug use, for example, how alcohol and drug use becomes a "central activity" in a person's life—and why. We will review how illegal mind-altering drugs and their users are scapegoats and victims of religious and political persecution. Drawing on philosophical, psychoanalytic, sociological, and psychological perspectives, we will investigate existential explanations for why people choose to use drugs as a way to attempt to escape from reality and what it means to be an autonomous, "heroic," or "self-actualized" person. Finally, we will examine Buddhist perspectives on the nature of human suffering and what we can do about it.

In this course you will learn
(1) how drug use is a way to avoid coping with life;
(2) how drug use is a form of self-deception;

(3) how drug use is a religious activity;
(4) how treatment for addiction is a religious activity;
(5) how thinking about drug addiction as a disease is a form of self-deception;
(6) a Buddhist perspective on contemporary psychology and psychiatry to increase understanding of self-imposed suffering and problems-in-living usually labeled "mental illness" and addiction disease;
(7) new ways of self-examination leading to greater consciousness and human fulfillment.

Lecture and discussion format.

Course Objectives

- To improve the student's scientific and psychologically-oriented thinking about drugs, consciousness and human fulfillment.
- To evaluate the evidence supporting and contesting the idea that addiction exists, is characterized by involuntariness, and is treatable.
- To explore the sociological basis for the conventional wisdom about addiction, with particular emphasis on the nature and practice of scapegoating.
- To understand what happens in voluntary and involuntary treatment for drug addiction.
- To understand philosophical, psychoanalytic, and psychological perspectives on why people choose to use mind-altering drugs.
- To comprehend the meaning of being an existentially-heroic individual.
- To learn about Buddhist perspectives on human suffering and their relation to contemporary western psychological perspectives.
- To develop skill in debating these and related controversial issues in public policy settings.

Required Texts

- Becker, E. (1997). *The denial of death*. New York: Free Press. ISBN: 0684832402
- Leifer, R. (1997). *The happiness project: Transforming the three poisons that cause the suffering we inflict on ourselves and others*. Ithaca, N.Y: Snow Lion Press. **You MUST purchase this book on your own**. The AU bookstore does not carry it because it is out of publication. Find it used or new on Amazon.com, or another online bookstore, **NOW**. You must have this book for the course. ISBN: 1559390794
- Schaler, J.A. (2000). *Addiction is a choice*. Chicago: Open Court. ISBN: 081269404X
- Szasz, T. (2003). *Ceremonial chemistry: The ritual persecution of drugs, addicts, and pushers*. Publisher: Syracuse University Press; Rev edition. ISBN: 0815607687

Course Requirements and Grades

Paper	50%	
Final exam	50%	
Class participation	20%	→ Note: You **must** do the CP assignment. There is no grade for it. It is a required part of the course. If the assignment is not completed, the final grade is reduced by twenty percent.
Total =	100%	

Note: Throughout this course you must abide by Rudolf Virchow's definition of a disease; meaning it refers to cellular abnormality, a physical lesion (wound). In other words, you must abide by a pathologist's definition of disease, not that of a mental health professional. This has nothing to do with denying the existence of disturbing, abnormal, or irrational behavior. We are simply abiding by the gold standard when it comes to defining and describing disease in the literal sense. A behavior cannot be a disease. Or, a behavior can be a disease only as a metaphor.

Paper: Double-spaced typed paper dealing with any way drugs and addiction constitute religious or existential solutions for problems-in-living. Look to any number of issues in the readings, lectures, and discussions in class to expand and write your paper on. The "problems-in-living" can be individual mental, emotional or physical problems (intrapersonal problems); interpersonal problems (involving family, school, peers, etcetera); and/or the existential problems we will be addressing such as fear of death, fear of isolation or aloneness, fear of freedom (in which people may embrace paternalism; and fear of meaninglessness (consider here the reasons that people believe in God or engage in some kind of religious ritual or ceremony that gives them a sense of direction and purpose in life).

This is a research paper. You must have the following sections clearly indicated with these headings: Introduction; Operational Terms and Definitions (if needed); Literature Review; Discussion; Summary/Conclusion. Do not put your opinion in the literature review. Your opinion goes in the second half of the Discussion section, plus, Summary/Conclusion. You must use APA (American Psychological Association) format. Make sure your in-text citations are correctly cited as per APA, and your references in the end are EXACTLY APA format. No paper length—you decide—however, you must use the section headings. Further instructions will be handed out or talked about in class, if needed. There should be little need for further discussion. Everything is here. **Remember though: If you are going to address the issues of "mental illness," its "diagnosis" and alleged "treatment," you must use the definition of disease as established by Virchow, and used as the gold standard by pathologists all over the world. The definition of disease used by mental health professionals is not the definition of disease used by pathologists based on Virchow's work. You must use the definition used by pathologists, not the definition used by mental health professionals. This means that disease is of the body and consists of cellular abnormality, lesions, signs.** There is no such thing as the mind, therefore the mind cannot be sick, ill, or diseased.

The brain can obviously be diseased. Brain and mind are different. Disease is something literal. Differentiate between literal and metaphorical disease. Metaphorical disease can only be "treated" metaphorically. The difference between metaphorical and literal disease is one of the most difficult concepts in this course, and it is one of the most important concepts to comprehend. Use your dictionary. Ask questions. Work to understand the difference. Once you "get" the difference, everything "comes together." It doesn't matter whether you want to continue to believe that the mind can exist in a literal sense or not. You must use the gold standard when it comes to defining disease, that is, a disease is something physical, characterized by cellular abnormality and tissue destruction, and found in the cadaver during an autopsy.

Note: You will discuss your paper in class. You hand your paper in on the date listed below. Always keep a back-up copy of your paper.

Please keep the following in mind when you write your paper:

- Your paragraphs must neither be too short nor too long. Each paragraph should be able to stand alone.
- You may not use *Wikipedia* for research.
- Make sure you have smooth and logical transition from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph.
- Make sure you keep people, possession, and time parallel. For example, if you begin a sentence speaking in the plural and present tense, don't follow up in the same sentence using the singular and past tense.
- Make sure each sentence is a complete sentence.
- Make sure you differentiate between factual material and your opinion. Your opinion is fine, however, do not express your opinion as if it is fact.
- If you cite a source within the text, make sure you use APA format. If you don't know what APA format is, go to the library or purchase the APA Manual of Style. In-text citation is like this (Smith, 1969), and only like that. Not, (Smith, p. 46). It's always author's last name, year of publication, and if necessary, the page numbers, like this (Smith, 1969: pp. 12-15).
- Do not use footnotes.
- Do use www.dictionary.com and the link to the *Oxford English Dictionary* provided on BlackBoard.
- Do not cite material in the reference section that you did not cite in-text. Do not cite material in-text that you do not cite in the reference section. The reference section is on its own page.
- Make sure your name is on the first page. Give your paper a short and descriptive title. Make sure each page is numbered, centered, at the bottom of the page.
- Do not quote more than two lines of material. Paraphrase material in your own words, then reference it from the source it came from.
- Keep your writing and language formal, no colloquialisms.
- Use the following headings: Introduction (make sure you state the purpose of your paper here); Operational terms and definitions (list and define any that may be relevant and unfamiliar to a reader); Literature review (list what other people have found); Discussion (clearly state your opinion, don't present it as fact); Conclusion: (Summarize, list limitations and possible biases); References: APA style. Important.

  Final examination: The final examination will consist of multiple choice and/or essay questions focused on the material throughout the whole course. It is cumulative.

- Group presentations: You will occasionally be assigned to a group and present on various assigned readings.

Class participation (CP): Further instructions or clarification for the assignment below will be presented in class. One post per week. This must be posted in the BlackBoard discussion board for the week indicated or labeled in the margin on the left of your BlackBoard home page for this course. I'm building the Blackboard folders this week. They are not up yet.

Directions: Each week you post one CP assignment for the appropriate week BlackBoard discussion board. There are three parts to one CP assignment or post. Title each CP post the

following way and make sure your name is listed as it appears with the registrar: CP post, date, your name.

Inside your post you do this: You post a news item you've found on the Internet that is related to anything we've discussed in class or in the readings. You summarize the article briefly, put the url there so that fellow students can read the article you found, then you give your brief opinion of the article. Thus,

1. CP, your name, the date, in the subject area.
Title of article in the text area with the
URL of article, followed by

2. Your opinion of article/issue. You decide the length. You should present enough to establish a clear statement of your opinion.

3. Then, underneath this you write "Reply to (name of student you are replying to)."
Here you post a response to the opinion written by someone else in class—their opinion in any post of theirs for that week. Please be polite and respectful. *Argumentum ad rem,* no *argumentum ad hominem*.

The CP assignment counts for twenty percent of your grade. It is a requirement for the course. If you do not do the assignment, your final grade drops by twenty percent of the average for your paper (fifty percent) and final exam (fifty percent).

Note: Clear and accurate writing—including accurate spelling on exams and papers—will be taken into account in assigning grades, as well as **participation in class discussions**. Material discussed in class, or in films, and not in any of the readings, may form the basis for questions on the examinations. **Exams must be taken on the dates assigned. One grade reduction for over four class absences**. Sign in at each class. Please be on time.

No fault absence policy: This means no note is required for your absence, however, the penalty applies for over three absences, regardless of reason. Save the three you have without penalty in case you get sick or have a family emergency. Students are responsible for anything covered in class during their absence. Readings must be completed by the session to which they are assigned. Additional readings may be assigned during the course. Students are encouraged to form study groups on their own. You do the readings. You write down questions for discussion from the readings and lectures. I lecture on various points from the readings. I do not lecture on everything you read. You are responsible for the readings. This is different from high school. You could be tested on something that is part of the readings that I did not lecture on in class. Grades: A-=90, B+=89, B-=80, C+=79, C-=70. **Check your email for class readings, announcements, etc**. Check BlackBoard for announcements.

Make sure you receive email through BlackBoard. If a class is cancelled because I have to give a talk out of town, or because I am sick or have to have surgery, I will make every effort to present a lecture for that class on BlackBoard. You are responsible for that lecture. I will send out an email directing you to the lecture on BlackBoard in place of my face-to-face lecture. I do have at least one important speaking engagement this semester that I must participate in, and I am scheduled for knee surgery in January. I'm not sure whether those events will fall on

the date of one or two of our classes, however, if they do, I will either schedule a guest speaker, a movie, or a lecture on BlackBoard.

If you know someone who is in the mental health profession, who you think disagrees with much of what we are studying, and you think he or she would be interested in giving a talk to the class, please let me know. I would be happy to talk to him or her about coming in and speaking to our class. College is a lot about exploring and debating new ideas, new ways of viewing oneself and the world. I welcome diversity and different points of view. Much of what you will learn in this course is rarely presented in other classes. In order for me to present these alternative ways of viewing disease and behavior, I must present the "other side."

Teaching Assistant

Our graduate teaching assistant is Mr. Nafis Islam. His email address is ni8955a@american.edu. Nafis will introduce himself to you through Blackboard and in class. He worked with me last semester. He may have time to help you with the process of the course, especially your papers. Contact Nafis if you (a) have a problem with BlackBoard and doing the CP assignment; (b) need help with the structure of your paper (Please do not wait until the last moment to ask Nafis for help.) He is not available for reading your paper carefully before you turn it in. He will help you with making sure you understand what goes under which heading, APA format, etcetera. If you are worried about writing a good paper, you should first meet with Nafis to make sure you have the headings correct, and the APA style correct. Then meet with someone in the university writing center. You must make an appointment at the writing center well in advance. Do not expect to get an appointment right away. Again, book your appointment in advance. When you get an appointment with someone be sure to take along a copy of your syllabus so they know what is expected of you. Not everyone has to do this. I strongly encourage you to use the writing center if you are not confident in your writing.

Punctuality

It is important to be on time, when you have an appointment with Professor Schaler, Mr. Islam, or someone at the writing center. It is also important that you be on time for class. Please sign in at each class.

Academic Integrity Code

"Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. It is expected that all examinations, tests, written papers, and other assignments will be completed according to the standards set forth in this code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary action will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course."

CLASS SCHEDULE

Any topic is subject to change. Additional readings and articles will be sent out by email or be available to download on BlackBoard.

Date	Topic	Reading
January 15	Drugs as scapegoat	Szasz ix-60
January 19	**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**	**No classes**
January 20	Inauguration Day	No classes
January 22	Drugs and medicine as magic **Begin your CP assignment starting this week. Please have it completed two days after each date to do part three of the CP assignment.**	Szasz 61-124
January 29	Medicine as social control	Finish Szasz
February 5	Addiction Is a Choice	Chapters 1-5
February 12	Addiction Is a Choice	Chapters 6-9
February 19	Addiction Is a Choice	Chapter 10-11
February 26	Ideology of Alcoholics Anonymous	Handouts/lecture
March 5	What is religion? **Paper due**	Lecture, handouts Paper discussion
March 8 to 15	**Spring break; No classes**	**Handouts**
March 12	Article handout/lecture	Becker ix-124
March 19	Depth psychology of heroism	Becker 125-252
March 26	The failures of heroism The dilemmas of heroism	Becker 253- end
April 2	Introduction and the Buddhist view	Leifer 11-122
April 9	Western views of suffering	Leifer 123-158
April 16	Western views of desire **Last week for CP assignment**	Leifer 159-214
April 23	Western views of self Transforming suffering	Leifer 215-264 Leifer 265-finish
April 30	**Final exam**	**2:10 PM to 4:40 PM**