



**University of North Texas  
College of Health and Public  
Service  
Social Work Department  
SOWK 4325 / Intersection of Trauma  
and  
Substance Use**

Welcome to SOWK 4325! I look forward to working with all of you this semester as we learn about trauma-informed practices. Should you have any questions along the way, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

### **About the professor:**

**Dr. Dhru Mukherjee, Ph.D., LCSW-S** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work at the University of North Texas. His research focuses on community mental health, the intersection of trauma and substance use, clinical skill development, Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy, and exploring worldview in the social work profession.

### **Instructor Information**

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### **Course Description**

This course examines the co-occurring nature of psychological trauma and substance use disorder (SUD), a significant challenge for behavioral health professionals in integrated healthcare settings. Students will explore how trauma and substance misuse intersect, leading to complex clinical outcomes. The course provides: (a) a detailed understanding of trauma and

addictions and their interactions; (b) an overview of categories of substances and their physiological impact; (c) an examination of differential impacts on diverse demographic groups; and (d) a review of evidence-based assessment and treatment protocols. The curriculum addresses micro, mezzo, and macro interventions and integrates systemic, legal, and spiritual considerations in treatment

### **Course Structure**

This course is delivered 100% online with no face-to-face meetings. Weekly learning modules released on Mondays include readings, discussions, assignments, and quizzes. Assignments are due Sundays at 11:59 p.m. Central Time (CT). The semester is 16 weeks long.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify different types of traumatic stress and substance use disorders and their mutual co-occurrences and cultural influences.
  - CSWE Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior (applying knowledge to diverse populations)
  - CSWE Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
  - CSWE Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
  
2. Critically engage in the theoretical models of substance use disorders from pharmacological, cognitive, trauma-responsive systems, behavioral, and psychodynamic approaches.
  - CSWE Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior (theoretical application)
  - CSWE Competency 4: Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice
  - CSWE Competency 6: Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

3. Distinguish effective assessment and screening protocols involving trauma and substance use in integrated healthcare settings.
  - CSWE Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  
4. Assess basic intervention protocols involving trauma and substance use.
  - CSWE Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  - CSWE Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  
5. Evaluate best practices involving trauma and substance use.
  - CSWE Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  
6. Locate local, state, and federal-level policies involving trauma and substance use.
  - CSWE Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

**Assignments and Grading**

Assignments include weekly quizzes and discussions, a paper outline, a final paper, and a final exam. Discussion posts require thoughtful engagement, integration of trauma and substance use concepts, and APA citation where applicable (see Discussion Instructions below).

Assignment	Points	Due
Weekly Quizzes (15 total)	300	Weekly
Weekly Discussions (15 total)	300	Weekly
Paper Outline	50	Week 11 (Due Mar 29th)
Final Paper	250	Week 16 (Due May 3 <sup>rd</sup> )
Final Exam	100	Finals Week (Due May 8 <sup>th</sup> )

**Discussion Instructions (Applies to All Weekly Discussions)**

1. Purpose: Weekly discussions are a space to practice integrating the intersection of trauma and substance use (SUD) using course concepts, evidence, and professional communication.
2. Initial Post: Respond directly to the week's prompt and explicitly connect BOTH trauma and SUD (not "trauma only" or "SUD only").
3. Peer Replies: Reply to at least two classmates. Each reply must add trauma+SUD integration (e.g., extend an idea with a concept from readings, add a practice implication, or ask a clinically relevant question).
4. Deadlines: Weekly modules open Monday; initial post and replies are due by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. Central Time (CT) unless Canvas indicates otherwise.
5. Evidence & APA: Use at least one assigned reading/resource each week to support your claims and include APA-style in-text citations (and references when applicable).
6. Respectful engagement: Maintain a professional tone; disagree with ideas, not people; and use person-first, non-stigmatizing language.
7. Privacy & trauma-informed participation: Do not share personal trauma details or identifying information about yourself or others; use de-identified/composite/fictional examples; avoid graphic descriptions and add a brief content note if needed.
8. Academic integrity & AI: Your writing must be your own. Do not paste AI-generated text as posts or replies. Basic spelling/grammar tools are permitted for polishing your original writing. Follow the course AI and academic integrity policies.

### **Weekly Discussion Prompts (Overview)**

- A. Prompts are posted in Canvas each week. The list below is provided to help you plan ahead.
- B. Week 1: Choose one population (e.g., youth, veterans, unhoused individuals, LGBTQ+ communities) and explain one way trauma exposure can increase risk for substance use and one way substance use can increase vulnerability to traumatic experiences, citing at least one course source.
- C. Week 2: Using the trauma-informed care principles from this week, describe two concrete changes you would make to a first-session intake so that substance use screening and trauma safety are addressed without increasing shame or dysregulation.

- D. Week 3: Compare two explanations for trauma–SUD co-occurrence (e.g., self-medication, learning/conditioning, social determinants, neurobiological stress sensitization) and identify what each model implies for intervention priorities.
- E. Week 4: Pick one substance class (e.g., alcohol, opioids, stimulants) and explain how its pharmacological effects can interact with trauma-related hyperarousal/numbing to shape tolerance, withdrawal, craving, and relapse risk.
- F. Week 5: Describe how attachment and developmental trauma may appear as substance use “coping” in relationships (e.g., conflict, intimacy, abandonment cues) and propose one engagement strategy that increases relational safety while supporting change.
- G. Week 6: Create (or use a brief fictional) client snapshot and write a one-paragraph integrated formulation linking trauma symptoms, substance use patterns, the function(s) of use, and immediate stabilization/safety needs.
- H. Week 7: From a family-systems lens, identify one trauma-driven pattern that can look like “enabling” or “resistance” and propose a trauma-informed boundary/communication approach that supports recovery without blame.
- I. Week 8: Explain how polysubstance use and the current drug supply (contamination/adulterants, unpredictability) complicate trauma-informed care, then propose two harm-reduction messages you would deliver in a culturally responsive way.
- J. Week 9: Spring Break (no discussion).
- K. Week 10: Describe how trauma history can shape overdose risk (e.g., using alone, avoidance of services, dissociation, survival strategies) and outline a trauma-informed overdose prevention plan that includes naloxone education and safer-use counseling.
- L. Week 11: Draft a brief SBIRT-style opening that screens for substance use and trauma-related safety while clearly explaining confidentiality/consent in plain language and preserving client choice.
- M. Week 12: Choose a client goal (abstinence, reduced use, safer use) and justify an integrated plan that combines harm reduction, recovery supports, and (when appropriate) medications, explicitly addressing trauma triggers and emotional regulation.

- N. Week 13: Compare a present-focused coping model with a trauma-processing approach for co-occurring trauma/SUD and argue how you would sequence care for a specific client presentation (readiness, safety, supports, withdrawal risk).
- O. Week 14: Analyze how stigma operates as a trauma-like force across micro/mezzo/macro levels in SUD treatment and propose one change at each level that would improve engagement and outcomes.
- P. Week 15: In a scenario involving parental substance use and child safety concerns, explain how you would balance mandated reporting, safety planning, and trauma-informed family engagement, including one concrete referral/support.
- Q. Week 16: Select one priority population and explain how structural inequities, trauma exposure, and recovery capital interact, then propose one micro practice strategy and one macro/policy strategy to support sustained recovery.

### **Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technology**

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to generate text is not allowed in this course. All work submitted in Canvas will be screened for use of AI systems such as ChatGPT, Claude, Google Bard, or any other automated assistance. Using AI in this way undermines your ability to develop critical thinking, writing, and research skills that are essential for this course and your academic success. Any detection of AI use for generating text is in violation of UNT's academic integrity policy and may result in further investigation. **Grammar review tools like Spell Check in Microsoft Word or Grammarly are permissible to assist in reviewing your original writing.**

While AI use to create text is not allowed, there may be times when AI can be used to assist with an assignment or generating ideas. If you choose to use AI, it is important to think critically and question the accuracy of information provided. AI is known to regularly produce inaccurate information, so you will need to confirm its accuracy through reviewing other sources, **especially scholarly sources.** In addition to critical thinking, you will need to cite the AI tool used in any assignment if you find a source or if you have generally used it. Using GenAI content without proper credit or substituting your own work with GenAI undermines the learning process and violates UNT academic integrity policy. If you're unsure whether something is allowed, please seek clarification.

In short, **do not copy and paste what has been generated. Use your own words.** GenAI should complement, not replace, your critical thinking or our course materials. If something seems unclear, please seek clarification.

## **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity emanates from a culture that embraces the core values of trust and honesty necessary for full learning to occur. As student-centered public research university, UNT promote the integrity of the learning process by establishing and enforcing high academic standards. Academic dishonesty breaches the mutual trust necessary in an academic environment and undermines all scholarship. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, submitting a paper multiple times to complete course requirements, forging the signature of the instructor or of another student, fabrication, and/or facilitating or sabotaging the academic dishonesty of other students for exams, papers etc.

Plagiarism can take various forms:

- **Cheating:** This includes exchanging answers on tests or pretending the work of others is your own work. This includes using work drawn from books, essays, newspapers and magazines, websites, and papers you wrote for another class or one that was written by other students.
- **Non-attribution:** Copying quotes or text where you don't give proper credit. You should use quotation marks for quotes and block indentations for passages. Always use citations at the end of a quote. The best way to avoid non-attribution is to always give ample credit to source authors. Better to have too many citations than to fail to credit your sources.
- **Patchwriting:** Using quotes and the structure of someone else's writing as your own. It is careless paraphrasing. Please summarize and report what you are reading using your own words. Quotes should be kept to a minimum as per APA guidelines.

Students who are unsure whether a particular act constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor. Professors will periodically utilize Turn-It-In software on Canvas to determine that students are not plagiarizing. See specific details and description of UNT's [Policy on Student Standards of Academic Integrity \(18.1.16\)](#) and students' right to appeal.

## Consequences of Academic Dishonesty

Students identified as potentially committing academic dishonesty at UNT will be reported to the Graduate Director and Chair of the Social Work Program and will also be reported to appropriate University officials. University policy supersedes department policy.

At UNT, after meeting with the student, a report may be made to the Dean of Students at: [UNT Academic Integrity](#)

Faculty will immediately contact students with a potential violation to meet with them to discuss the situation. Students will be apprised of their student rights and responsibilities and asked to provide an explanation for their behavior. If the student(s) acknowledges the act of academic dishonesty and the faculty member is satisfied that the incident can be effectively resolved with a grade sanction, the faculty member will assign one of the following sanctions:

- a. Admonition. Verbal or written reprimand
- b. Performance of additional work/Assignment of Educational Coursework. The student may be required to perform additional coursework not required of other students in the specific course.
- c. Changing/reduction of grade--Partial or no credit for an assignment or assessment. The instructor may award partial or no credit for the assignment or assessment on which the student engaged in academic dishonesty, to be calculated into the final course grade
- d. Withdrawal from the course
- e. Failure. The instructor may assign a failing grade for the course

**Academic dishonesty is grounds for termination from the Social Work Program or denial of admission.**

## Weekly Schedule

Full reading lists and additional resources are available in Canvas. Chapters refer to the required text: Doweiko, H. E. (2018). Concepts of Chemical Dependency (10th ed.). Cengage.

Week 1 – Jan 12

Topic: Scope of the SUD Problem in the USA + course intersection roadmap

Readings: Chapters 1 & 2 + additional readings

Assignments: Quiz 1, Discussion 1

Week 2 – Jan 19

Topic: Trauma-Informed Care in SUD Settings

Readings: Additional readings

Assignments: Quiz 2, Discussion 2

Week 3 – Jan 26

Topic: Etiology of SUD + Trauma Pathways to Use (ACEs/Developmental Adversity)

Readings: Chapters 26 & 27 + additional materials

Assignments: Quiz 3, Discussion 3

Week 4 – Feb 2

Topic: Pharmacology of Addiction + Stress/Trauma Neurobiology (Plain-Language)

Readings: Chapter 3 + additional materials

Assignments: Quiz 4, Discussion 4

Week 5 – Feb 9

Topic: Attachment, Developmental Trauma, and Substance Use

Readings: Additional readings

Assignments: Quiz 5, Discussion 5

Week 6 – Feb 16

Topic: Co-Occurring Disorders + Integrated Case Formulation

Readings: Chapter 25 + additional materials

Assignments: Quiz 6, Discussion 6

Week 7 – Feb 23

Topic: Family Systems & Relational Dynamics in SUD

Readings: Chapter 24 + additional materials

Assignments: Quiz 7, Discussion 7

Week 8 – Mar 2

Topic: Polysubstance Use + Changing Drug Supply and Risk

Readings: Chapters 4, 5, 7, 9 & 12

Assignments: Quiz 8, Discussion 8

Week 9 – Mar 9

Spring Break

Readings: -----

Assignments: -----

Week 10 – Mar 16

Topic: Opioids, Stimulants, and Overdose Prevention

Readings: Chapters 8 & 11

Assignments: Quiz 9, Discussion 9

Week 11 – Mar 23

Topic: Screening & Assessment in Integrated Care (SBIRT, Level of Care, Confidentiality)

Readings: Chapter 28 + additional materials

Assignments: Quiz 10, Discussion 10, Paper Outline Due (Sun Mar 29)

Week 12 – Mar 30

Topic: Harm Reduction, Abstinence, MOUD, and Recovery Goals as a Continuum

Readings: Chapters 32 & 33 + additional readings

Assignments: Quiz 11, Discussion 11

Week 13 – April 6

Topic: Interventions for Co-Occurring Trauma + SUD (Sequencing + Integrated Models)

Readings: Chapters 29, 30 & 31 + additional readings

Assignments: Quiz 12, Discussion 12

Week 14 – April 13

Topic: Stigma, Ethics, Culture + Provider Impact (Vicarious Trauma/Burnout)

Readings: Chapter 37 + additional materials

Assignments: Quiz 13, Discussion 13

Week 15 – April 20

Topic: Children, Families, and Systems (Child Welfare, Perinatal, Mandated Reporting—Trauma-Informed)

Readings: Chapters 17, 20 & 21 + additional readings

Assignments: Quiz 14, Discussion 14

Week 16 – April 27

Topic: Populations in Addiction and Recovery + Sustaining Recovery Supports

Readings: Chapters 18, 19 & 22

Assignments: Quiz 15, Discussion 15, Final Paper Due

Finals Week – May 4-8

Topic: Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care + Policy Wrap

Readings: Chapters 34 & 35 + additional readings

Assignments: Final Exam