

## OCC1 443 CONSTRUCTING MENTAL HEALTH

### General Information

<i>Course #:</i>	OCC1-443
<i>Section #:</i>	001
<i>Term:</i>	Winter
<i>Year:</i>	2025
<i>Course Schedule:</i>	Fridays, 1:05 pm - 3:55 pm
<i>Number of Credits:</i>	3
<i>Prerequisite Courses:</i>	OCC-245 & POTH-250

### Instructor Information

<i>Course Coordinator:</i>	Zachary Boychuck, PhD, OT
<i>Email:</i>	<a href="mailto:zachary.boychuck@mcgill.ca">zachary.boychuck@mcgill.ca</a>
<i>Office:</i>	Davis B6B
<i>Office Hours:</i>	Virtual or in-person available by appointment
<i>Communication Plan:</i>	Please send an email request if you would like to schedule a meeting. Best efforts will be made to respond to all emails within 48-72 hours.

**Course Description:** This course provides foundational knowledge for occupational therapy practice in mental health from a historical and critical perspective. An intersectional framework will be used in applying occupation-focused reasoning in the domain of mental illness and mental health.

**Expanded Course Description:** This course provides foundational occupational therapy philosophy, theories and skills for a range of practice contexts that address mental health. This course acknowledges the utility of a biomedical understanding of mental illness, and intentionally situates learners to explicitly work within a context of diversity, systemic oppression, and health inequities. An intersectional framework will be used in applying occupation-focused reasoning around experiences of mental illness and mental health. Learners will be introduced to the historical and scientific creation of psychiatric categories, as well as controversies and debates about the potential to pathologize everyday culturally informed responses to unjust events. An intersectional and anti-oppressive approach will be fostered in interviewing and analyzing occupational possibilities and engagement. Learners

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will begin to propose activities that push against normative assumptions of individual well-being and focus on empowerment, community and connection through activities. This course includes an exploration of learners' own values and assumptions about what constitutes mental health and occupational meaning across social positions and systems of oppression (class, race, age, gender identities, ability, sanity etc...).

\*\*\*This course includes content that is part of the OT curriculum Indigenous-focused thread. Please refer to the [relevant document](#) to situate your learning.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, learners will have engaged in the following dimensions of an intersectional approach to occupation-focused reasoning in mental health, as per *Bloom's taxonomy* (Anderson et al., 2001):

- Contrast the difference and implications between the medical diagnosis of a mental illness and an intersectional approach to mental health (*Analyzing*)
- Actively interrogate assumptions and beliefs about mental health (*Evaluating*)
- Apply core concepts within the philosophy of occupation to diversity in mental health (*Applying*)
- Explain why political and cultural perspectives are integral to OT practice (*Understanding*)
- Articulate the distinction and purpose of narrative vs procedural reasoning (*Understanding*)
- Develop an occupational analysis for a given individual (*Creating*)
- Practice non-directional active listening and narrative strategies for interviewing focused on the sociocultural dimensions of occupational experience and mental health (*Applying*)
- Initiate suggestions and grading for activity-based approaches in mental health (*Creating*)
- Explore community resources that provide support and/or empowerment (*Analyzing*)
- Demonstrate personal planning skills in order to integrate mental health as a priority while remaining organized and timely in relation to rolling due dates (*Applying*)

## RESPECTFUL & ENGAGED PEDAGOGY

**Land Acknowledgement:** McGill University stands on the unceded Indigenous lands of the Kanien'keha:ka, Keepers of the Eastern Door of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The Kanien'kehá:ka Communities are recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters of

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Tiohtiá:ke/Montréal, which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and Anishinaabeg Nations.

**Diversity Statement:** The Occupational Therapy Program recognizes our responsibility to foster a learning environment where students and instructors can engage in dialogue and exchange ideas without being made to feel unwelcome or disrespected in view of their identity or beliefs. The Program intends that the instructional design of all courses minimize any barriers to participation, particularly barriers based on age, biological sex, disability, gender identity or expression, indigenous ancestry, linguistic and cultural background, race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political views/opinions/ideologies, and any other aspect integral to one's personhood. We therefore recognize our responsibility, both individual and collective, to strive to establish and maintain a safer and respectful environment that reflects on, and minimizes, discrimination.

**Self-directed learning:** is fostered through interactive instructional activities and the flexible/variable due dates of required assignments. Lecturing is minimized and students will engage in a collective learning process. Students will be expected to complete the required work prior to coming to class and be prepared to discuss and engage in various learning activities both in and out of classes (reflective writing and/or art, group dialogue and debate, group learning-through- doing, and use of technology for collaborative learning as appropriate etc....).

**Guest Testimonials:** Students will have the privilege to listen to the stories and testimonials of peoples with lived experiences of oppression, mental illness, and challenges navigating the system. During these lectures, you will attend punctually, and practice respectful and active listening.

**On safety for discussion-as-learning:** While safety can never be promised for a classroom, we can collectively foster a space that is brave enough to grapple with complex social processes and beliefs that impact, our, individuals' and families' occupations and mental health. For guests and learners to be encouraged to share their experiences, thoughts, questions and opinions within a respectful environment, the following professional behaviors are expected throughout the course:

- We engage in controversial discussion with civility.
- Each of us needs to own our prejudices, intentions, and impacts.
- Discomfort is a part of learning. When you are uncomfortable with the challenge posed in the class, reflect on why this is so and reach out for support.
- Diversity of experiences, standpoints, beliefs and opinions makes us richer; that being said, not all opinions will be considered valid in this course. Opinions and propositions that violate human rights will be attended to by the teacher with the intention of promoting respectful and inclusive

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attitudes and behaviors.

- We can disagree and discuss ideas and opinions. We will not attack the whole person or invalidate people's experiences.
- *Je vous encourage à parler et écrire dans la langue de votre choix*

### Ground Rules for Participation

*Do not hurt yourself:* If you want to speak, please do in English or French. If you need to be quiet, please do. If you need to leave the class because you are triggered, please do without asking permission. If you need help, let me know. If you have valid reasons for extensions, just ask for one.

*Do not hurt others or the classroom:* Practice phrasing your questions and opinions in inquiring rather than judgmental ways. When you do judge, reflect on why you think what you think. If you don't have something useful or kind or inquiring to say, don't say it.

*Uphold rights:* We all equally have a right to space in the class. Whether you like the content or not, whether you want to study hard or not, whether you want to continue in OT or not. Grades are not the measure of engagement or the desire to learn, and we all choose and/or have the ability to be present here in different ways and for different reasons. We each have a right to participate as we see fit: quiet listening, posting on MyCourses, discussions with peers outside of class, tutorials with the teacher, as well as talking in class.

*Actively foster safety for others:* Think of how each one of you is responsible for and can make the class a braver space for each other. If your peer is quiet and has great ideas, offer to share them with the class on their behalf or encourage them to post on MyCourses anonymously. If you see a peer engaging in bullying or micro-aggressions then speak up, talk to them or the teacher. If you catch yourself saying or thinking something stigmatizing, don't just feel bad about it. Take the time to reflect on your opinion and where it might come from.

*Teacher's responsibility:* It is the teacher's responsibility to model all the above with and for you. Like you, the teacher will make mistakes, and we all need to unlearn stigmas that we have all been socialized into.

## CONTENT

This course covers four intertwined threads:

- 1) An intersectional understanding of mental health
- 2) Application of the person-environment-occupation model with an understanding of systems of oppression
- 3) Integration of critical reflection and strategies for one's own mental health

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- 4) Analysis and proposal of therapeutic activities that acknowledge systems of oppression and cultural understandings of health and belonging

### Course Materials

Articles, handouts, web links and other material will be posted on the course website.

**Copyright of course materials:** *Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.*

## EVALUATIONS

Refer to the *Learning Evaluation Guide* document for details at the start of the course.

**Assessment:** The [Policy on Assessment of Student Learning](#) exists to ensure fair and equitable academic assessment for all students and to protect students from excessive workloads. All students and instructors are encouraged to review this Policy, which addresses multiple aspects and methods of student assessment, e.g. the timing of evaluation due dates and weighting of final examinations.

Evaluations include 45-55% of individual work. If a student fails the total *individual* component, a remedial will be required.

Please note that final grades may be adjusted on a bell curve to distinguish between excellent, good, and average work and participation throughout the semester.

## COURSE REGULATIONS

**Course Accessibility:** As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, please do not hesitate to discuss them with me ([zachary.boychuck@mcgill.ca](mailto:zachary.boychuck@mcgill.ca)) and to seek support from [Student Accessibility and Achievement](#) (514-398-6009).

**Right to submit in English or French written work that is to be graded:** In accord with [McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.

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Conformément à la [Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill](#), chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

**Special Requirements for Course Completion and Program Continuation:** In order to pass the course, a grade of at least C+ (60%) must be obtained as a total course mark. Please refer to the appropriate sections in the undergraduate calendar on University regulations regarding final and supplemental examinations. This course falls under the regulation concerning individual and group evaluation. (Please refer to the 2023-2024 SPOT Rule & Regulations document found on the SPOT website for further details).

**Skills building attendance and participation mark:** Attendance and participation at all classes is required. A student cannot miss more than one (1) class without an acceptable excuse. Doing so will result in 10% of the total course mark being deducted.

**Consequences of not completing assignments as requested:** Students who do not hand in assignments on time will lose 10% of the total mark for the assignment for each day the project is overdue.

**Professional Conduct:** Professionalism and accountability are expected throughout the course of the semester. This includes the on-going respectful nature of teacher- student as well as student-student interactions.

**Dress Code:** Professionalism with respect to dressing is encouraged throughout the course of the semester. It is each student's responsibility to have appropriate attire during all class assignments and learning activities. When working with simulated patients learners must be dressed professionally.

**Technology in Class:** Your respectful attentive presence is expected, therefore while you are permitted to use your laptop in class, it is understood that you will not be using your laptop or cell-phone for social purposes during class time (e.g. email, msn, sms). Your cell phone should be on silence during class time and phone calls should only take place during the break or after class.

**Plagiarism/Academic Integrity:** McGill University and the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences value academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the [McGill University Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#) and the [Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Code of Conduct](#)

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*L'université McGill et Faculté de Médecine et des Sciences de la Santé attachent une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Ils incombent par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le [Université de McGill Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires](#) et [Faculté de médecine et des sciences de la santé](#)*

**In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.**

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