

# Syllabus

---

## PAIN ASSESSMENT IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

### General Information

**Course #:** POTH 663  
**Section #:** 12412  
**Term:** Winter  
**Year:** 2020

**Course pre-requisite:** The student must have at least a B.Sc. in a health-related discipline or permission from the instructor. It is assumed that participants have a basic knowledge of clinical patient assessment.

**Course Schedule:** Starting January 6, 2020 with new weekly modules available each Saturday at 9:00 A.M. EST. Date and times for study of the course material are at the discretion of the student. It is necessary to complete each module by the end of the week it is assigned, so as to keep up with the required discussions on the discussion board and contribute to group work.

**Number of credits:** 3

**Course Location:** Online via McGill myCourses (<https://mycourses2.mcgill.ca/>)

### Course Coordinator & Tutor:

**Lesley Norris-Singer, BSc PT MSc Rehab Science**  
Lecturer, School of Physical and Occupational Therapy,  
McGill University [lesley.singer@mcgill.ca](mailto:lesley.singer@mcgill.ca)

### Course Lecturers:

**Maria Dritsa, PhD**  
Clinical Psychologist, Noci Clinique  
Affiliate Member School of Physical and Occupational Therapy  
[maria.dritsa@nociclinique.ca](mailto:maria.dritsa@nociclinique.ca) (best way to be reached)  
Tel: 514-731-4146

**Céline Gélinas, RN, PhD**  
Associate Professor, Ingram School of Nursing, McGill University  
[celine.gelinas@mcgill.ca](mailto:celine.gelinas@mcgill.ca) (best way to be reached)  
Tel: 514-398-6157 or 514-340-8222 ext. 4645

**Sara Saunders, OT(c), erg, PhD**  
Assistant Professor [Professional]; Associate Director OT Program,  
School of Physical and Occupational Therapy, McGill University

[sara.saunders@mcgill.ca](mailto:sara.saunders@mcgill.ca)

Tel: 514-398-4400 ext. 09253

**Mark Ware, MBBS MRCP MSc**

Associate Professor, Family Medicine and **Anaesthesia**, McGill University;  
Director of Clinical Research, Alan Edwards Pain Management Unit, McGill  
University Health Centre

[Mark.ware@mcgill.ca](mailto:Mark.ware@mcgill.ca)

Tel: 514-934-1934 ext. 42784

## Course Overview

This interdisciplinary course was developed for the Certificate in Chronic Pain Management coordinated by the School of Physical & Occupational Therapy at McGill University. This course will assist learners in developing approaches to the global assessment of patients with pain (acute and chronic) and to guide diagnostic, care and treatment. This will include conventional health assessment techniques (interview and physical examination), pain measurement tools, psychological assessment, specific techniques (e.g. examination of lumbar spine, functional assessments), and the role and value of diagnostic studies.

## Learning Outcomes

This course will assist learners to develop approaches to the global assessment of the patient with pain (acute and chronic) to guide diagnosis, care and treatment and the identification of complex cases. This will include conventional health assessment techniques (interview and physical examination), pain assessment tools, psychosocial assessment, specific techniques (e.g. examination of lumbar spine, functionality assessments), and the role and value of diagnostic studies.

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

- Review definitions and types of pain (i.e., acute, chronic, nociceptive, neuropathic) and appreciate how assessment techniques differentiate between pain syndromes
- Conduct a health history, including medical, physical and psychosocial factors and comorbidities that could contribute to the perception and management of chronic pain
- Complete physical examination adapted to the patient's condition and pain problem, and recognize normal and abnormal findings
- Understand the psychometric properties (i.e. reliability, and validity) related to the use of pain assessment tools for their appropriate selection and optimal use in clinical practice with different populations from infancy to old age
- Identify psychosocial factors relevant to pain assessment
- Appreciate the role of objective functional assessments (e.g. six-minute walk; sit-to-stand test)
- Appreciate use of screening tools for common issues such as addiction risk and problematic drug use
- Understand when to request and how to interpret common diagnostic tests
- Use assessment findings for the establishment of the patient's care plan and treatment for pain management
- Conduct assessment of effectiveness of therapy
- Identify and address communication issues in patient assessment
- Have awareness of the importance of documentation of assessment findings

## Instructional Method

The course content is divided into 13 units. These consist of recorded lectures, reading assignments, online discussions, and group assignments by students. During the course, students will be expected to provide a case history, conduct a health assessment, request and consider diagnostic tests, and begin to develop the components of a treatment plan. They will also be expected to identify what health-related outcomes they will monitor to assess response to treatment, and to document and communicate their findings.

The objectives will be met using common pain conditions and syndromes in a case-based format, relevant to students' practice and experience.

The course will be offered through various educational strategies including online recorded Power Point presentations, weekly readings, case studies, the use of examples from student's own practices; the interdisciplinary nature of students, lecturers and tutor; and through the various interactions of online forums and chatrooms.

Course material requires a written case history prepared (including sufficient information to be able to conduct an assessment max 400 words) which will be used throughout the course. Moreover, all reading materials for this course will be provided to the student via *myCourses*.

## Course Content

Module	Section	Description	Teaching Methods
<b>January 6: Introduction to the course</b>			
<b>Assignment no 1 – due January 15 by midnight</b> <b>Assignment no 5 – Prepare a written case history prepared (including sufficient information to be able to conduct an assessment max 400 words) which will be used throughout the course – due January 19 by midnight</b>			
<b>1</b>	1.1	Introduction to the course ( <i>M. Ware</i> ) Understand the definitions of chronic pain and terms used in chronic pain assessment and management Know epidemiology of chronic pain Understand complexity of chronic pain	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings
	1.2	Review of types of pain ( <i>C. Gélinas</i> ) Review some definitions related to pain, discuss limitations for patients unable to self-report and suggest an alternative definition for pain. Describe the types of pain (acute, chronic, nociceptive, neuropathic), and be able to relate them to the patient condition	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings
	1.3	Psychosocial assessment: some general considerations ( <i>M. Dritsa</i> ) Review the biopsychosocial model of pain and implications for assessment	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings

		Know the purpose and indications for assessment of psychosocial and behavioral variables	
<b>January 11: Communication Techniques and the Interview</b>			
<b>Assignment no 2 – Client Evaluation – due date February 2 by midnight</b>			
<b>2</b>	2.1	Communicating with the patient ( <i>M. Ware</i> ) Appreciate the importance of practitioner-patient communication Learn ways to improve communication skills	Power Point Lecture Video review
	2.2	The Interview ( <i>M. Ware</i> ) Describe the elements to cover during a pain interview and obtain a complete pain-related history Identify various strategies (questions) to obtain the relevant information during the interview	PowerPoint lecture
<b>January 18: Overview of Clinical Exam from a Physician Perspective</b>			
<b>3</b>	3.1	The clinical examination ( <i>M. Ware</i> ) Understand the main steps of clinical examination (ie. Inspection, palpation, percussion, auscultations) Identify relevant systems to examine in a patient suffering from pain Describe normal versus abnormal assessment findings related to physical examination in a patient suffering from pain	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings
	3.2	Neuropathic pain ( <i>M. Ware</i> ) Appreciate how sensory testing is important in the diagnosis of neuropathic pain	PowerPoint lecture
	3.3	The back examination ( <i>M. Ware</i> ) Understand and apply the principles of the musculoskeletal examination	PowerPoint lecture, video
<b>January 25: Psychometrics of Pain Assessment Tools</b>			
<b>Assignment no 3a – Pain Assessment Tools (Submit tools and readings for approval) – to be submitted to Prof. Céline Gélinas by February 16 by midnight</b>			
<b>Assignment no 3b - Pain Assessment Tools due March 29 by midnight</b>			
<b>4</b>	4.1	Part I – Reliability ( <i>C. Gélinas</i> ) Describe the main steps of scale development Describe the term reliability Identify various strategies to test reliability and relate them to different types of pain assessment tools Adequately interpret coefficients related to reliability testing	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings
	4.2	Part II – Validity ( <i>C. Gélinas</i> ) Describe the term validity in accordance with the current measurement guidelines	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings

		<p>Identify various strategies to test validity and relate them to different types of pain assessment tools</p> <p>Identify strengths and limitations of these strategies</p>	
<b>February 1: Pain Measurement in Non-Verbal Patients</b>			
5	5.1	<p>Example with CPOT Illustrate the process of the development, validation, and implementation in clinical practice of a behavioural pain scale (C. Gélinas)</p>	Power Point Lecture, Assigned readings
<b>February 8: Clinical Exam from a Psychosocial Perspective – Part 1</b>			
6	6.1	<p>Review of psychological factors related to the development of chronic pain and disability (M. Dritsa)</p> <p>Know the most common psychological comorbidities</p> <p>Identify and address patient's reluctance for a psychological evaluation</p>	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings, case study
	6.2	<p>Conducting a clinical interview (M. Dritsa)</p> <p>Know the type of information collected during a clinical interview</p> <p>Ability to conduct a clinical interview focused on the assessment of cognitive, affective, and behavioural variables involved in pain perception and management</p> <p>Know how to use this information in better understanding the patient's response to pain</p>	PowerPoint lecture
	6.3	<p>Pain behaviours (M. Dritsa)</p> <p>Know the rationale for assessing pain behaviours</p> <p>Know the steps involved in formal assessment protocols</p> <p>Know how to adapt these protocols in clinical settings</p>	PowerPoint lecture
<b>February 15: Clinical Exam from a Psychosocial Perspective – Part 2</b>			
7	7.1	<p>Measuring pain beliefs and coping (M. Dritsa)</p> <p>Know the most common pain belief questionnaires and their limitations</p> <p>Know the most common coping questionnaires and their limitations</p>	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings
	7.2	<p>Assessing emotion and psychopathology (M. Dritsa)</p> <p>Know the most common tools for assessing emotions and distress</p> <p>Know their limitations in chronic pain populations</p> <p>Know the most common assessment tools for measuring psychopathology, indications for use and limitations in chronic pain populations</p>	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings

	7.3	Screening tools for measuring medication misuse and abuse ( <i>M. Dritsa</i> ) Know how to use drug abuse and misuse screening measures and their limitations	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings
<b>February 22: Functional assessment: An occupational and physical therapy perspective</b>			
<b>Assignment no 4 – Administration and Critical Evaluation of a Psychosocial Questionnaire due April 12 by midnight</b>			
8	8.1	Functional Assessment ( <i>L. Singer</i> ) Know some examples of a functional assessment Able to conduct a functional assessment	PowerPoint lecture, Assigned readings
	8.2	Occupational therapy approach to pain assessment ( <i>Sara S.</i> )	PowerPoint lecture, Assigned readings
<b>February 29: Spring Break</b>			
<i>Break</i>			
<b>March 7: Special Populations</b>			
9	9.1	Pain in older patients	PowerPoint lecture, Videos, assigned readings
<b>March 14: Diagnostic Investigations</b>			
<b>Assignment no 5b – Client Case due date April 26 by midnight</b>			
10	10.1	Lab and imaging tests ( <i>M. Ware</i> ) Know what diagnostic tests are useful for what condition Appreciate the utility of various diagnostic tests in pain assessment Know when to consider diagnostic tests	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings
	10.2	Neurological tests ( <i>M. Ware</i> ) Know what diagnostic tests are useful for what condition Appreciate the utility and limitations of various diagnostic tests in pain assessment Recognize when to consider diagnostic tests	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings
<b>March 21: Integrating Assessment and Treatment</b>			
11	11.1	Integrating assessment data and treatment planning ( <i>M. Dritsa</i> ) Know how to integrate psychosocial assessment data to physical and medical evaluation data Know how to use assessment data to match patient with treatment	PowerPoint Lecture
<b>March 28: Documentation</b>			
12	12.1	Documentation of assessment ( <i>M. Ware</i> ) Understand the need for complete documentation of the pain assessment	PowerPoint lecture, assigned readings
	12.2	Critique your own clinical note	Self-reflection

#### April 4: Course Review and Summary

13	13.1	Interdisciplinary Perspective	Discussion and assigned readings
----	------	-------------------------------	----------------------------------

## Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment	Due date	% of final grade
Discussions/Participation	All term (within 2 weeks of posting)	15
Assignment 1 Introduction Video	January 15	5
Assignment 5a – Case History	January 19	5
Assignment 2 - Client Evaluation Activity	February 2	5
Assignment 3a -Proposal (submission of tools)	February 16	2
Assignment 3b – Pain Assessment Tools	March 29	18
Assignment 4 – Administration and Critical Evaluation of a psychosocial Questionnaire	April 12	25
Assignment 5b – Case Presentation	April 26	25

### Discussions/Participation (15%)

You are required to participate in a minimum of 3 of the discussion forums. These forums can be found under **Discussions** on the course website.

In the 3 Discussion Forums of your choice, you should make a minimum of 2 posts to receive your grades. One of these two posts will be your response to the topic of the initial discussion and the other post will reflect your responses to your colleagues in that specific forum. This means that you will have created a total of at least 6 posts in the Discussion Forums.

In addition, these posts must include your own point of view to a discussion thread or theme based on your personal experience and your own learning from course materials and other research (you will cite these materials on your post). In addition to being thoughtful, please try to be succinct and limit your posts to no more than 300-500 words each.

Each forum has a value of 5% for a total of 15%.

- Content and relevance - 3.5%
- Timeliness, adherence to instructions - 1.5%

Students who do not engage in a minimum of 3 online debates will not be allowed to receive these marks.

### Assignment 1 introduction video (5%) due January 15

This is based on posting a short video in week 1 of your introduction to the class telling us about your discipline, area you work and perhaps a fun fact about yourself or a pastime you enjoy.

### Assignment 2 Client Evaluation (5%) due February 2

This is a role play activity exploring how to evaluate a client/patient when meeting them for the first time. This activity will be done in pairs. You can work with a fellow classmate or with a colleague. By the end of week 2 you must notify the tutor about who you will be working with. Select a case from week 1 or come up with one of your own. Complete a client evaluation in 25 minutes or less. You may



choose the most appropriate method of communication to complete the evaluation based on what is most suitable for you and your partner, for example; skype, phone, live, chat, email, etc. One person will act as the client; the other will act as the clinician. You are expected to provide a reflection article about your experience and post it on the discussion board space in week 2

### Assignment 3 – Pain Assessment Tools (20%) due February 16 (3a) and March 29 (3b) for Prof. Celine Gelinas

This written assignment will be completed in teams of 2-3 students. Students will select two different pain assessment tools as well as a maximum of 2-3 validation articles per tool. The pain assessment tools can be, for example, an intensity scale, a multidimensional questionnaire, an observational scale (e.g. behaviors) or a screening tool measuring the same construct (e.g., pain intensity, pain fear, pain disability). It may also be facilitating to select tools that have been developed and validated for the same population (e.g., back pain, cancer, musculoskeletal, postoperative) and context of care (e.g., acute care, chronic care, rehabilitation).

The students will prepare a summary of 5 pages maximum (1.5-line spacing excluding cover page, tables, figures and reference list). The students will describe the content of the selected pain assessment tools, their purpose of use, the population and context for which it is intended, and the interpretation of scores; briefly discuss the reliability and validity findings by identifying the strengths and limitations. In conclusion, they will make recommendations for clinical use of these tools.

Assignment 3 Marking Rubric	
Criteria	Marks (%)
Sending of tool choice and articles by deadline for approval	2
Description of tools and their characteristics (purpose, clientele, context, scores)	3
Description and discussion of reliability strategies and results	6
Description and discussion of validity strategies and results	6
Recommendations for use of tools in clinical practice	2
Adherence to number of pages requested and general presentation	1
Total	20

### Assignment 4 - Administration and Critical Evaluation of a Psychosocial Questionnaire (25%) due April 12 for Prof. Maria Dritsa

For this assignment you will choose one of the questionnaires reviewed during the lectures on assessment of psychosocial factors. The questionnaire can be one that you currently use in your practice or one that you would like to integrate in your assessment procedures. Complete the questionnaire from the perspective of a patient that generally consults your practice. Share the answers to the following questions on the discussion board. Answers to questions 3 and 4 should be limited to a maximum of 500 words each. Please include references where appropriate.

**\*\*Please note this discussion assignment is not part of your Discussion/Participation marks for the course.**

1. What was your overall experience?

2. Did you have trouble understanding some of the questions?
3. What are some of the limitations of your questionnaire (your answer should be based on the literature and on your personal experience completing the questionnaire). As discussed during the lecture content validity is context specific (ex. Somatic items of the Beck depression Inventory in chronic pain patients). Do you have any concerns about content validity of your questionnaire given the specific context of your practice?
4. While questionnaires offer valuable information, they can never measure contextual information or replace clinical judgement. What specific contextual information helps you use the questionnaire you completed in a valid way?

Note: If you would like to complete the exercise with a questionnaire not covered during the lectures please submit the questionnaire to the course instructor ([maria.dritsa@nociclinique.ca](mailto:maria.dritsa@nociclinique.ca)) for approval.

### Assignment 5 - Case Presentation (25 %) due January 19(5a) and April 26(5b) for Prof. Lesley Norris- Singer

The case presentation spans the semester. The case you have chosen for this course will be the same one submitted at the end of week 2 (5%). The goal is to complete the assessment of your anonymous patient/client. Although this is an individual assignment, you may want to consult another classmate of your choice for some details for a more interdisciplinary approach to the case.

The final deliverable should be a maximum of 20 PowerPoint slides. presentation summarizing the complete assessment of the client case. (You may add important brief information to the notes section of the slide). Please copy and paste your chosen case at the beginning of the presentation and note this will not be included in your final slide count.

Illustrate the components of the assessment including; the history, what the physical assessment will look like, the psychosocial assessment, the pain assessment tools you would use for this client , any test or imaging that either has been done or you feel would be important for you, and the interdisciplinary roles, as it pertains to your client case. You can improvise for information not included in the case you have submitted to include something you feel would be relevant. On the final slide list in a table what diagnostic test(s) (if any) you would consider if you were seeing this patient for the first time OR if you were seeing them in follow-up as well as:

- What advantages would such test(s) give you in your assessment?
- What would be the limitations or concerns about the test(s)?
- Make a single table of these tests along with your reasons for conducting/not conducting them.

Review the topics of the course to ensure you are using all the appropriate information for a complete evaluation of your client.

Assignment 5 Rubric		
Exigences		Points
	Inclusion of all necessary components	9
	Flow of Evaluation	4

	Interdisciplinary Content	5
	Presentation Style	4
	Length of Presentation	3
	<b>Totale</b>	<b>25</b>

## Late Penalties

Assignments which are received late will be subject to a penalty of 2% per day. Assignments which are more than 1 week late will not be graded and the student will receive 0 for the assignment. Extensions may be granted for good reason provided the instructor is notified in the first couple of days after the assignment is provided (according to outline). Extensions will not be granted the day the assignment is due.

## McGill Policy Statements

McGill University values **academic integrity**. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).

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.

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

© 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.

As the instructor of this course I endeavour to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#), 514-398-6009.