

THE PRESENTATION REQUIREMENT

As you are learning, the study of addictions has focused primarily on alcohol and other psychoactive drugs, and most of my lectures and our readings have that focus. But human beings often do many things to excess, and the concept of addiction is often applied to many of these other human activities. This Presentation requirement gives you the opportunity to choose one such activity and to investigate what is currently known about it and see whether it makes sense within an addictions framework. This requirement also provides you an opportunity to work with other students. The purpose of this exercise is to strengthen your capacity for critical thinking by exploring in depth a complex issue, and to develop a deeper appreciation of how important scientific research is to enhancing our understanding.

If you are reading this page, it probably means I have initiated the process of assigning each of you to a specific focus, organizing you into groups of 3 to 5 students who can work together to share ideas and resources and to prepare a Powerpoint slideshow for class presentation.

Here are the possibilities from which you will choose:

- Gambling
- Shopping/Spending
- Eating/Food (not including the DSM eating disorders)
- Electronic devices (Internet/video games/texting)
- Sex
- Exercise

These presentations will be the major focus of our last few classes, in which we will look at the question of whether involvement in other, “non-chemical” behaviors, might be appropriately thought of as forms of addiction. Each group will focus on one such behavior, and your task is to help us determine whether it represents a form of addictive behavior. The presentation itself should consist of two separate pieces, and while the entire group should take responsibility for the entire presentation (especially the last bullet below), you can also divide up areas of responsibility by having each member of your group focus on a different bullet:

Description:

- Definitions, symptoms, diagnostic criteria, brief case studies, different patterns or types, etc.

[There are many excellent examples on the Internet of real people discussing their “addiction”; if you can find one, and if it is not too long (maximum 4-5 minutes), feel free to include it in your presentation.]

- Consideration of problems or difficulties or controversies surrounding its description and “diagnosis” or how it is classified
- Presentation of facts and statistics about incidence and prevalence, demographics, frequency of different “symptoms” and negative outcomes, co-morbidity with other “addictions” or mental disorders, persistence over time, etc.

Analysis:

- Presentation of a clear framework for thinking about what "addiction" means and how we determine whether some pattern of behavior deserves to be called "addictive"
- (Optional) Discussion of theories of causation and/or methods of treatment and prevention – this is NOT the focus of the presentation, and if included, should be brief

- Using an addictions framework, your conclusion as to whether the activity can/should be regarded as a form of addiction—you do not have to take a definite position, meaning you can present arguments both for and against (you may certainly make mention of the judgments of others, but you should also include your own judgments)

As much of a focus as possible on what can be substantiated with scientific evidence and/or expert opinion. Be sure to also think critically about the information you locate and to focus as much as possible on what is known and on what can be substantiated with scientific evidence. The field of addictions suffers from an excess of exaggeration, myth, ideology, personal bias, and what I like to call "psycho-babble"—quality, not quantity, counts!

Altogether, for your Description and Analysis, you should rely on anywhere from 4 to 8 different references you have located to help you with your presentation; although quality does matter, unlike the Term Paper you may also consider using good quality information you locate on the Internet. In your presentation, cite your sources carefully, and provide a References list, in proper APA style, at the end.

Your presentation in class will be in the form of a PowerPoint slideshow. You will present for roughly 20-25 minutes, which typically requires 15-20 individual slides. Slides should be succinct, with a clear heading and 4-6 bullets/sub-bullets of text per slide, which might involve as few as 40-50 words of actual text, and certainly not more than 100-125 words; use font sizes of between 24 and 32, and use a sans-serif font such as Arial or Tahoma or Calibri. The first slide should be a Title slide, and the last slide should be a References slide. You do not need an Abstract slide, and you do not need running heads. Roughly 2/3 of your content slides will focus on Description, and 1/3 on Analysis. If you are so inclined, you can be creative with transitions and animations, but focus on content, not appearance.

You will not be graded on your presentation in class, but you should still put time and effort into it, rehearsing it ahead of time, to make it as interesting and informative for us as possible. In class, you will get feedback from me and from your fellow students through the discussion that follows your presentation. You will then go back to your PowerPoint, make revisions as needed, and print it by selecting the Outline option under "Settings" when you click File>Print. The Outline version of your revised presentation must be submitted at the next class that follows your presentation.

The Presentation is worth up to 70 points, as follows:

- Definitions/examples = up to 24
- Diagnosis/classification = up to 8
- Statistics = 10
- Addictions framework = 8
- Conclusion = up to 12
- References = 8
- Bonus for overall quality of presentation outline (good writing, clear organization) = up to 5

When you submit your outline, I will ask you to confirm that you contributed equally to it, or to acknowledge that you might have contributed less than the others.