



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore



**Franklin University Switzerland
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Forum-Nexus Program
Course Syllabus**

**PSY 497-SIS
Mental Health Issues affecting Migrants and Refugees
in the European Union**

Course Description

This course examines mental health issues affecting migrants and refugees in the European Union (EU), with a focus on Spain, Italy, France, and the Netherlands. Students will explore the psychological impact of forced displacement, trauma, acculturation stress, discrimination, and legal uncertainty. The course will analyze how European mental health systems respond to migrant and refugee needs, including culturally competent care, trauma-informed interventions, language barriers, and access to services. Students will also evaluate EU-wide frameworks, humanitarian responses, and ethical responsibilities of mental health professionals working with vulnerable populations. The course combines psychological theory, public health perspectives, and comparative policy analysis to better understand mental health inequalities across Europe.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will:

- Analyze the key mental health challenges experienced by migrants and refugees in the European Union.
- Evaluate how trauma, displacement, and post-migration stress affect psychological wellbeing across different migrant populations.
- Assess barriers to accessing mental health care in EU member states, including legal, linguistic, and cultural challenges.
- Compare national approaches to refugee mental health care in Spain, Italy, France, and the Netherlands.
- Examine the role of EU institutions, NGOs, and humanitarian organizations in addressing migrant mental health needs.
- Develop evidence-based recommendations for improving culturally appropriate mental health care delivery for migrants and refugees in Europe.

Course Requirements

This course requires independent research, organization, and academic discipline. Students are expected to complete the required and additional readings in pace with their assignments and the course outline. Each student is required to participate in a minimum of three professional visits and eight independent cultural visits (ICVs). Students are expected to meet with their SIS Coordinator regularly throughout the course for consultation and assistance. Please note that your SIS Coordinator may ask you to attend a regularly-scheduled class when that material is relevant. Grading will consist of four essay assignments, a midterm, an oral presentation, and a final, handwritten exam.

Participation in “Europe Today: An International IQ Seminar”

All students also attend **Europe Today: An International IQ Seminar**, a daily session with occasional distinguished guest lectures. In this seminar, students learn about the culture of each country, gain an understanding of essential European geography and current events, discuss their experiences and cross-cultural interactions, get language tips, and identify ways to have an even more immersive study abroad experience. The material covered in the seminar complements the syllabus for this course, and there will be some exam questions based on the seminar. Knowledge from and participation in the International IQ Seminar is factored into the grade for this course.

Assignments and Grading:

Essays

After completing the reading assignment for the unit, students are expected to write 900-1300 word essays responding fully to the prompts listed below. Students are expected to make explicit reference to the readings and to cite their references properly (Chicago footnotes style). An essay should have an introduction and conclusion.

- **Migrant and Refugee Mental Health in the EU:**
Assess how Spain and France have approached mental healthcare for migrants and refugees. What are the main challenges in providing accessible and culturally appropriate mental health services to these populations?
- **EU-Wide Mental Health Policies vs. National Autonomy:**
The EU has implemented several mental health initiatives, yet healthcare remains largely a national responsibility. To what extent should the EU have a stronger role in shaping mental health policy across member states? Provide specific examples to support your argument.
- **Digital Innovation in Mental Health Services:**
Discuss the impact of telepsychiatry and digital mental health solutions in France and the Netherlands. How have these technologies improved access to care, and what challenges (e.g., privacy, data security, and patient engagement) still need to be addressed?
- **Policy Recommendations and Ethical Responsibilities:**
The EU promotes human rights and inclusion, yet migrant mental health remains a major challenge across member states. Based on EU reports and assigned readings, propose a set of recommendations to strengthen migrant and refugee mental health support across Europe. Consider ethical responsibilities of psychologists, funding priorities, and long-term integration strategies.

Presentation

Deliver a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation summarizing the main findings of your independent study. You should reflect not just on the material from the essays, but also from all the assigned readings.

Presentations are expected to be synthetic, and placing all the knowledge learned in context. After your presentation, the professor will ask questions to assess your knowledge.

Midterm & Final Exams

The midterm and final exams will assess your overall progress throughout the study abroad semester. You will be asked not only to demonstrate knowledge based on the readings, but also to make connections between the various course units and reflect holistically on the knowledge you have gained in this independent study.

Required Textbook

UNHCR / WHO Toolkit Guidance. *Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support.* ([link](#))

World Health Organization (WHO Europe) (2023). *Mental health of refugees and migrants: Risk and protective factors and access to care.* ([link](#))

World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe. (2025). *Strengthening Mental Health in the WHO European Region in 2024: A Year in Review.* ([link](#))

WHO European framework for action on mental health 2021–2025 ([link](#))

Additional Readings

European Commission. (2024). *Better Together: Co-creating the Future of Mental Health.* ([link](#))

Mental Health Europe. (2025). *The European Parliament Gears Up to Work on Mental Health in 2025.* ([link](#))

Ipsos. (2024). *Health Service Report 2024: Mental Health Seen as the Biggest Health Problem.* ([link](#))

The Guardian. (2025). *'We're Witnesses to the Horror of the World': The One-of-a-Kind Italian Clinic Treating Refugees for Trauma.* ([link](#))

Course Outline:

Module 1: Introduction to Migration and Mental Health in the EU

- Overview of EU health policies and initiatives.

Module 2: Spain – Recent Developments in Mental Health Care

- National strategies and funding allocations for mental health services.
- Tackling Social Exclusion in Europe

Module 3: Italy – Community-Based Mental Health Models

- The Trieste model of mental health care and its global influence.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of community-based programs.
- Historical context: The Basaglia Law and its impact.
- Innovations in refugee mental health care: The Samifo Centre in Rome. ([link](#))

Module 4: Mental Health Care for Migrant and Refugee Populations

- Challenges faced by migrant adolescents and associated psychosis risks.
- Best practices in providing culturally sensitive mental health services.

Module 5: EU-Wide Initiatives and Policy Frameworks

- The EU-PROMENS project and capacity building in mental health. ([link](#))
- The Pan-European Mental Health Coalition's objectives and activities. ([link](#))
- Financing and funding mental health care services

Module 6: France – Policy Reforms and Service Delivery

- National mental health plans and recent policy reforms.
- Integration of mental health services into primary care.

Module 7: The Netherlands – Digital Innovations in Mental Health

- Adoption of telemedicine and digital psychiatry.
- National policies supporting digital mental health solutions.
- Emerging technologies in mental health care.
- Ethical considerations and challenges in digital psychiatry.

Module 8: Future Directions in EU Mental Health Policy

- Anticipated policy developments and funding opportunities.
- The impact of upcoming EU regulations on national mental health services.

Module 9: Trauma, Stress and Psychological Vulnerability

- Trauma before migration vs trauma during migration vs post-migration stress
- PTSD, depression, anxiety disorders, and somatic symptoms
- Resilience and protective factors

Components of Final Grade

Essay #1	10%
Essay #2	10%
Essay #3	10%
Essay #4	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Final Presentation	20%

Grading Scale

93-100 %	A
90-92.9 %	A-
87-89.9 %	B+
83-86.9 %	B
80-82.9 %	B-
77-79.9 %	C+
73-76.9 %	C
70-72.9%	C-
67-69.9 %	D+
63-66.9 %	D
60-62.9 %	D-
Below 60 %	F

Academic Integrity

Franklin University Switzerland, and Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore place a high value on the integrity, good conduct, and academic honesty of all students. Students are expected to maintain high

standards of academic integrity at all times. Any instance of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will result in a grade of F for the course.

AI Policy

The use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Dall-e, Grammarly, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Brainstorming and refining your creative ideas for specific writing assignments;
- Finding information on relevant topics related to the course;
- Checking spelling on your writing assignments and presentations.

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Generating a draft of your writing assignments and final presentation.
- Writing entire sentences, paragraphs or responses to complete class assignments.

In sum, any content that you hand in must not be generated by AI software, but it has to represent your intellectual contribution. Unauthorized use of artificial intelligence tools to write your paper or disguise plagiarized work is considered unauthorized assistance in this course and will result in a failing grade on the assignment.