

AIM INSTITUTE | Mental Health and the Church Course Syllabus

Course Term: Twelve weeks; every Tuesday from January 28- April 22, 2025

Time: 7:00-8:00 PM EST

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Many people inside and outside of our churches experience severe mental health challenges. This class provides an overview of mental health issues and how the church can be a source of support for those who are suffering from them. It is designed to equip believers to be able to identify mental health problems, provide safe and beneficial interventions and collaborate with mental health professionals. The roles of counseling, medications, scripture, prayer and spiritual warfare are discussed, and we take a deep dive into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (fifth addition) to understand the difference between various disorders. The intended outcome of the class is for the students to become more effective in providing hope, encouragement and a supportive community for those who experience psychiatric disorders. Students will choose an area of mental health that interests them and write a report on it.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will develop an understanding of mental health disorders from a biblical perspective.
2. Students will learn how to provide support for those who experience symptoms of psychiatric disorders or substance abuse.
3. Students will know how to intervene when they encounter another person who is in a psychiatric crisis.
4. Students will be able to integrate prayer, scripture reading and deliverance into the help that they provide for others.
5. Students will be able to help the churches of which they are a part to become a supportive community for those who experience mental health disorders.

INSTRUCTOR: James Ruark

James likes to quote Augustine of Hippo-- "Faith seeks to understand." He has spent most of his life learning and teaching what Christians believe and why they believe it. He received his bachelor's degree in history from Calvin College and his master's degree in Christian apologetics from Liberty University. He has worked as a middle school teacher, and work for over 25 years in the mental system. He also worked in a ministry to the homeless and vulnerable adults before taking his current position as bereavement coordinator at a hospice. He has been an elder at River of God Church in Byron Center,

Michigan since 2005. He and his wife, Lori, have been married since 1992. They have four adult daughters and six grandchildren.

COURSE FORMAT

This directed study format enables you to receive college level instruction while studying at home. (Note, AIM Institute does not offer accredited college credits.) Course elements include:

- Weekly video assignments.
- Required textbook reading assignments.
- Contact time with the instructor and classmates by means of a weekly Zoom debrief classroom.
- Study questions for your personal benefit as well as preparation for the weekly debrief.
- The course will be graded as pass or fail. Bear in mind your weekly preparation will have a direct bearing on how much you gain from the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- The first of twelve weeks beginning Tuesday, January 28 to April 22 (US Eastern Standard Time).
- You will receive a Zoom invite by email for each debrief.
- Preparation, including watching the lecture videos, can be done at any time before the debrief.
- Completion of the course requires a research project on a mental health issue of your choice. The instructor will provide a template and guidance for completing the project.
- A study guide with the schedule of weekly assignments and the course project will be sent to you after you are registered.

REQUIREMENTS

- This is an intensive course; students should plan to participate in all class sessions.
- Complete all course reading, watch videos, and writing assignments.
- Complete course project by week 12.

TEXTBOOKS

Friendship Counseling. Baldwin, Carol Lesser. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988.

A bibliography with additional books will be provided in the study guide.

REGISTRATION

The online registration form must be completed to attend this course. The registration form is available by [CLICKING HERE](#).

For more information, contact James Ruark: jisamazed@aol.com