

**NOVA COLLEGE-WIDE COURSE CONTENT SUMMARY**  
**PSY 260 – PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE (3 CR.)**

**Course Description**

Examines how psychoactive drugs interact with the body and the brain. Explores the use of prescription psychoactive drugs to treat mental disorders. Explores the use of psychoactive drugs in American culture. Differentiates use and abuse of psychoactive substances so that symptoms of abuse can be identified in a person. Investigates various treatments of substance abuse. Lecture 3 hours per week.

**General Course Purpose**

This course is a one-semester course in the practical application of psychological principles to the use and abuse of psychoactive drugs. Students will learn about the effects of different types of psychoactive drugs on the human body, the difference between use and abuse, the social factors that contribute to drug use and abuse, and treatment options for drug addicts. The course is designed primarily for individuals in the health professions, psychology majors, and others interested in the understanding the different symptoms of psychoactive drug use and their treatments.

**Course Prerequisites/Corequisites**

Prerequisite: PSY 200, or division approval.

**Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe how psychoactive drugs affect humans physically, mentally, and behaviorally.
- Understand how alcohol/drugs affect neurotransmission and brain structures.
- Summarize the various pharmacological, psychological, social and emotional affects of drugs within major drug categories.
- Apply the basic vocabulary of technical terms used in psychopharmacology and the clinical treatment of substance abuse.
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of psychoactive drug use (both legal and illegal) in American culture.
- Understand the major theories of addiction and models of chemical dependency in understanding the process of addiction and recovery.
- Identify the various treatment models and approaches utilized in the field of substance abuse treatment with both substance abusers and their families.
- Outline the advantages of the utilization of psychotropic medications in treating clients with co-occurring disorders (substance abuse and mental health).
- Identify medications used in the treatment of mental disorders and evaluate pros and cons of use of these medications and consider risk of abuse and dependency.
- Apply critical thinking, writing, and presentation skills to the field of psychology.

**Major Topics to be Included**

Pharmacokinetics

Drug Tolerance and Dependence

Most commonly used stimulants, depressants, hallucinogens, and psychotropics.

Media Influences on Psychoactive Drug Use and Abuse

Cultural Influences on Psychoactive Drug Use and Abuse

Theories of addiction

Classical and Holistic Treatments