

Fundamentals of Dialectical Behavior Therapy

GSAPP Course # 18:821:612:01

Spring 2026

Course Instructor

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Part-Time Lecturer at GSAPP

Licensed Clinical Psychologist & GSAPP Alum

Pronouns: she/her/hers

Course Assistants

-Alma Bitran, M.S.: alma.bitran@rutgers.edu

Pronouns : she/her/hers

-Sofia Moore, B.A.: sofia.moore@rutgers.edu

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Office Hours: By appointment (please email): julia.brillante@rutgers.edu

Course Time: Fridays 9:00am – 11:45am

Location: GSAPP Room A317

Website: <https://canvas.rutgers.edu>

Course Overview

This course is designed to familiarize students with Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), an evidence based psychosocial treatment initially developed for suicidal individuals with borderline personality disorder (BPD). Students will be taught the primary theories, principles, and strategies that inform DBT. Students will also become familiar with the latest research on DBT for BPD. We will also discuss considerations when applying DBT with diverse populations and with adolescents (DBT-A). Lecture, demonstration, multimedia applications, and group discussion will be used as the primary teaching methods. DBT is a complex treatment with multiple facets. It is therefore not expected that a student will have full competence to deliver the treatment as a result of just this one course. However, this course will provide sufficient background and serve as a necessary prerequisite before using DBT in an applied setting.

Profession-Wide Competencies Addressed in the Course

Intervention, Consultation, Individual and Cultural Diversity

Required Readings

1. Linehan, M.M. (1993). *Cognitive behavioral treatment of borderline personality disorder*. New York: Guilford Press.
2. Linehan, M.M. (2015). *DBT skills training manual* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.
 - a. Skills training handouts and worksheets available online with purchase of manual.
3. Other required readings (e.g., articles or book chapters) will be made available via Canvas.

***Optional* Supplemental Reading**

1. Swenson, C. R. (2016). *DBT principles in action: Acceptance, change, and dialectics*. New York: Guilford Press
2. Koerner, K. (2012). *Doing Dialectical Behavior Therapy: A practical guide*. New York: Guilford Press.
3. Miller, A.L., Rathus, J.H., & Linehan, M. M. (2007). *Dialectical Behavior Therapy for suicidal adolescents*. New York: Guilford Press.

Course Requirements

● Class Attendance and Participation	(25%)
● Practice Assignments	(15%)
● Group Presentation- on 3/13, 3/27, or 4/3	(30%)
● Final Paper – due 5/1/26	(30%)

Class Participation and Practice Assignments

Active class participation is essential. It is critical that you come to class, on time, having completed all the reading and ready to actively participate. Your participation ensures that the class will be enriching to all of us and that you will successfully acquire knowledge of DBT. Participation includes in-class and outside-of-class assignments and exercises (e.g., roleplays) as they relate to assessments, strategies, and techniques covered in the course material. Occasionally, information and announcements will be sent to you via email in-between classes. Please be sure to check your email at least once every other day

Group Presentation:

As a class, you will break into five groups. Each group will be asked to provide a 45-60 minute presentation on one of the DBT skills modules (mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation, and distress tolerance- 2 groups for this module). In this presentation, you should provide an overview of the module and teach specific skills to the class as a DBT skills trainer might teach to a group. Experiential exercises are required. Group assignments will be determined by early to mid February.

Final Paper:

You have considerable latitude as to what the paper may consist of, but it must deepen your knowledge of the science and practice of DBT. An approximate length for the paper is 6-8 pages. The paper must reference *at least* six empirical journal articles. The paper should be double spaced and written in APA 7th edition style. The expectation is that the paper is written entirely by you; the use of AI is prohibited. **Paper topics need to be cleared with me by 4/3/26.**

The following are just some examples of possible paper topics:

- A critical analysis of the empirical standing of DBT
- A comparison of DBT to one of three other treatments for BPD (schema-focused therapy, transference-focused therapy, mentalization based therapy)
- DBT case conceptualization of a particular client with BPD (or emotion dysregulation)
- A critical analysis of the support of DBT for marginalized populations (racially-minoritized clients, gender-diverse clients) and future directions
- A review of literature supporting DBT for eating disorders and discussing the application of this adaptation

The paper is due via email by 5/1/26 at 5pm. Please send it to me in Microsoft Word format and include your last name in document title. Late papers will have points deducted.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS (subject to change)

Class 1:

1/23/26 Course Overview, Introduction to BPD & DBT; Research Review

Linehan, M. M. (1993), Chapter 1

Linehan, M. M., & Wilks, C. R. (2015). The course and evolution of Dialectical Behavior Therapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 69, 97-110.

Gunderson, J. G. (2009). Borderline personality disorder: Ontogeny of a diagnosis. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 166, 530-539.

The following readings are optional for understanding the evidence base:

Harned, M. S., Coyle, T. N., & Garcia, N. M. (2022). The inclusion of ethnoracial, sexual, and gender minority groups in randomized controlled trials of dialectical behavior therapy: A systematic review of the literature. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*.

Rizvi, S. L., Bitran, A. M., Oshin, L. A., Yin, Q., & Ruork, A. K. (2024). The state of the science: Dialectical behavior therapy. *Behavior Therapy*, 55(6), 1233-1248.

Kliem, S., Kröger, C., & Kosfelder, J. (2010). Dialectical behavior therapy for borderline personality disorder: A meta-analysis using mixed-effects modeling. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 78(6), 936.

Valentine, S. E., Bankoff, S. M., Poulin, R. M., Reidler, E. B., & Pantalone, D. W. (2015). The use of dialectical behavior therapy skills training as stand-alone treatment: A systematic review of the treatment outcome literature. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 71(1), 1-20.

Class 2:

1/30/26 Biosocial Theory

Linehan, M. M. (1993), Chapter 2

Masland, S. R., Victor, S. E., Peters, J. R., Fitzpatrick, S., Dixon-Gordon, K. L., Bettis, A. H., ... & Rizvi, S. L. (2023). Destigmatizing borderline personality disorder: A call to action for psychological science. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 18(2), 445-460.

Oshin, L. A., & Rizvi, S. L. (2024). Considerations for the use of dialectical behavior therapy for individuals experiencing oppression. *Psychotherapy*.

The following paper is optional for elaboration on the biosocial theory from a developmental perspective:

Crowell, S.E., Beauchaine, T.P., & Linehan, M.M. (2009). A biosocial developmental model of borderline personality: Elaborating and extending Linehan's theory. *Psychological Bulletin, 135*, 495-510.

Class 3:

2/6/26 Beginning Treatment: Assumptions, assessment, structure, & targets
Linehan, M. M. (1993), Chapters 4-6

Class 4:

2/13/26 Beginning Treatment: Structure & Commitment
Linehan, M. M. (1993), Chapter 14

Linehan, M.M. (1993), Chapter 9, pages 284-291

Pierson, A. M., Arunagiri, V., & Bond, D. M. (2022). "You didn't cause racism, and you have to solve it anyways": Antiracist adaptations to dialectical behavior therapy for White therapists. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, 29*(4), 796-815.

Class 5:

2/20/26 Change Strategies I: Behavioral Principles, Behavioral Assessment
Linehan, M. M. (1993), Chapter 9

Rizvi, S.L., & Ritschel, L.A. (2014). Mastering the art of chain analysis in Dialectical Behavior Therapy. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, 21*, 335-349.

Class 6:

2/27/26 Change Strategies II: Behavioral Principles, Problem Solving
Linehan, M. M. (1993), Chapters 10 – 11

Haft, S. L., O'Grady, S. M., Shaller, E. A., & Liu, N. H. (2022). Cultural adaptations of dialectical behavior therapy: A systematic review. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*.

Class 7:

3/6/26 DBT Skills Training: Structure, Format, and Research
Linehan, M. M. (2015), Chapters 2-5 and Chapter 6 (pp. 125-138)

Delaquis, C. P., Joyce, K. M., Zalewski, M., Katz, L., Sulymka, J., Agostinho, T., & Roos, L. E. (2020). Dialectical behaviour therapy skills training groups for common mental health disorders: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 300*, 305-315.

Class 8:

3/13/26 Acceptance Strategies: Validation & DBT; DBT Skills: Mindfulness

Linehan, M. M. (1993), Chapter 8

Linehan, M. M. (1998). Validation and psychotherapy. In A. Bohart & L. S. Greenberg (Eds.), *Empathy and psychotherapy: New directions to theory, research, and practice* (pp. 353-392). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

**Mindfulness Skills Group Presentation*

3/20/26 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Class 9:

3/27/26 DBT Skills: Distress Tolerance

Linehan, M. M. (2015), Chapters 7, 10, and Associated Handouts and Worksheets

**Distress Tolerance Group Presentations (Crisis Survival & Reality Acceptance)*

Class 10:

4/3/26 DBT Skills: Interpersonal Effectiveness and Emotion Regulation

Linehan, M. M. (2015), Chapters 8, 9, and Associated Handouts and Worksheets

**Interpersonal Effectiveness & Emotion Regulation Group Presentations*

**Paper topics cleared with me by 5pm*

Class 11:

4/10/26 Dialectical Strategies

Linehan, M. M. (1993), Chapter 7

Fruzzetti, A. R., & Fruzzetti, A. E. (2003). Dialectics in cognitive and behavior therapy. In W. T. O'Donohue, J.E. Fisher, & S. C. Hayes (Eds.), *Cognitive behavior therapy: Applying empirically supported techniques in your practice* (pp. 121-128). New York: Wiley.

Class 12:

4/17/26 Consultation Team

Linehan, M. M. (1993) Chapter 13 (pp. 423-434)

Fruzzetti, A. E., Waltz, J. A., & Linehan, M. M. (1997). Supervision in dialectical behavior therapy. In C. E. Watkins Jr. (Ed.), *Handbook of psychotherapy supervision* (pp. 84-100). New York: Wiley.

Class 13:

4/24/26 Stylistic and Case Management Strategies

Linehan, M. M. (1993a), Chapters 12, 13

Class 14:

5/1/26 Crisis Protocols & Issues in Treating Suicidality

Linehan, M. M. (1993a), Chapter 15 (462-495)

Linehan Risk Assessment and Management Protocol (L-RAMP); found here:

http://blogs.uw.edu/brtc/files/2014/01/SSN-LRAMP-updated-9-19_2013.pdf

**Papers due by 5pm via email*

Class 15:

5/8/26 DBT Case Examples

Rizvi, S.L. (2011). Treatment failure in Dialectical Behavior Therapy. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 18, 403-412.

Rizvi, S.L., & Salters-Pednault, K. (2013). Borderline personality disorder. In W. O'Donahue and S. Lilienfeld (Eds.), *Case Studies in Clinical Science* (pp.301-328). New York: Oxford University Press.

New York Times article on Marsha Linehan; found here:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/23/health/23lives.html>

Class, Departmental, and University Policies:

Attendance: As psychologists-in-training, it is expected that students will attend every class and schedule activities around their classes and other clinical work. (Please see student handbook: <https://gsapp.rutgers.edu/current-students/student-handbook-policies-and-procedures>)

Attendance refers to coming in-person, on time and participating in class discussions. **If you are unable to attend a class unexpectedly (e.g., due to illness) or will be late, please email myself and the course assistant(s) prior to class.** Students are responsible for all material covered during their absence including reading required material from any missed class.

Grades may be affected if more than two classes are missed (except for observance of religious holidays, or extenuating circumstances such as multiple absences due to chronic illness). Students are excused from class when observing religious holidays, in accordance with Rutgers University policy (see below). Please provide timely notification about necessary absences for religious observances.

(<https://scheduling.rutgers.edu/scheduling/religious-holiday-policy>).

Statement on Disabilities: Students with disabilities who qualify for reasonable accommodations may arrange for these through the Office of Disability Services, Kreeger Learning Center, 151 College Avenue; dfoffice@rci.rutgers.edu

Names and Pronouns: Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Respect for Diversity: It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

APA Style Format: Unless otherwise noted all formal written work should use the Style Sheet of the American Psychological Association. See: <http://apastyle.apa.org/> (full access via Login to Rutgers University Libraries home page: <http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/>)

Academic Integrity: Work submitted for this course must be your own. You are responsible for knowing and conforming to all professional and university standards. See <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/students.shtml>

Course Bibliography

Crowell, S.E., Beauchaine, T.P., & Linehan, M.M. (2009). A biosocial developmental model of borderline personality: Elaborating and extending Linehan's theory. *Psychological Bulletin, 135*, 495-510.

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Gunderson, J. G. (2009). Borderline personality disorder: Ontogeny of a diagnosis. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 166*, 530-539.

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Rizvi, S.L., & Ritschel, L.A. (2014). Mastering the art of chain analysis in Dialectical Behavior Therapy. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 21, 335-349.

Rizvi, S.L. (2011). Treatment failure in Dialectical Behavior Therapy. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 18, 403-412.

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