



OT 543: Community and Population Needs and Health I

Late Spring/Summer 2026

	Instructor Information
Name	Dr Sheelagh M. Schlegel DrHSc, MPH, CHES, CAPS – “Shee-Shee”
Contact	schlegels@sacredheart.edu
Office Hours	Student drop-hours on Thursdays N-122. Use booking page to make virtual or in-person meetings on other days
Office Location	N-122

About the Professor: I earned a Bachelor of Science in OT in 1992, a Master of Public Health in 2006 and a Doctorate in Global Health in 2019. I am a Certified Health Education Specialist and achieved my Aging in Place certification in June 2020. I teach Therapeutic Use of Self and Community and Population Health Needs I and II courses, coordinate the Personal Transformation I course, and facilitate the Wellness seminar for admitted students before they start the program. I have led service-learning trips to Haiti and Guatemala with other departments in the CHP. I work part-time seeing clients for a home health agency in CT. I am married and have four children, four step-children, a dog, two cats, and a turtle!

Course Overview

	Course Information
Meeting Times	Mondays 10am -1pm
Format	Lecture, lab, seminar, advisor meetings, synchronous
Location	N-350

	Course Information
Credit & Workload	This course is offered in a 15-week semester calendar. One (1) credit hour represents 45 hours of work over the course of a term, which includes activities such as lectures, laboratories, recitations, discussions, field work, and independent study. For a three (3) credit hour course, the total expected workload is 135 hours. In a 15-week course, this averages to approximately 9 total hours per week.
Prerequisites	Not applicable

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This course offers specific knowledge for the development of a deep understanding of the occupational therapist's role in the community. The focus is on the occupational engagement of individuals, groups and populations critical for their overall health, well-being, and disease prevention. The course culminates with significant progress on a community-based needs assignment mentored by faculty advisors. To this end, students develop knowledge and skills related to occupational justice, the concept of community, community health theory and practice, health promotion theories, health promotion practice, disease or disability prevention, and the needs assessment process.

COURSE RELATIONSHIP TO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE AND AOTA VISION 2030:

"Vision 2030 is:

- *The guiding force and definitive aspiration for the profession, to which AOTA aligns its organizational, strategic, and operational plans for maximum mission impact over the next five years.*
- *Inextricably linked to AOTA's mission to advance occupational therapy practice, education, and research through standard setting and advocacy on behalf of its members, the profession, and the public.*
- *Essential to the profession's ongoing viability and success," (AOTA, 2025).*

"As an inclusive profession, occupational therapy maximizes health, well-being, and quality of life for all people, populations, and communities through effective solutions that facilitate participation in everyday living," ([AOTA](#), 2025).

Vision Statement: Enriching life for ALL individuals and society through meaningful engagement in everyday activities.

Foundational Pillars			
Inclusive and Equitable Professional Community	Evidence-Based, Client-Centered, and Innovative Practice	Universally Recognized with Valued Excellence	Occupational Justice and Advocacy
Creates a supportive environment fostering belonging, collaboration, networking, and continuous learning for all professionals to enhance growth and development.	Delivers high-quality and skilled care using latest research, focusing on individual client needs and goals while encouraging innovative approaches to enhance treatment outcomes.	Establishes occupational therapy's importance across various settings, demonstrating its unique value in improving individuals' quality of life and functional abilities.	Promotes education, advocacy, accessibility, and the right for ALL to engage in meaningful occupations through collaboration with consumers, other professionals, and policymakers.

([AOTA](#), 2025).

OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT LEARNING IN RELATION TO THIS COURSE

While it may appear that knowledge is certain, that there are facts we can count on, in reality knowledge changes over time. What we did in occupational therapy in the 1950's is not what we do today. We can teach you skills, assessment tools, and specific diagnostic categories, but all of that may be different in 20 years. That tool may no longer exist, the DSM may change the criteria for a diagnosis or drop it altogether, and the skills you rely on today may be shown to be ineffective by tomorrow's research.

Therefore, an important characteristic for you to develop is your capacity for curiosity and the desire to continually learn and improve. If you remain static in OT, you may become bored and may burn out. If the profession remains static, we may become irrelevant. All of us must engage in continual improvement for our profession to remain viable and for us to achieve our centennial vision.

We believe that all our students can learn given sufficient resources, proper instruction, and adequate motivation and effort. For you to continue a path of lifelong learning as an OT, and not become stifled and complacent, you will need the intention to do so, the motivation, drive, and curiosity to ensure you do not become bored or boring, in your practice. We will make this course playful and silly wherever it is appropriate to do so.

We also believe in evidence-based teaching and have crafted activities and assignments that research suggests will help you learn the material. There is abundant evidence that

repetition is important, that writing (in pencil) helps you to remember, that merely reading and highlighting content is not sufficient for long term learning, and that quizzes, and self-questioning will help you learn. We will use many, if not all, of these strategies this semester.

RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM DESIGN:

The cornerstone of the MSOT program and curriculum at SHU is “Transformation through values-based education.” Our curriculum design is a blueprint for learning. The curriculum reflects the mission, vision, and philosophy of our program. Our program philosophy contains our beliefs about occupations, human beings, learners, and teaching practices. Consequently, the design of the curriculum has emerged from our philosophical beliefs. The Sacred Heart University occupational therapy program curriculum-design is based on the longstanding symbol of occupational therapy, the profession, going back to our professional history and roots, to that of weaving. Weaving is the craft of fabric production, in which two distinct sets of yarns or threads are interlaced at right angles to form a fabric or cloth. The visual representation of a piece of cloth shows the intersections of the warp and weft of the woven fabric. Our curriculum design utilizes the warp as a representation of the values of the profession, the program, and the university. Within this course, the values of authenticity, justice, integrity, altruism, and open-mindedness are emphasized. The weft are the threads or streams of occupational therapy content, knowledge, skills, the experiences that comprise the foundation of our program (occupational performance analysis and interpretation, enabling occupations, scholarship, professional communication, interpersonal skills, and professionalism).

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition of Social Justice is woven into this course through an effort to direct services to not-for-profit organizations and underserved populations whenever possible. Students consult with organizations and communities to identify needs and responses to those needs that best address the needs of populations served. This requires the application of the values of authenticity in our interactions, justice in our service, integrity in our data collection and analysis, altruism in our service, and open-mindedness. It is part of the curricular stream of becoming a professional and a future leader.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR THIS COURSE: Various models and theories from the fields of occupational therapy, community health, and health promotion were used to develop this course, including, but not limited to PEOP and PEOP models, Doing-Being-Belonging-Becoming, the Occupational Justice Framework, the Occupational Adaptation Model, the Model of Human Occupation, the Health Belief Model, the Diffusion of Innovation Model, the Socioecological Model, .

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS:

Lecture, quizzes, discussions, simulation experiences.

COURSE POLICIES: All university programs and courses adhere fully to the University Policy on Academic Integrity, as stated in the [Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs](#) and on the [Academic Integrity Web Page](#). Academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, and other unethical behavior) could result in a grade of F for the assignment and/or course.

This syllabus and course outline are subject to change by the instructor during the semester. Changes may be necessary because of students' specific interest(s), general class progression, and class cancellations. If such changes are implemented, they will be announced in class and posted online. This syllabus and any addendums attached shall not be construed by the student as a contract, implied or expressed, between the student and/or the professor and the University.

COURSE MATERIALS

Link to SHU Bookstore: [SHU Bookstore](#)

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Scaffa, M.E. & Reitz, S.M. (2020). Occupational Therapy in Community and Population Health Practice. F.A. Davis.

Soriano, F. I. (2013). Conducting needs assessments: A multidisciplinary approach (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Clark, F.A., Blanchard, J., Sleight, A., Cogan, A., Florindez, L, Gleason, S. . . .Vigen, C. (2015). Lifestyle Redesign®: The Intervention Tested in the USC Well Elderly Studies, 2nd Edition. Bethesda, MD: AOTA Press.

Fazio, L. S. (2017). Developing occupation-centered programs with the community (3rd ed.). Thorofare, NJ: Slack Inc.

STUDENT BUDGET FOR COURSE SUPPLIES: All materials for this course will be provided by your instructors. The Occupational Therapy Department has already selected and purchased a wide range of materials for use during this course. If, for any reason, you choose to engage and teach an activity for which we do not have the specific materials, you may have to purchase those materials from your own funds.

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP WORK: Students are responsible for independent reading of all materials. Students are responsible for independent work, unless there is a requirement for group work. If group work is a requirement, students are expected to

participate fully, collaborate, share, and exchange in equal measure. Adjust as needed for your course.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES: Each program in OT must meet the same Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) standards. How they are met varies from program to program. The standards that are addressed in this course are listed in the table below. This link will allow you to review all the [ACOTE standards](#).

The course objectives, program objectives, the mission and vision of the department and the overall curricular design are all linked to the ACOTE standards. Table 1 shows the connection between the entire course series objectives, the program objectives they are linked to, and the ACOTE standards that are addressed in this course, as well as how we plan to meet and measure the learning objectives for this course.

Table 1- Program Outcomes, Course Objectives, ACOTE Standards, Learning Activities & Measures

Program Outcomes	Course Objective	ACOTE Standard	Learning Activities	Learning Measures
Demonstrate the knowledge and skills required of an entry level occupational therapist, including critical thinking and clinical reasoning.	Describe the historical development of occupational therapy in health promotion and prevention of disease and disability and describe the relationship between health promotion, the OTPF and core values of the profession.	B.1.2. Apply and analyze the role of sociocultural, socioeconomic, and diversity factors, as well as lifestyle choices in contemporary society to meet the needs of persons, groups, and populations. Course content must include, but is not limited to, introductory psychology, abnormal psychology, and introductory sociology or introductory anthropology.	Lecture, reading, discussion	Reading Quizzes and Exams Needs Assessment
Demonstrate the knowledge and skills required of an entry level occupational therapist,	Demonstrate the knowledge and skills required of an entry level occupational therapist,	B.1.3 Demonstrate knowledge of the social determinants of health for	Applied learning activities VR Simulation Experience	SDOH Discussion Board VR Simulation Reflection

including critical thinking and clinical reasoning. Engage in continual learning and evidence-based practice with intellectual open-mindedness.	including critical thinking and clinical reasoning. Promote justice through compassionate service to the local and global communities	persons, groups, and populations with or at risk for disabilities and chronic health conditions and distinguishes the epidemiological factors that impact the public health and welfare of populations. B.2.5. Apply and analyze scientific evidence to explain the importance of: • Balancing areas of occupation. • The role of occupation in the promotion of health and wellness. • The prevention of disease, illness, and dysfunction for persons, groups, and populations.		
Demonstrate the knowledge and skills required of an entry level occupational therapist, including critical thinking and clinical reasoning.	Identify examples of occupational injustice in the community by developing an understanding of the concepts of Occupational Justice	B.1.3 Demonstrate knowledge of the social determinants of health for persons, groups, and populations with or at risk for disabilities and chronic health conditions. This must include an analysis of the epidemiological factors that impact the public health and welfare of populations	Lecture Discussion Learning activities	Exams SDOH Discussion Board

Demonstrate the knowledge and skills required of an entry level occupational therapist, including critical thinking and clinical reasoning.	Demonstrate an understanding of the contextual elements of a community and evaluate how they affect engagement in occupation and ability to fill health and wellness needs and how to determine the effect	B.3.11 Evaluate the needs of persons, groups, or populations to design programs that enhance community mobility, and determine alternative means of transportation in community settings, including driver rehabilitation and other community access options. B.3.20. Evaluate access to community resources, and design community or primary care programs to support occupational performance for persons, groups, and populations.	Lecture Discussion Learning activities	Exams and Quizzes Needs Assessment Assignment
Demonstrate the knowledge and skills required of an entry level occupational therapist, including critical thinking and clinical reasoning. Promote justice through compassionate service to the local and global communities	Understand the requirements of a community needs assessment and conduct a needs assessment for a community partner.	B.5.1. Locate, select, critique, and synthesize quantitative and qualitative research that contributes to the development of a body of knowledge and evidence-based decision making. This includes the • Level of evidence • Validity of research studies • Strength of the methodology • Relevance to the profession of	Lecture Reading quizzes Discussion	Needs Assessment Assignment

		occupational therapy B.5.3. Demonstrate the ability to use quantitative statistics and qualitative analysis to interpret tests and measurements for the purpose of establishing and delivering evidence-based practice.		
Apply ethical reasoning aligned with the AOTA and the program's values to make decisions and practice professionally	Understand and apply the ethical requirements related to Needs Assessment research and apply as required	B.1.4. Demonstrate the ability to use quantitative statistics and qualitative analysis to interpret tests and measurements for the purpose of establishing and delivering evidence-based practice. B.5.4 Ethical Policies and Procedures for Research Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical policies and procedures necessary to conduct human-subject research, educational	Lecture Discussion	Research Checklist Assignment Needs Assessment Assignment Exams

		research, or research		
--	--	--------------------------	--	--

Course Activities

Topical Outline & Course Schedule:

See Blackboard for a class-by-class weekly schedule with an overview of the topics and assignments associated with your course. I will communicate about any unexpected schedule change by email and Bb announcement i.e. inclement weather, instructor illness, etc.

Final Grades

Please read this section carefully. Final grades will be determined by student performance according to the following:

Assignment/Assessment	Percentage of Grade
SDOH Discussion Board Students will read Social Determinants of Health articles and watch one of the videos below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6wH4nQVmhW https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CALj8t8EnD8 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDbENx9c3Fg Students will complete a 300–500-word discussion board following instructions on Blackboard. Students will post a response to one other student with a 150–250-word response. Both the original post and response must be in APA format and have in-text citations and references	10%
Simulation Reflection Students will participate in a simulation with SPs and will submit a 1-page reflection on the simulation	5%
Research Checklist Part I and II	20%

Students will submit checklist after meeting with their site and faculty mentor, relevant to the community/population that they are working with, and outline the methods they will use for their needs assessment in APA format with citations and references	
Needs Assessment Timeline Students will submit a timeline including goals and dates to outline how their needs assessment will be completed by week 10 of the semester. A Gant chart or similar tool can be used to visually display the timeline	5%
IRATs and TRATs	15%
Midterm Exam – based on Weeks 1-6	10%
Final Exam – based on Weeks 8-14	10%
Needs Assessment Students will submit a draft in week 10 and then the final needs assessment at end of week 13	25%
Total	100%

The final letter grade is assigned in accordance with the university grading policy [SHU Graduate Grading System](#).

Student Expectations

ATTENDANCE: As per program policy, a 100% attendance rate for all courses is required. Per university policy, attendance will be recorded on Blackboard for each class and for each student. Absences from classes are allowed only under extraordinary circumstances, such as illnesses, emergencies, religious obligations, or important family events, for example, a wedding of an immediate family member. Documentation for an absence due to an important family event requires at least three weeks advance notice, and documentation of all other absences confirming circumstances that caused them are required within a week of returning to school. Please contact the course instructor in advance of an absence unless it is an emergency. In case of emergency, notify the department as soon as possible.

Failure to follow these procedures will result in the total grade reduction of one letter grade increment for each unexcused absence. Please refer to COVID Contingencies policy in the Student Manual with regards to absences/isolation for colds and flu symptoms, or the SHU [Coronavirus](#) web page. Please note that, while classes might take place online (using Zoom, Webex, or Microsoft Teams) in case of inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances, attendance policies for the online classes are the same as for the in-person classes.

To the extent permitted by federal and state copyright laws, the class lectures and materials provided by the professor are copyrighted. By participating in the class lectures, students consent to the video and audio recording of said lectures. As part of the requirements of the course, students are required to participate, whether in person or via electronic communications. At the professor's discretion, students may be required to leave their audio and video devices on during the class lectures.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY and PARTICIPATION: Please refer to the 2025-2027 O.T. Student Handbook.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIORS: Please refer to the 2025-2027 O.T. Student Handbook.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PLATFORMS: In accordance with Sacred Heart University's [Academic Integrity Policy](#), the use of Artificial Intelligence platforms is on a case-by-case basis in the Department of Occupational Therapy. Students are permitted to use artificial intelligence chatbots (such as ChatGPT) **only when explicitly directed by the instructor**. If you are ever unsure whether the use of an artificial intelligence chatbot is allowed, please contact the instructor prior to using it.

How We Support Your Learning at SHU

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM YOUR OCCUPATIONAL THERPAY FACULTY:

- Your materials will always be available to you at least one week before class (usually much earlier than that).
- We will answer your emails during the work week within 24 business hours.
- We will grade your papers and have things back to you within 3 weeks of your turning them in (if you turn them in on time).
- We will explain why we are doing what we are doing. We don't believe in 'busy work' and won't give you any.
- We will have very high standards for your behavior and ours. We believe in Stephen Covey's 7 habits of highly effective people. We also believe that to demonstrate and model responsibility and efficacy, we must have integrity. Integrity starts with making and keeping promises and commitments. We pride ourselves on being dependable and keeping our commitments.
- When we are meeting with you, and in class with you, you will have our undivided attention. We will all practice 'being present' in the moment in our communication with each other. 'Being present' in the moment is an important skill to learn. If it ever seems like we are distracted and not listening fully, please say so. If you ask a question when we are distracted or when we cannot give you our full attention (for example at the beginning of class while setting up), we will tell you so and will tell you when we will be able to give you our full attention.
- We will start and end class on time, unless there are extreme events.
- We spend a lot of time planning what we will do in class and what we think are activities that will help you learn this material- but that will also be fun.

- We will model the same professional behaviors we expect of all of you. We will treat you as a future colleague and an adult student. Please speak with us if you're having any difficulties with the material or assignments. However, we also believe in personal responsibility.

University Supports (Read the University Syllabus Extension)

The university has many supports, services, and policies available to support your success at Sacred Heart University. Be sure to visit this course on Blackboard and click "Syllabus Extension" under the Syllabus module to read important information regarding academic integrity, academic accommodations, learning support services, and more. If you have any questions, please contact your instructor.