

# Welcome

Dr. Deepa Rao

Hello everybody, and welcome to the Global Mental Health course from the University of Washington. My name is Deepa Rao, and I'm one of the core instructors for this course. [I am a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Professor in the Departments of Global Health and Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington, in Seattle in the United States. My professional interests are in designing, implementing, and scaling effective interventions in non-psychiatric settings and to improve mental health, reduce stigma, and help people better engage in care. I have 20 years of experience in global mental health working alongside colleagues in the United States and India, South Africa, and elsewhere. Throughout ten weeks of this course, we will be joined by a handful of other guest lectures with various areas of expertise to share with you. We are really looking forward to exploring the dynamics and complex topics of global mental health with you.

So, what first comes to mind when someone says 'mental health'?

When most people think about mental health, they jump to the processes of diagnosing severe mental illnesses or treating people with severe mental illness. However, the topic of global mental health encompasses so much more than this. Global mental health work can look like dismantling stigma, advocating for integrated health systems that incorporate task sharing, promoting positive mental health, using implementation science methodologies to improve services, and supporting individuals and groups in high conflict regions. And over the next 10 weeks, we will discuss all of these topics and more. By the end of this course, you will have been exposed to a survey-level view of many facets of global mental health in theory and in practice.

In this pursuit, we've included mini-lectures, quizzes, case studies, readings, bi-weekly discussion forums and an Individual Reflection Guide that you'll complete in phases before the course ends. There is truly something for everyone here.

Whether you come from a robust background in mental health work or whether this topic is completely new to you, we all have something to learn and to offer in return. We as instructors believe in bidirectional learning; we learn just as much from participants as we teach. We encourage you to share your thoughts and experiences with each other and to add depth and richness to our conversations.

We want to set clear expectations for students at the onset of this course that the intention of this class is **not** to prepare you to diagnose or treat patients. Formal, long-term training and licensing is key to provide services and treat those experiencing mental illness. We feel it is important to emphasize this for safety reasons and to remind you that you will not have all the answers by the end of this course. Rather we hope that exploring the breadth of topics encompassed by global mental health helps you to understand where you might fit into the ecosystem of promoting stronger mental health systems in your area. After all, as the WHO states, “there is no health without mental health,” and while you will not gain the skills to diagnose or treat, you will leave this class ready to advocate for stronger mental health care and better able to connect the folks you work with to the services they might need.

Please also be patient and gentle with yourselves and your classmates. We recognize that the highly personal nature of the subject may bring up difficult conversations or new insights for participants, and we hope that you have the support you need from classmates, site coordinators, family, and friends to navigate the impact of what we are learning. This is also a gentle reminder to be respectful of one another, to exercise deep listening skills to hear what classmates are sharing with empathy and compassion, and to practice non-judgement. We are all here to learn together.

With that said, we welcome you again to Global Mental Health, and we wish you the best of luck completing this course. We look forward to this learning journey!