



VIU summer SCHOOL **GLOBAL mental** **Health and** **Human RIGHTS**

**Global Mental Health and Human Rights:
Confronting 21st-Century Authoritarianism
and Racial Supremacy**

July 6-10, 2026

**Venice International University
Isola di San Servolo, Venice**

VIU Summer School

Global Mental Health and Human Rights: Confronting 21st-Century Authoritarianism and Racial Supremacy

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**Venice International
University**

**Scientific Coordinators:
Guido Veronese
University of Milano-Bicocca**

**Alex L. Pieterse
Boston College**

**Ashraf Kagee
Stellenbosch University**

Amid the prevailing global instability, the immediate repercussions of warfare and political violence have echoed, sparking conflicts and precipitating substantial forced migration. This reality is starkly manifest across the globe, epitomized by the enduring conflict and extensive displacement observed in the war-ravaged region of Gaza. Furthermore, the conflict in Ukraine serves as another poignant manifestation of this tumult, highlighting the widespread prevalence of violence and displacement in modern society. Conflicts and wars have plunged the planet into a vortex of environmental, climate, societal, gender, and racial crises, undermining human rights and self-determination on a global scale. Mental health and human rights are dramatically interlocked constructs. There is no mental well-being without peace and equity and vice versa. Mental prosperity seems to be thought of as a consolidated right just for privileged groups; in contrast, oppressed and marginalized individuals most often resulted in being blamed for their incapability to handle their living conditions and adjust to challenges and adversities because of a lack of civilization, poor personal and social capital or inadequate relational skills . More recently, critical global mental health and global public health have recognized the urgent need to analyze and intervene in the political determinants and antecedents of cogent global challenges of our contemporaneity including war and structural violence. In addition, transnational and intersectional feminist and postcolonial perspectives have exposed patriarchal whiteness as the dominant grammar informing the mainstream of psychology and psychiatry, unveiling the extractivist strategies of the so-called essentialist culture and performed gender-sensitive protocols. Indigenous and postcolonial participatory approaches propose themselves as a genuine alternative to conceptual and intervention models aiming at re-socializing and readapting people to iniquitous and unjust classist and racialized living conditions. Our approach is to foster a psychology of liberation that will provide theoretical and practical participatory tools to enable the adaptation and control of indigenous and self-determined models to understand mental health in low and middle-income countries (LMICs) and societies undergoing or coming to terms with political turbulence, war, and social upheaval.

Faculty

Guido Veronese, University of Milano-Bicocca

Alex L. Pieterse, Boston College

Ashraf Kagee, Stellenbosch University

Guest speakers

Urmitapa Dutta, University of Massachusetts

Lowell

Other contributing faculty tbc

Tutor

Chiara Fiscione, University of Milano-Bicocca

Who is it for?

Applications are welcome from PhD students, young researchers and practitioners working in mental health, international relations, law, gender and race studies, social work, education, psychology, psychiatry, environmental and climate studies, political science, public health, nursing, global health and mental health. The school is also open to activist individuals and groups, policy and decision-makers, NGOs and CBOs, stakeholders and influencers seeking to strengthen their knowledge and know-how on global mental health, human rights, and allied disciplines.

Methodology and structure

- **Public and Global Mental Health:** developing contextually relevant and culturally appropriate intellectual knowledge to understand relationships between mental health and human rights in LMICs and high-income countries (HICs).

- **Interdisciplinarity** in tackling civil and social issues: the multi-disciplinary dimension of public health will be harnessed. Community psychology, psychiatry, education, sociology, social work, epidemiology, biostatistics, nursing, anthropology, law and disability, and race studies will feature prominently in the summer school.

- **Multiple methods:** quantitative disciplines such as epidemiology and statistics will be employed alongside qualitative and participatory social science approaches to enhance understanding of health behaviours in their social and economic contexts;

- Contextually **appropriate theories:** the program will emphasize the development of theories that are contextually appropriate and culturally relevant to areas of the world where research on mental health and human rights is necessary. This includes the global south and societies that have

endured colonialism, war, apartheid, occupation, and social inequality.

- **Participatory and actionable approach:** the program will emphasize approaches to mental health based on the inclusion and participation of marginalized communities, Black and Brown people, persons with mental health disabilities, indigenous populations, people on the move and refugees affected by war and violence, poverty and forced migration because of discrimination and climate and environmental deterioration.

- **Dialogue and partnership:** Collaboration and learning between young and senior scholars and promoting South-South and North-South partnerships will be emphasized.

- **Advocacy for the human rights of people living with mental health conditions** who, at the same time, have experienced violations of human rights. Attention will be given to persons affected by mental illness (including carers and family members), communities, health workers, faith-based organizations and fellow researchers.

Learning outcomes for participants

On successful completion of the Summer School, the students will be able to:

Knowledge

- define and understand the fundamental concepts, principles and tools of Liberation Psychology, radical feminism, and critical theories in public and global mental health;

- assume concepts of class, race, gender, culture, identity and diversity concerning indigenous and intersectional approaches;

- assume the fundamental concepts of global mental health in societies undergoing or coming to terms with geopolitical turmoils, gender disparities, economic disadvantages and climate changes;

- analyze and form critical perspectives about Global Mental Health and Human Rights through the synthesis of different disciplines;

- identify areas of quality research pertaining to mental health and human rights.

Skills

- Plan and develop research project using multidisciplinary research methodologies;

- locate multi-method (quantitative, qualitative and participatory) research approaches;

- critically discuss systems of oppression and privilege that inform global challenges on gender, race, class and environment as a focus of the school;

- rising self-awareness and conscientisation about personal and group positioning in their disciplinary field and community;
- collaborate effectively as a part of professional teams in interdisciplinary and international contexts.

Application and actionability of knowledge and skills

- Analyze and develop contextually appropriate and culturally appropriate theories relevant to areas of the world where research on global mental health and human rights is necessary;
- demonstrate a critical reflection on professional knowledge and skills integrating broad subject knowledge and perspectives;
- advocate for mental health and social justice as an agenda item in human rights campaign in participants' institutions and communities.

Credits

A Certificate of attendance will be issued at the end of the course.

Number of ECTS credits allocated: **2**

Fees

Students of VIU member universities: € 400 incl. VAT.

Students of other universities: € 800 incl. VAT.

The fees will cover tuition, course materials, lunches in the VIU cafeteria and social events. Student participants will be responsible for covering their own travel expenses to and from Venice, accommodation, and local transportation.

VIU Alumni are eligible for a reduced fee.

PhD candidates and post-docs from universities in EU universities may be eligible for Erasmus+ mobility grant support. Candidates should consult the International Office in their own university for information about the calls for applications for funding as well as for possible scholarships. VIU will provide any supporting documentation requested for such applications. Contact VIU Erasmus office: erasmus@univiu.org

Accommodation on campus

In shared rooms (triple/quadruple) with other participants: € 308 VAT included for 6 nights with breakfast (municipal tax included). Further information will be available in the Application form.

Applications

December 2, 2025 – 10 March, 2026

via the VIU website

Applicants must submit the application form, a letter of motivation – which should include a brief description of the candidate's research interests, a curriculum vitae and a photo. After March 10 the pre-selected students will be invited by the Selection Committee for a motivational interview, which will complete the selection process. The Program will admit up to 25 participants.

Venice International University is a consortium of 23 institutions, representing 14 countries throughout the world.

The mission of VIU is to foster cooperation among VIU member institutions while facilitating the exchange of knowledge and ideas, by developing, promoting and organizing joint academic, research and training/capacity-building program. Students from non-member universities may participate in selected academic programs. The academic programs at VIU are distinguished by a markedly interdisciplinary approach to the topics, and by the international perspectives that the participants contribute to the discussions. The VIU campus is on the island of San Servolo in Venice, Italy.

Location



Venice International University

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