

PSYCHEDELIC SCIENCE AND SOFIA UNIVERSITY

Sofia University is gaining a worldwide reputation in the area of psychedelics research, thanks in large part to Sofia University co-founder, James Fadiman. Like his colleague, Stanislav Grof, Fadiman was originally involved in psychedelics research in the early 1960s before they were effectively banned by the U.S. Government. A resurgence of interest over the past 10 to 15 years has led to more research and greater acceptance of these substances by governments and the public.

Recently, Sofia U co-sponsored the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) Psychedelic Science Conference 2013 in Oakland, California. James Fadiman, Ph.D., featured as one of the international experts in the field, held a workshop titled, "Psychedelic Horizons Beyond Psychotherapy." The MAPS conference also included a presentation going into more detail about the challenges and benefits of teaching future therapists to be more sensitive and competent in working with clients who have used or are using psychedelic substances.

At Sofia U, Fadiman co-teaches courses on psychedelic research and clinical issues with faculty member David Lukoff, Ph.D. The two-unit residential course was first offered in the fall quarter of 2010 and has been well received. The class covers clinical research on psychedelic drugs as adjuncts to psychotherapy for the treatment of addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and existential distress at the end of life, as well as how to address psychedelic experiences that clients bring into psychotherapy. While not all students who enroll in the class intend to be clinicians, clinical aspects are discussed throughout the course.

Lukoff commented, "Our fondest hope for this course is that it paves the way for other universities, particularly those offering graduate training for mental health professionals, to use this precedent at an accredited graduate program to advocate for including similar courses in their curriculum."

Understanding psychedelic experiences requires knowledge about the interdisciplinary context, traditional uses, and applications behind modern research on psychedelic drugs for treating trauma and addiction. Lukoff commented on the specific need for this type of course: "With all of these clinical and research advances, how could a doctoral psychology program not provide

training in this area? The recent research is beyond compelling that therapy, experientially supported with psychedelics, helps resolve combat trauma in veterans as well as other forms of trauma and reduces anxiety in cancer patients."

Sofia University is currently developing an online course for its global students and has plans to offer the class

through other institutions. In addition to the psychedelics course at Sofia U, increasing interest in psychedelics in higher education is reflected in Sofia students' dissertations and research.

Fadiman commented, "Our students whose dissertations have dealt with psychedelic issues are doing psychedelic clinical studies at Yale and Johns Hopkins University. Sofia University is one of the few academic institutions in the world that supports graduate study in this area, thus fulfilling part of its mission to remain at the forefront of clinical training and emerging research areas."

In addition to sponsoring the Psychedelic Science Conference this year, Sofia University also held an event on May 2, 2013, called "Psychedelic Experience: Healing, Growth and Discovery" hosted by James Fadiman and Brad Burge, the Communications Director for MAPS. The event can be viewed on Livestream at www.livestream.com/sofiauniversity. The event included engaging dialogue on new research opportunities including discoveries in neuro-science, long-term effects of ongoing use, and work done in indigenous settings. The evening's dialogue also considered the application of psychedelic substances for chronic sleep disturbances, severe life-long allergies, academic test-taking, neuromuscular improvements, successful withdrawal from anti-depressants, as well as the almost totally unstudied effects of micro-dosing and experiments in accelerated scientific problem-solving.

