

SOC 315
SOCIOLOGY OF MADNESS
SPRING, 2017

INSTRUCTOR: David Newman

OFFICE: 330 Asbury

OFFICE PHONE: 658-4517

E-MAIL: DNEWMAN@DEPAUW.EDU

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday & Thursday, 11:30-1:30; and by appointment



A story is told about a man who became a fixture on the streets of Edinburgh, Scotland. He would stop people on Princes Street, a main thoroughfare, and ask them whether they were sane. If any replied "Yes," he would retort—"Ah, but can you prove it?" And if they could not, he proceeded to triumphantly show them that he at any rate could prove his sanity, by producing his own certificate of discharge from a mental hospital.

"You can't tell who's crazy anymore!"

(Comment made by my sister in response to seeing more and more people walking down the street as they talk on their hands-free cell phones)

*Sometimes naked, sometimes mad, now foolish,
Thus they appear on Earth: The free ones
Hindu verse*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We've all seen or heard about madness: the urban bag lady who pushes around all her worldly belongings in a shopping cart; the distant uncle about whom no one in the family talks because of the persistent rumor that he "isn't right in the head"; the person on the bus or subway who can't sit still and makes strange faces; the news story about the shy postal worker who goes berserk and murders a dozen people or the frustrated freeway driver who shoots a woman in the car ahead of him because she's driving too slowly; the mother who kills her newborn baby for no apparent reason. Such people are commonly referred to as "mentally ill."

But what exactly is mental illness? Is it a biological disease that can only be diagnosed, treated and cured by trained medical experts, or is it simply a social label, a metaphor used to define and control behavior that has been defined culturally or ethically as inappropriate and bothersome? Or could it be a combination of both? Most people in this society take for granted that mental illness is a medical condition. It's clear to us that people who behave strangely or unpredictably are abnormal. When we see such people we matter-of-factly say they are "sick" and conclude that they need some form of medical or psychiatric treatment. So why devote an entire sociology course to study something so obvious?

Well, the fact of the matter is that the nature of mental illness—like the nature of every thing else in society—is not so clear-cut after all. It hasn't always been the case that mad behavior was considered an illness. In the past it was commonly believed to be the result of spirit possession or lack of moral strength. Furthermore not all societies around the world today conceive of madness as a medical disease, either. Are these past or distant societies simply ignorant and mistaken—not as "civilized" and "knowledgeable" as we are?

We live in a society where most of our problems in living are framed in medical terms. The list of behaviors labeled as "illnesses," "syndromes," or "disorders" grows steadily each year. As we sit here today researchers are desperately searching for the chemical, the gene, or the neurological connection that causes the "disease" of madness. Yet we must always keep in mind that the "symptoms" of mental illness are not fevers, headaches, or painful joints. They are not things that can be discovered on x-rays or seen in blood tests in the form of elevated white cell counts. Instead the "symptoms" of mental illness are violations of social norms—hearing voices that we're not supposed to be able to hear, expressing emotions we're not supposed to express, talking to people who aren't there, and so on. Given that social norms vary from society to society, any understanding of madness must take into consideration the relevant societal and historical context within which the behavior occurs. The Bible, for instance, is filled with stories of people carrying on lengthy conversations with God. Most people don't consider them mentally ill. But what if your neighbor claimed that God spoke to her over dinner every night? Would you question her mental health? In short, "mental illness," as a category of actions or thoughts and ultimately as an all-encompassing identity, is a social creation.

So this course will take as its starting point an examination of mental illness as a social construction. As such it will *not* be a course on "how to" diagnose mental illnesses in your friends, your family yourself; nor will it be a cheap form of therapy that will make it easier for you to sleep at night or pass calculus exams. It will not be a freak show that merely describes the mystifying behavior of "those weird people who live in the institution on the hill." Instead, it will be a course that critically examines the origin and the utility of the idea of "mental illness."

This course may make you uncomfortable at times because it will force you to think about some very fundamental assumptions concerning madness, mad people, and the professionals who are supposed to help them. We will ask ourselves some apparently simple questions about madness: What is it? What causes it? What is the best way to control it? What you will discover is that the answers to these questions will reveal more about the society in which we live than the biological, chemical, or psychological processes underlying madness itself.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course grades will be based on three in-class essay exams, a paper project, and in-class participation. I use a non-competitive grade scale. This means the grade you receive will depend entirely on your performance and mastery of the course material, not on how well others do in the class.

EXAMS

- There will be three non-overlapping exams.
- Due dates for the exams are listed below.
- The exams will consist of several short definitions of key terms and essay questions based on reading and lectures.
- "Study guides" will be handed out 1 week prior to the exam date. The actual definitional terms and essay questions will be chosen from the "study guide."

PAPER PROJECT

-For the paper project you will choose **one** of the following three options:

OPTION A—the Activity Papers:

- This option requires that you write two “activity” papers. It is designed for those students who wish to do something daring and non-traditional.
- The activity papers (described in the accompanying detailed handout) are meant to be “hands-on” assignments. What I mean by that is that you will be asked to go forth from this classroom and do or observe something in your social environment that illustrates a process that can be found in sociology of madness.
- Each activity paper will be roughly 5-7 pages long.

OPTION B—the Fictionalized Autobiography:

- This option is for those students who prefer creative writing projects to standard term papers.
- This paper is a 12-15 page fictionalized first hand account of madness
- What I mean by “fictionalized” is that the paper will be based on actual research and factual information about the experience of madness, but you will write it from the point of view of a mad person.

OPTION C—the Term Paper:

- This option is for those students who wish to write a standard, research-based term paper.
- The term paper is 12-15 page report on a topic related to madness that is of interest to you.
- A list of potential topics will be handed out early in the semester.

-Due dates for the two OPTION A papers, the OPTION B paper and the OPTION C paper are listed below.

*****LATE PAPERS ARE ALWAYS SUBJECT TO AUTOMATIC PENALTIES. ABSOLUTELY NO EXCEPTIONS!!!*****

ATTENDANCE POLICY AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

I believe that learning is an interactive process. Much of the material for this course will be covered in class and will rely heavily on in-class discussion and debate. The success or failure of any class always hinges, to a large extent, on the combination of the people involved. Therefore, **regular class attendance is mandatory** and active participation is not only encouraged but expected. If you are going to miss class, it is your responsibility to let me know **in advance** and your responsibility to get the information we covered. Acceptable reasons for an excused absence include family emergency, serious illness, religious holiday, and participation in college athletic competitions and are typically documented. According to DePauw's *Academic Handbook*, "There are no 'allowed cuts' or 'free' absences from class sessions. Faculty members may drop students from their classes or other appropriate action may be taken if absences are too frequent." **Hence, if you have more than four absences during the semester, you may not be eligible to continue in the course whether these absences are excused or unexcused.**

GRADING

-Points will be assigned as follows:

Exam 1	60 points
Exam 2	60 points
Exam 3	60 points

OPTION A:

Activity Paper #1	40 points
Activity Paper #2	+ 40 points
	80 points

OR OPTION B:

"fictionalized" autobiography	80 points
----------------------------------	-----------

OR OPTION C:

Term Paper	80 points
Class Participation	20 points

Total	280 points
-------	------------

REQUIRED READINGS (all available at Eli's Bookstore)

- Ethan Watters, *Crazy like us: The globalization of the American psyche*. New York: Free Press, 2010.
- Thomas Szasz, *Insanity: The Idea and Its Consequences*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997
- Thomas Szasz, *The Manufacture of Madness*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997
- Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*,

New York: Doubleday, 1961

- Peter Kramer, *Listening to Prozac*, New York: Penguin, 1997
- Allan Horwitz, *Creating Mental Illness*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002
- Carol Warren, *Madwives: Schizophrenic Women in the 1950s*. Rutgers University Press, 1987

DISABILITY ACCOMODATIONS

“DePauw University is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and university administered activities with reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act and Amendments (ADAAA). Any student who feels she or he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability or learning challenge is strongly encouraged to contact Pamela Roberts, Director of Student Disability Services and ADA Compliance for further information on how to receive accommodations and support. Contact information for Student Disability Services is: 408 S. Locust Street, Suite 200, in The Memorial Student Union Building ([765-658-6267](tel:765-658-6267)). It is the responsibility of the student to share the letter of accommodation with faculty and staff members. Accommodations will not be implemented until the faculty or staff member has received the official letter. Accommodations are not retroactive. It is the responsibility of the student to discuss implementation of accommodations with each faculty and staff member receiving the letter.”

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Weeks 1 and 2: Introduction; The Social Construction of Reality and Disease

- Horwitz, *Creating Mental Illness*, Introduction and Chapter 1
- Szasz, *Insanity*, Chapters 1 & 2
- Watters, *Crazy like us*, Introduction, Chapter 2: “The wave that brought PTSD to Sri Lanka,” and Chapter 3: “The shifting mask of schizophrenia in Zanzibar”

Week 3: The History of Madness, Part I: Biblical Times, Ancient Greece and Rome, The Middle Ages

- Szasz, *The Manufacture of Madness*, p. xv - 134

**** Film: *A Modern Exorcism*, Thursday, February 16****

Week 4: The History of Madness, Part II: Madness Becomes Mental Illness, The Age of Reason, "The Great Confinement"

- Szasz, *The Manufacture of Madness* (continued), pp. 135-179; 260-275

****Film: *Out of Sight*, Thursday, February 23****

Week 5: The History of Madness, Part III: 20th-21st Century America, The Asylum Building Movement, Freud, the Drug Revolution, the Birth of Community Psychiatry, the Dominance of the Medical Model

- Goffman, *Asylums*, Chapter 3: "The underlife of a public institution"
- Horwitz, *Creating Mental Illness*, chapter 2, 6

*****OPTION A, PAPER 1 DUE THURSDAY, MARCH 2*****

Weeks 6 & 7: The Medical Model of Madness; The categorization of mental disorders

- Szasz, *Insanity*, chapter 3 and chapter 5
- Goffman, *Asylums*, Chapter 4: "The medical model and mental hospitalization"
- Horwitz, *Creating Mental Illness*, chapters 3, 4, 5

*****EXAM 1: TUESDAY, MARCH 7*****

Weeks 8 and 10: Contemporary issues in the treatment of mental illness: surgical intervention, electro-shock therapy, drugs, psychotherapy

- Kramer, *Listening to Prozac*, chapters 1, 2, 7 through 9
- Watters, *Crazy like us*, chapter 4: "The mega-marketing of depression in Japan"

****Film: *Crazy Love*, Tuesday, March 21****

****Film: *The Medicated Child*, Thursday, April 6****

*****NOTE: Week 9 is Spring Break (March 27 through March 31). No classes! Wee hee!*****



Week 11: Hospitalization and Deinstitutionalization

- Goffman, *Asylums*, Chapter 1: "On the characteristics of total institutions,"

****Film: *The New Asylums*, Thursday, April 13****

Week 12: Psychiatry and the Law

- Goffman, *Asylums*, Chapter 2: “The moral career of the mental patient”
- Szasz, *Insanity*, chapters 7 & 8

*****EXAM 2: TUESDAY, APRIL 18*****

Week 13: Alternatives to the medical model: sociological explanations of mental illness; competing theories

- Horwitz, *Creating Mental Illness*, chapter 7
- Warren, *Madwives*, chapter 1 (pages 3-45)

Week 14: Gender, Class and Madness

- Warren, *Madwives*, chapters 2-5 (pages 49-150)

Week 15: Wrapping Things Up

- Warren, *Madwives*, chapters 6-8 (pages 153-219)
- Horwitz, *Creating Mental Illness*, Conclusion

****Film: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Tuesday, May 9 (NOTE: Running time is approximately 2 hours and 10 minutes, so the film will end at approximately 4:30)****

*****OPTION A, PAPER 2 DUE THURSDAY, MAY 11*****

*****OPTION B—FICTIONALIZED AUTOBIOGRAPHY—DUE THURSDAY, MAY 11*****

*****OPTION C—TERM PAPER—DUE THURSDAY, MAY 11*****

*****EXAM 3: MONDAY, MAY 15 @ 1:00 *****