Mental Illness and Society (SOCY331401)  
Spring 2015  
Professor Lara Birk (birk@bc.edu)  
Class Times: TTh 10-11:15 a.m. (McGuinn 415)  
Office Hours: TTh 2-3:30 p.m. & by appointment (McGuinn 420)

Course Description

Psychiatric disorders are commonly viewed through a purely biomedical and/or a psychological framework. In this course, we will apply a sociological imagination to the topic and interrogate the ways in which mental illness, often seen as a supremely private “personal trouble,” is also a “public issue.” We will read the works of both classic and contemporary scholars, but we will also use memoirs and films to sensitize us to the experience of mental illness itself. We will explore mental illness as a social construction, stigma, labeling theory, as well as gender, race, class, and sexual orientation in mental illness.

Course Objectives

- To understand mental illness through a sociological imagination
- To listen to the voices of the mentally ill themselves and learn about the mental illness experience
- To improve the skills in critical thinking, reading, public speaking, and analytical writing that will help you to excel in and beyond college

Required Texts

1. Michel Foucault (1965), *Madness and Civilization*  
2. Sigmund Freud (1905), *Dora*  
4. David A. Karp & Gretchen E. Sisson (2010), *Voices from the Inside*  
5. Additional Readings in Course Reserves

Films

1. *Gaslight* (1944)  
2. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1975)
Grading

- 10% Attendance & Participation
- 10% Co-Leadership of 1 Class Discussion (with an assigned partner)
- 15% First Paper (4-5 pages)
- 15% Second Paper (4-5 pages)
- 10% Annotated Bibliography for Final Paper (10 sources)
- 15% Presentation of Final Project
- 25% Final Paper (~12 pages)

Late Work

I will allow extensions, but only under extreme circumstances (significant illness, family emergency, etc.). If you anticipate that you will need extra time to complete an assignment, please see me right away. Work that is more than 5 days from the original due date will receive an F. If you have not been granted an extension, you will receive a grade deduction of 10% for every day your work is late.

Class Attendance

Regular attendance is necessary to do well in this course. I expect you to attend and participate fully in every class session. If you anticipate missing a class for any reason, you must email me in advance to notify me of the reason for your absence. If there is an illness or family matter to which you need to attend, you must have the dean send me a notice about it if you expect to miss more than one class session. Excessive absences will be noted and will significantly affect your grade in the course.

**Please note:** When students use electronics (laptops, I pads, smart phones, etc.) in the classroom, I find that it tends to be a distraction both to you and your classmates more often than it is an enhancement to your learning. This is a discussion-heavy course, and your full attention and participation are required at all times. As such, I ask that you please refrain from using such devices during class unless absolutely necessary to your learning.

Participation

As mentioned above, this is a course centered on class discussion, and therefore I expect you to:

1) Do the assigned readings before the class in which they are due
2) Participate in class discussions on a regular basis

If you anticipate this will be a problem for you due to shyness or any other reason, please see me.

Academic Integrity

Presenting another’s work as your own—or even presenting your own past work as new to fulfill a different assignment—not only is a serious and punishable violation of BC policy, it is also wasteful. Engaging in any form of intellectual dishonesty robs you of the education you are here to get. If you borrow the words or ideas of anyone else, whether an online source, a noted scholar in the field, or a classmate, you must accurately cite that individual’s contributions. Engaging in cheating or plagiarism of any sort is a serious breach of the honor code implicit in the everyday operations of university life and a major violation of Boston College’s academic integrity policies. If I find you have been intellectually dishonest, you will be reported to your dean and penalized accordingly. For a full statement of BC’s policies on academic integrity, please see [http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html](http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html).
Disability Resources

If you have a disability of any kind that you believe will impact your ability to perform academically, you must be registered with the Disability Services Office in Maloney Hall at 21 Campanella Way. Please notify me at the beginning of the semester if you have a documented disability and what sort of accommodations you will need in this course.

Campus Resources

- Connors Family Learning Center: O’Neill Library, 617-552-0611
- Learning Resources for Student-Athletes: Yawkey Athletic Center, 617-552-8533
- Health Services: 119 Cushing Hall, 617-552-3225 or Emergency (24 hours) 617-552-3227
- Counseling Services: 108 Gasson Hall, 617-552-3310
- Disability Services Office: Maloney Hall, Suite 212, 617-552-3470
- Women’s Resource Center: 213 McElroy, 617-552-3489
- Sexual Assault Network: 617-552-BC11
- BC Police Department: Emergency 617-552-4444, Non-Emergency 617-552-3475

Assignments

Prequel to the Course

Tues. 1/13 – Introduction

Thurs. 1/15 – Psychiatry: The Biological and Psychological Approaches
- Schwartz and Corcoran (2010), "Biological Theories of Psychiatric Disorders: A Sociological Approach” (Ch. 4 in Handbook of Study of Mental Health, p. 64-88)
- T.M. Luhrmann (2000), "Where the Split Came From” (Ch. 5 in Of Two Minds, p. 203-238)

Understanding Mental Illness through a Sociological Imagination

Tues. 1/20 – Viewing Mental Illness through a Sociological Imagination
- C. Wright Mills (1959), “The Promise” (p. 1-6)
- Emile Durkheim (1897/1979), “The Social Element of Suicide (Book 3 Ch. 1 in Suicide, p. 297-325)
- Carla Fine (2010), “No Time to Say Goodbye” (Ch. 13 in Voices, p. 153-164)
Thurs. 1/22 – Overview of Sociological Approaches to Mental Illness
  ▶ Peggy Thoits (2010), “Sociological Approaches to Mental Illness” (Ch. 6 in *Handbook for the Study of Mental Health*, p. 106-124)
  ▶ Elyn R. Saks (2010), *The Center Cannot Hold*" (Ch. 4 in *Voices from the Inside*, p. 43-54)

Tues. 1/27 – Deconstructing the Diagnosis
  ▶ Rick Mayes and Allan Horwitz (2005), “DSM-III and the Revolution in the Classification of Mental Illness” (p. 249-267)
  ▶ Peter Conrad (2005), “The Shifting Engines of Medicalization” (p. 3-14)
  ▶ Arthur Kleinman (1988), “What is a Psychiatric Diagnosis” (Ch. 1 in *Rethinking Psychiatry*, p. 5-17)
  ▶ Kay Redfield Jamison (2010), “Flights of Mind” (Ch. 2 in *Voices*, p. 24-32)

Thurs. 1/29 – The Stigma of Mental Illness
  ▶ Erving Goffman (1963), “Stigma and Social Identity” (Ch. 1 in *Stigma*, p. 1-40)
  ▶ Bruce Link and Jo Phelan (2001), “Conceptualizing Stigma” (p. 363-385)

Tues. 2/3 – “Antipsychiatry”: Critiques of Psychiatric Diagnosis
  ▶ Thomas Szasz (1960), “The Myth of Mental Illness” (p. 113-117)
  ▶ Thomas Scheff (1966), “The Social Institution of Insanity” (Ch. 5 in *Being Mentally Ill*, p. 69-97)
  ▶ Mark Vonnegut (2010), “The Eden Express” (Ch. 3 in *Voices*, p. 33-42)

Thurs. 2/5 – Institutionalization
  ▶ WATCH FILM BEFORE CLASS: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975)
  ▶ Erving Goffman (1958), "The Mortified Self" (p. 55-63)
  ▶ Kate Millett; Lori Schiller (2010), “Part III: Hospitalization” (Voices p. 95-120)
  ▶ DEADLINE: FIRST PAPER (4-5 pages)

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**Deconstructing Insanity**

Tues. 2/10 – A Foucauldian Analysis of Mental Illness
  ▶ Michel Foucault (1965), *Madness and Civilization* Ch. 1, 2, and 3 (p. 1-79)

Thurs. 2/12 – Psychopaths as Dangerous
    ▶ WATCH linked “TED Talk” at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jon-ronson/psychopath-test-ted-talk_b_2973423.html
Tues. 2/17 – Mental Illness and Criminality
  ❖ Hiday & Burns (2010), “Mental Illness and the Criminal Justice System” (Ch. 24 of *Handbook for Study of Mental Health*)

**Hysteria: A Gendered Case Study**

Thurs. 2/19 – Deconstructing Hysteria
  ❖ Sigmund Freud (1905), *Dora*, p. 1-112
  ❖ Elaine Showalter (1997), “The Hysterical Hot Zone” (p. 3-13) and “Defining Hysteria” (p. 14-29) (Ch. 1 and 2 in *Hystories*)

Tues. 2/24 – The Making of a Mad Woman
  ❖ WATCH FILM BEFORE CLASS: *Gaslight* (1944)
  ❖ Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1892), “The Yellow Wallpaper”
  ❖ D. C. Jack (1991), “Loss of Voice” (Ch. 2 excerpt in *Silencing the Self*, p. 29-37)

Thurs. 2/26 – Hysteria Today
  ❖ DEADLINE: SECOND PAPER (4-5 pages)

Tues. 3/3 and Thurs. 3/5 – NO CLASS (Spring Break)

**Diagnostic Expansion**

Tues. 3/10 – Saving Normal
  ❖ Allen Frances (2013), “What’s Normal and What’s Not” and “Diagnostic Inflation” (Ch. 1 and Ch. 3 of *Saving Normal*, p. 3-34; 77-133)

Thurs. 3/12 – DSM-V
  ❖ Gary Greenberg (2013), Ch. 1 and 2 (from *The Book of Woe* p. 1-43)

Tues. 3/17 – Big Pharma
  ❖ Robert Whitaker (2010), “The Epidemic Spreads to Children” (Ch. 11 from *Anatomy of an Epidemic*, p. 216-246)
  ❖ DEADLINE: FINAL PAPER TOPIC DUE TODAY
Thurs. 3/19 – The Role of Culture
- Latif Nasser (2012), “Do some cultures have their own ways of going mad” (http://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2012/01/08/some-cultures-have-their-own-ways-going-mad/FSuwCngChHtpMzdBzSPagI/story.html)
- Ethan Watters (2010), “Introduction” and “The Rise of Anorexia in Hong Kong” (Introduction and Ch. 1 in Crazy Like Us, p. 1-63)

Tues. 3/24 – The Globalization of Western Diagnoses
- Ethan Watters (2010), “The Shifting Mask of Schizophrenia in Zanzibar” (Ch. 3 in Crazy Like Us, p. 127-185)
- DEADLINE: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY for FINAL PAPER (8 sources)

Class, Race, Sexual Orientation, and Gender in Mental Illness

Thurs. 3/26 – Social Class and Mental Illness
- Sarah Rosenfield (2012), “Triple Jeopardy: Mental Health at the Intersection of Gender, Race, and Class” (p. 1791-1801)

Tues. 3/31 – Race, Racism, and Mental Illness
- Janis Sanchez-Hucles (1998), "Racism: Emotional Abusiveness and Psychological Trauma for Ethnic Minorities" (p. 69-87)
- Thema Bryant-Davis and Carlota Ocampo (2005), "The Trauma of Racism" (p. 574-578)
- Patricia Williams (1991), “Death of the Profane” (in Alchemy of Race and Rights)

Thurs. 4/2 – Sexual Orientation, Homophobia, and Mental Illness
- Richard Friedman and Jennifer Downey (1998), "Psychoanalysis and the Model of Homosexuality as Psychopathology: A Historical Overview” (p. 249-270)

Tues. 4/7 – Gender, Mass Shootings, and Mental Illness?
Experiences of Mental Illness from the Inside

Thurs. 4/9 – The Ethics of Studying the Ill
✓ Sue Estroff (1995), “Whose Story is it Anyway?” (p. 77-104)
✓ Arthur Frank (1997), “When Bodies Need Voices” (Ch. 1 in Wounded Storyteller, p. 1-26)

Tues. 4/14 – On ”Madness”
✓ MEMOIR: Marya Hornbacher (2008), Madness: A Bipolar Life (especially p. 1-70 and 281-284)

Thurs. 4/16 – “The Worried Well”
✓ Martha Manning (2002), ”The Legacy” (in Unholy Ghost, p. 256-269)
✓ William Styron (2002), ”From Darkness Visible” (in Unholy Ghost, p. 114-125)
✓ Ruth Whippman (2012), ”America the Anxious” (http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/22/americathe-anxious/)
✓ RECOMMENDED: COMPLETE YOUR FIRST DRAFT of the FINAL PAPER by TODAY

Presentations of Final Projects

Tues. 4/21 – Presentations
✓ No Readings

Thurs. 4/23 – Presentations
✓ No Readings

Tues. 4/28 – Presentations
✓ No Readings

Thurs. 4/30 – Presentations
✓ No Readings

Sat. 5/9 – 9AM: DEADLINE for FINAL PAPER (~12 pages)

**I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus, provided I give you fair and ample warning.**