From Madness to Mental Health

Autumn Quarter 2017
Monday, 6:00 – 9:00 pm

Course Instructor
Alida M. Bouris, PhD, MSW
Associate Professor, School of Social Service Administration
University of Chicago
Phone: 773-834-4304
Email: abouris@uchicago.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this seminar, we will critically engage and discuss historical and contemporary texts on the topic of “mental health.” Whereas early research, practice, and literature tended to characterize people as mad, insane, or crazy, more recent works have adopted the philosophy and language of mental health, well-being, and recovery. Still, stigma on mental health remains pervasive, and portrayals in popular culture often dramatize mental illness and the potential dangers that people with mental illness pose to the public good. In this course, we will endeavor to define what is meant by “mental illness” and “mental health,” how these definitions are historically, socially, and culturally situated, and how different understandings shape both private and public responses. Course materials will draw from a wide range of disciplines, including psychiatry, psychology, sociology, anthropology, law, public health, and social work, as well as portrayals in popular culture and the narratives of people living with and affected by mental illness.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the quarter, students will understand:

- The diversity of social, cultural, and medical approaches to understanding mental illness and mental health, and how these understandings have changed over time.
- How expressions of mental illness and mental health are historically and culturally situated.
- Mental illness as a subjective experience.
- How different social, political, and cultural groups and institutions respond to expressions of mental illness, and the implications of such interventions for people living with and affected by mental illness.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The course grade is determined by attendance, facilitation of and participation in small and large group discussions, and a final assignment. Details on the assignments are below.

COURSE FORMAT

Class time will involve lectures, large and small group class discussions, videos, and other in-class activities. My hope is that we can have an engaging discussion about the topics in the
course, with less need for lecture. Rather, we will endeavor to co-create a vibrant and open environment where we can engage with difficult material and fundamental questions about meaning making and how different actors, organizations and cultures make sense of and respond to human suffering. To that end, it is critical that students read the required readings assigned for each class.

REQUIRED READINGS

All readings are available in Canvas or online, as presented below. There is no course book required for purchase. It is possible that the readings may be adjusted during the quarter based on new materials and world events, etc.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

All written assignments must be typed (double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font with one-inch margins; this is not a default setting in Word so please make sure your paper is properly formatted) and free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors. References should conform to the style of the American Psychological Association (APA Style, 6th Edition). Although the scholarly content of your work is a primary interest, the structure of your paper is an essential component of your work. All assignments should contain proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling and be organized in a coherent and thoughtful manner.

To receive full credit, all work must be submitted on time. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on their stated due date, unless otherwise indicated. Assignments turned in late without advance approval will be penalized a half grade for each day they are late, e.g., from an A to an A-, from an A- to a B+, etc.

Requirement 1: Attendance and Participation – 20% Due: Ongoing

Attendance and Participation: Please notify me via email or telephone in advance of class if you are going to be absent due to illness, religious holidays, university-sanctioned events, family emergencies, or other unforeseen circumstances. Class participation will be evaluated by attendance and active participation in classroom discussions. Active participation in discussions will be evaluated on both the quality and quantity of participation. Contributions to discussions are expected to reflect an understanding of assigned readings, critical thinking, and the ability to integrate and build on the contributions of others.

Three strategies will mark active participation in this course: (1) preparing for class by reading the assigned material, (2) giving voice to your questions and ideas, and (3) listening carefully to the ideas and questions of others. Evidence of active participation includes a range of behaviors such as asking questions in class, emailing classmates or the instructor with clarifying questions or comments about course material, volunteering to participate in classroom activities, commenting directly on ideas presented by other students, and monitoring your own participation levels to avoid “monopolizing” class discussions.

A course on mental health and mental illness will inevitably engage difficult and sensitive topics, some of which people will have direct experience with. Thus, it is critical that we all keep an open mind, listen to the perspectives and questions of our colleagues, and appreciate that we come to the course with different interests, life experiences, perspectives, and responses. An ideal learning environment is one that is based on a foundation of respect and openness, and is sensitive to the diversity of experiences present in the classroom. Together, we will set norms for how we want to relate to each other during class discussions. Please see the attached document on classroom/discussion norms, which we will review and adapt for our time together.
A Note on Laptops and Cell Phones: Cell phones should be turned off and/or silenced during class. Texting during class is prohibited. Laptops are permitted in the classroom but should only be used to take notes for class. Using a laptop for anything other than in course note-taking will result in a significant reduction in your attendance and participation points and will result in laptops no longer being allowed in class. Eating and drinking in class are fine, as long as you avoid disturbing other students and clean up after yourself.

Requirement 2: Student Facilitated Seminar Discussions – 30% Due: Ongoing

Beginning in Week 4, a group of 2 to 3 students will be responsible for preparing a critical reading response and facilitating class discussions on the weekly assigned readings and topic(s). There are two components to this assignment:

Component 1: Reading Reflection

- Each person in the group will prepare a two page critical response to the assigned learning materials. In your response, please provide a brief summary of the main points, ideas, or arguments that are being engaged.
- After your brief summary, please consider any points of dis/agreement, connections, and disconnections, in the materials. I, and your colleagues, want to see how you think and this is a space where you get to engage and play with different ideas. For example, do you agree or disagree with the author(s)? State the reasons for your response. In cases of disagreement, propose an alternative way of examining the issue(s) under consideration. It is easy to criticize but good critical thinking involves being able to offer up other ways of examining, understanding and responding to the world. Your critical response also can consider how author(s) engage with diverse populations with respect to race/ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, ability status, religion, age/developmental stage, etc.? I do not expect you to have the answers to the issues addressed in the required materials but rather to grapple with complex ideas and to offer up unique ways of thinking about and responding to the materials, and how they play out for diverse populations across time and place.
- At the end of your summary, please include at least 2 questions for potential discussion.
- Each person in the group will prepare their own summary and set of discussion questions. However, the reflection and questions should be helpful for planning your learning activity below.

Component 2: Group Facilitation of Discussion and Interactive Learning Activity

- Each group will work together to develop a set of discussion questions and an interactive learning activity for the class. The goal is not to lecture your colleagues on the materials but to facilitate a discussion and learning activity that brings the key ideas, arguments, and materials to life. You are not required to but can select additional readings, podcasts, or other media to present as part of your facilitation and/or further learning. Creativity in application is encouraged.
- All students will work with me in advance of their assigned week to discuss the readings, possible questions, and ideas for course discussion.

Requirement 3: Final Assignment – 50% total

Outline Due: Monday, October 23 (in class) – 15%
Final Paper Due: Monday, November 27 (in class) – 35%

There are two options for the final assignment. Option 1 is a traditional research paper while Option 2 is a creative assignment that enables students to pursue an area and project of particular interest to them. Details on each option are below.
Option 1: Research Paper

Choose a designated area of mental health that is of interest to you and that has been included in either the DSM or the ICD at some point in time. For example, you could choose depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, ADHD or other conditions in current versions of the DSM-5 and ICD-10, or you can select topics that are no longer considered “psychiatric disorders,” such as homosexuality, gender identity disorder, or hysteria. The topic need not be something that we have covered in class but should be of genuine interest to you. In 8-10 pages, please address the following:

• **Section I:** The history and diagnostic criteria of the condition: when was this condition considered to be a readily identifiable mental illness and why? In other words, what are/were the social, political, cultural, and/or economic factors associated with this condition formally entering psychiatric/medical manuals? What are/were the criteria used to diagnose this condition? You need not be exhaustive in this section but should give a general overview with appropriate examples (approximately 2 pages).

• **Section II:** Compare and contrast at least two different settings/cultures where this condition has been differentially understood. In your answer, describe how each setting attempted to explain the presence of the condition in the population, e.g., why is someone affected, afflicted, or suffering? For example, from the 1940s to the 1970s, American psychiatry relied on the concept of the schizophrenogenic mother, which referred to disordered maternal nurturing such as rejection, neglect, or overprotection, to explain the development of schizophrenia. As another example, the book *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (Anne Fadiman, 1997), tells the story of how a family and community of Hmong immigrants in the United States (U.S.) understand epilepsy as a type of spiritual giftedness and how this understanding is distinctly different from the U.S. medical system’s understanding of epilepsy. In addition, how are the symptoms associated with the illness expressed differently in these two different settings? Here, you may want to review research and writings on culture bound syndromes or the Americanization of mental illness (see the work of Ethan Watters). In addition, it may be useful to review literature on anthropology, social work, and sociology (approximately 3-4 pages).

• **Section III:** In the final section of the paper, describe at least two different approaches to responding to people who are/were diagnosed with the selected condition. These approaches can but need not be connected to the two settings/cultures that you reviewed in Section II of the paper. Describe what is done in each approach and underlying philosophies. What are/were the outcomes associated with each approach, e.g., is the condition maintained, alleviated, or worsened? What is the nature of the evidence for these claims? In this section, it may be helpful to review literature on treatment approaches, e.g., literature from anthropology, public health, social work, psychology, psychiatry, sociology, and nursing, as well as writings from people living with and affected by the condition (approximately 3-4 pages).

Outline Directions: In 2.5 to 3 pages, please submit a draft outline of your paper, with approximately one page for each section of the final paper. In each section or in a separate final section, please list any questions for consideration or areas where you would like specific guidance. Please be sure to include references in your outline and a separate reference page that includes a list of cited literature (page 4). I will return the outline with detailed feedback as well as answers to your questions and/or requests for specific guidance.
OPTION 2: Creative Final Project

Option 2 enables you to engage with a particular topic we have discussed this quarter and to create a final assignment that brings the material to life in a thoughtful and creative way. To make it as applicable to your intellectual and creative interests, it is purposefully open-ended and flexible. Be creative in choosing a format that will be of the greatest value to you. Possible formats include:

- A reading and conversation guide
- A presentation for colleagues, neighbors, or community member
- An article, either for an academic or mainstream audience
- A zine or a comic book
- A short film or a podcast

Your assignment should demonstrate substantial engagement with assigned course readings, as well as material that was not assigned in the class. In addition, each assignment should be accompanied by a two page document that specifies how the final project connects to the ideas we have discussed in class (see below outline).

Outline Directions: As the assignment is open-ended, you will be asked to submit a 2.5 to 3 page proposal during Week 5. Your outline should address the following areas:

1. The proposed area/topic of mental health you are taking up in your assignment, e.g., stigma and stigma reduction campaigns, cultural expressions of mental illness, alternative approaches to psychiatric care, mental health and criminal legal system, the links between racism, discrimination and mental health, etc.
2. The format and anticipated length of your final project take, e.g., a presentation, zine, article, etc. Who do you anticipate the audience being, and how will you get it to them?
3. Please discuss the foundational materials that will guide your project and how you will apply them. What additional sources will you draw upon?

Please communicate/meet with me as you develop your idea, and be sure to include references in your outline (page 4). I will return the outline with detailed feedback as well as answers to your questions and/or requests for specific guidance.

EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Your grade will be based on the total points accumulated for the course, as follows:

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Required Readings

Week 1: Course Introduction and Overview Perspectives on Madness, Mental Illness, and Mental Health September 25

Required Reading


For Further Learning


Week 2: Perspectives on Madness, Mental Illness, and Mental Health October 2

Required Reading


For Further Learning


Chapter 1: Horwitz, A. V. An overview of sociological perspectives on the definitions, causes and responses to mental health and illness (pp. 6-19).

**Week 3: Perspectives on Madness, Mental Illness, and Mental Health**

**Required Listening and Reading**


**For Further Learning**


**Week 4: Perspectives on Madness, Mental Illness, and Mental Health**

**Student Group 1 Facilitates Discussion**

**Required Reading and Listening**


**For Further Learning**


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**Week 5: Perspectives on Madness, Mental Illness, and Mental Health**

**October 23**

**Due: Outline for Final Assignment**

**Group 2 Facilitates Discussion**

**Required Listening and Reading**


People of Color and Mental Illness Photo Project: [http://diorvargas.com/poc-mental-illness/](http://diorvargas.com/poc-mental-illness/)

**For Further Learning**


Week 6: Cultural Expressions of Illness and Health

Group 3 Facilitates Discussion

Required Reading and Listening

Aguilar, A. (Writer). Out of the shadows: Trading the couch for the curandero [Radio series episode]. In Eight Forty Eight. Chicago, IL. Available at: https://www.wbez.org/shows/eight-fortyeight/out-of-the-shadows-trading-the-couch-for-the-curandero/d0fe3924-d0e5-4302-97b5-10f4dc61f67d


For Further Learning


Week 7: Cultural Expressions of Illness and Health

Group 4 Facilitates Discussion

Required Reading and Listening


Luhrmann, T. M. (2007). Social defeat and the culture of chronicity: Or, why schizophrenia does so well over there and so badly here. Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry, 31(2), 135-172.

For Further Learning


Watterson, Ethan. *The Americanization of mental illness:* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slHZkCX1Ybk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slHZkCX1Ybk)

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**Week 8: Diverse Experiences and Responses to Mental Health**

November 13

**Group 5 Facilitates Discussion**

**Required Reading**


**For Further Learning**


Week 9: Diverse Experiences and Responses to Mental Health  
November 20

Group 6 Facilitates Discussion

Required Reading and Listening

Chapter 5: The twentieth century—New voices of hope (pp. 77-87)  
Chapter 6: Pioneers and innovations (pp. 88-112).


For Further Learning


Week 10: Diverse Experiences and Responses to Mental Health  
November 27

Final Assignment Due

Required Reading, Listening, and Viewing


Review the following websites and associated resources:

Hearing Voices Movement: http://www.hearingvoicesusa.org/
Background Video on HVM: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQpjY6dakic

The Icarus Project: http://theicarusproject.net/

Intervoice: http://www.intervoiceonline.org/

National Alliance on Mental Illness: http://www.nami.org/

This is My Brave: http://thisismybrave.org