

HLTH AGE 4Q03: Representations of Mental Illness Winter 2020

Instructor: Dr. Mat Savelli
Email: msavelli@mcmaster.ca
Lecture: Tuesdays, 11:30-2:20pm

Office: Kenneth Taylor Hall Rm 230
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:30-3pm

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Course Description

Increasingly, stories and experiences relating to individuals diagnosed with mental health-related problems are being recognized as fundamental to the study of mental illness. Various media – including books, television, film, newspapers, songs, and poetry, among others – are utilized to bring these stories to light. Yet personal narratives and third-party accounts do not merely “tell a story” - they may be used to re-evaluate government healthcare policy and reshape treatment regimens. These representations also play a central role in shaping popular and medical understandings of mental health and mental illness. This course asks students to examine representations of mental illness and the wider world of mental health through a variety of mediums, including film, literature, autobiography, poetry, music, diaries, and art.

Course Objectives

After the course, students should have a strong grasp on how representations of mental illness have contributed to popular ideas about mental health. Students should come to appreciate the key differences in how various social actors have depicted the issue of mental illness, including physicians, artists, and individuals diagnosed with mental illness themselves. Students should also be able to explain how representations of mental illness have been mobilized by the consumer/survivor movement to challenge the biomedical conception of mental illness.

Required Materials and Texts

- All materials are available on Avenue to Learn.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Proposal: 13%
2. Annotated Bibliography: 10%
3. Essay: 35%
4. Presentation: 20%
5. Weekly Participation: 20%
6. Writing Tips Quiz: 2%

Course Evaluation – Details

Writing Tips Quiz (2%)

This short online quiz can be completed on Avenue to Learn. Students are required to read a description of common writing problems and then complete the subsequent quiz.

Essay Proposal (13%)

Students are required to submit a 2-page (double spaced) proposal relating to their final assignment. The proposal should clearly state your research question (not your thesis!)

and explain why it is significant and worthy of study. The question should be grounded in pre-existing scholarly literature (at least 3 secondary sources) and should make reference to whatever primary source you plan on analyzing.

Annotated Bibliography (10%)

In preparation for their major essay, students are required to complete an annotated bibliography, with a maximum length of 4 single-spaced pages. Please be sure to use APA formatting for the bibliography and provide a short one paragraph summary for each source and discuss how you will be using it within your final essay. You should include a MINIMUM of ten sources at this stage, although it is expected that students will continue to consult new sources while completing their essay.

Essay (35%)

Students are required to complete a 10-12 page, double-spaced final paper in APA format on any subject relating to representations of mental illness. For example, you might choose to focus on a specific medium or instead investigate a particular theme across different genres/media. The paper should incorporate both primary materials (the representations you will be analyzing) as well as secondary material (scholarly work on representations of mental illness). You may write on any topic of your choosing, but all topics should be cleared with the instructor well in advance.

Weekly Participation (20%)

Regular class attendance and participation are *mandatory* requirements to succeed in this course. Classes primarily take the form of a large group discussion, and students will be graded for the quality of their oral contributions. Students should aim to ground their comments in both course material and real-world experience. Although some people will naturally speak more than others, it is important that all students aim for regular contributions to the discussion. It is critical that students stay on top of the reading material in order to ensure good class discussions.

Presentation (20%)

Each student will be responsible for leading a 30 minute portion of class. During this time, students should provide a critical reflection upon the reading/representation of mental illness being discussed. This should NOT simply be a summary of what the representation is about; instead, students should ground their presentation in the broader context of discussions and understandings of mental health and illness. In addition to analyzing their material, students should prepare questions for the rest of the class. Sign-up for topics begins during the first class.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (Jan 7)

Introduction to Madness, Mental Illness, and Differentiation

Readings:

- Davis, *Constructing Normalcy*
- Hacking, *Madness: Biological or Constructed?*

Week 2 (Jan 14)

Visualization and Representations

Readings:

- Sturken and Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*
- Gilman, *Seeing the Insane*

Week 3 (Jan 21)

Techniques of Representation

Readings:

- Shoeneman et al. "Interior Landscapes of Mental Disorder"
- Birdsall et al. "Of Unsound Mind"
- Johansson & Sternudd, "Iconography of Suffering in Social Media"

Notes: WRITING QUIZ DUE

Week 4 (Jan 28)

News Media and Mental illness

Media:

- Russell, "Brave and Afraid"
- Press, "Madness"
- Vice News, "Institutionalized"

Notes: PROPOSALS DUE

Week 5 (Feb 4)

Personal Narratives of Mental Illness

Media:

- Tauchert, "Notes from My Psychosis"
- *Binge* Pilot (shown in class)
- Dixon, "Left of Normal"

Week 6 (Feb 11)

With Reference to the Medical World

Media:

- RD Laing, *Divided Self*, chapter 11
- Selected writings from Ronald Pies
- DSM-5 clinical vignettes

Week 7 (Feb 17-21)

Reading Week

Week 8 (Feb 25)

Fiction

Media:

- extracts from: Plath, *The Bell Jar*
- Kesey, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*

Week 9 (Mar 3)

Non-Traditional Forms of Representation

Media:

- Mental Illness and song
- Meme collection
- Consumer goods

Week 10 (Mar 10)

Mad Activism

Media:

- *Phoenix Rising*, vol 6, issue 1, 1986
- *Mad Students: This Insane Life*, issue 2, 2014
- NFB: *Mental Patients' Association* (film: shown in class)

Notes: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Week 11 (Mar 17)

Advertising and Public Information

Media:

- Print ad collection
- Video ad collection
- Anti-stigmatization campaigns

Week 12 (Mar 24)

Family Perspectives

Media:

- "When My Father Actually Lost His Mind"
- "Reaching My Autistic Son through Disney"
- "The Story of a Street Person"

- “My Lovely Wife”

Week 13 (Mar 31)

Film

Media:

- *Black Swan* (shown in class)

Notes: FINAL ESSAY DUE

Week 14 (April 7):

Returning to Representations

Course Policies

Email

Do not email the course instructor or TAs via Avenue to Learn. Direct all communication to our McMaster email addresses from your McMaster address. Questions that can be easily answered by looking at the syllabus will be ignored.

Attending Class

It is expected that attending class is a student’s primary priority, and these classes are not taught as distance education. In other words, class will not be podcasted and students are expected to attend regularly. Important announcements, including changes to the syllabus, may be made in lecture.

Submitting Assignments

Assignments must be submitted in class (as hard copies) and online to the Avenue to Learn dropbox. Both copies are officially due at the beginning of lecture on the due date, after which point late penalties will immediately apply. Failing to submit both copies by this point will result in a late penalty. “Being off campus,” “living in Mississauga,” and “getting stuck in traffic,” will not be accepted as a reason for late submission.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

| MARK | GRADE |
|-------------|--------------|
| 90-100 | A+ |
| 85-90 | A |
| 80-84 | A- |
| 77-79 | B+ |
| 73-76 | B |
| 70-72 | B- |
| 67-69 | C+ |

| MARK | GRADE |
|-------------|--------------|
| 63-66 | C |
| 60-62 | C- |
| 57-59 | D+ |
| 53-56 | D |
| 50-52 | D- |
| 0-49 | F |

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 3% per day, including weekends. These should be submitted to the Department of Health, Aging, and Society (KTH 226) or to the physical dropbox located just outside that office.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Students using MSAFs will have to complete all assignments at a later date - the grade for missed assignments or tests will NOT be tacked onto any other assignment or test. MSAFs must be filed on the day that the assignment is due, triggering an automatic 3 day extension. Without exceptional permission granted officially by your faculty, extensions beyond 72 hours will not be given.

Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Course Modification

The instructor reserves the right to modify elements of the course during the term. If any modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#), located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. [Student Accessibility Services](#) can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

If you require this course outline in an alternate/accessible format, please contact the Department of Health, Aging & Society (ext. 27227 | e-mail: hasdept@mcmaster.ca).

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.