Culture, mental health and psychiatry
(CHDV 23301, 33301; ANTH 24315, 35115; HIPS 27302)
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SUMMARY
While mental illness has recently been framed in largely neurobiological terms as “brain disease,” there has also been an increasing awareness of the contingency of psychiatric diagnoses. In this course, we will draw upon readings from medical and psychological anthropology, cultural psychiatry, and science studies to examine this paradox and to examine mental health and illness as a set of subjective experiences, social processes and objects of knowledge and intervention. On a conceptual level, the course invites students to think through the complex relationships between categories of knowledge and clinical technologies (in this case, mainly psychiatric ones) and the subjectivities of persons living with mental illness. Put in slightly different terms, we will look at the multiple links between psychiatrists’ professional accounts of mental illness and patients’ experiences of it. Questions explored include: Does mental illness vary across social and cultural settings? How are experiences of people suffering from mental illness shaped by psychiatry’s knowledge of their afflictions?

PREREQUISITES
This course is intended for 3rd and 4th year undergraduates and graduate students with some background in the social sciences.

COURSE FORMAT
The course meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Tuesdays we meet together as a group and I will lecture for most of the session. On Thursdays you will meet with your discussion section. My Tuesday lectures will not necessarily cover the readings
per se. Instead, I will provide a background and framework for our discussions of the texts on Thursdays.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION
Students will be evaluated on the basis of the following requirements and assignments:

1) **Attendance** of lectures and participation in discussions (20% of grade). Please make sure that you complete the required readings for the day.

2) A series of short (500 word) **reading responses**. Beginning week 2 of the course, students will write a response to the readings for each week and post it to the “Discussion Board” section of the Chalk website. The reading response can either take the form of comments or questions that arise from the readings for that week, or a comment on a reading response posted by another student. If you choose to comment on another student’s response you should make clear reference to and engage with the text(s) being discussed as well. Students who would prefer not to share their responses with their classmates, can email them directly to me and to your TA. It is important that responses be posted (or emailed) 8 PM on the Wednesday **prior to** the Thursday class session. (20% of grade)

3) A take-home **midterm exam**. (30% of grade) Midterm will be distributed at the end of class on Tuesday February 12, and will be due on Monday February 18 at 10:00am.

4) A 3,000 - 4,000 word **final paper**. All students have the following options for the final project:

   **A)** An **illness narrative** based on either 1) an interview with a family member or friend who has experienced mental illness, 2) an interview with family member or friend who has witnessed or been a caregiver for a relative struggling with mental illness and undergoing treatment, or 3) a first-person account of mental illness as found in an autobiography or film/documentary.

   **B)** A **cultural analysis** of a chosen diagnostic category from the proposed DSM-V

   **C)** A **review** of a full-length ethnography—chosen from a list—which links the book to course readings and situates it in the context of the anthropological and cultural psychiatric literature on mental health.

Students should prepare a one paragraph abstract proposing their topic by February 21. The paper is due on March 19 – one week after the last day of class. (50% of grade)
Students taking the course Pass/Fail must complete reading responses and either the midterm or final paper.

Two required books will be available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore and on reserve at Regenstein:


All other texts will be available in the “Course Documents” folder on Chalk.
Schedule of course sessions, readings and lecture topics:

1. MENTAL ILLNESS AND PSYCHIATRY: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS


   Jan 8 – Introduction to the course and lecture

   Jan 10 – Discussion

2. EXPERIENCING DISTRESS


   Jan 15 – Lecture

   Jan 17 – Discussion
3. PSYCHIATRIC POWER AND INSTITUTIONAL LIFE


Jan 22 - Lecture:

Jan 24 - Discussion

4. THE EPISTEMIC CULTURES OF PSYCHIATRY


How to think about science, Episode 22 – Allan Young; *Ideas*, CBC Radio; Audio interview (54 min): http://www.cbc.ca/video/news/audioplayer.html?clipid=1479178366


Jan 29 – Lecture

Jan 31 – Discussion
5. THERAPEUTICS AS TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF


Joe Dumit, 'Drugs for Life', Molecular Interventions, 2 (2002), 124


Feb 5 – Lecture

Feb 7 – Discussion

6. THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF ILLNESS AND CHRONICITY

Tanya M. Luhrmann, 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), pp. 155-72.


Feb 12 – Lecture
Midterm distributed
7. RECOVERY, SELF-ADVOCACY AND IDENTITY

Nev Jones, “Keep it Complex”: Realities and Fantasies of C/S/X Activism


Jim Sinclair, “Don’t Mourn for Us.”


8. GLOBAL PSYCHIATRIES AND THE CULTURAL ENCOUNTER


9. ADDICTION'S CIRCUITS AND TRAJECTORIES


March 5 – Lecture

March 7 – Discussion

10. SUMMING UP AND LOOKING AHEAD


March 12 – Lecture

March 19
Final paper due