The Culture of Mental Illness

MHHS-M 492
MHHS-M 592

Spring 2012
Tuesdays 6:00-8:40pm
NU 221

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Office Hours: MW 12-2 or by appt.

Required Texts/Films:
One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, Ken Kesey (1962)
The Bell Jar, Sylvia Plath (1971)
Sybil, Flora Schreiber (1973)
The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales, Oliver Sacks (1985)
Prozac Nation, Elizabeth Wurtzel (2002)

Silent Snow, Secret Snow, Conrad Aiken (1934) – In the “Resources” section of Oncourse
The Yellow Wallpaper, Charlotte Perkins Gilman – In the “Resources” section of Oncourse

Visual Texts (we will screen the following films):
Now Voyager, Irving Rapper (1942)
One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, Milos Forman (1975)
A Beautiful Mind, Ron Howard (2001)

Course Description: This course explores the ways in which our understanding of mental illness is constructed, represented, and proliferated throughout our culture, by examining text and film. We will consider how we as individuals and as a society are affected by different representations of mental illness, and how this translates into everyday interaction with others.

Requirements: This class will be conducted as a seminar, and class time will be devoted to discussion and exploration. Completion of the assigned readings prior to each class is required. You are expected to engage actively in class; individual participation will be evaluated each session. Additionally, you will write two papers and give one in-class presentation.

Required writing assignments:
-MHHS undergraduate students (6-8 pages): due March 6 and May 1
-MHHS graduate students (10-12 pages): due March 6 and May 1
Paper topics are up to you. For the first paper, you’ll need to stick to texts/films we’re using in class. For the second paper, you may move beyond what we’ve explored in class.

For each paper, you must write a proposal due **two weeks** before the paper is due. Proposals should be 1 page (single spaced) and include a detailed explanation of what you think your purpose/thesis/argument will be; a list of the text(s)/film(s) you’ll be using; some of the problems you expect to encounter; a question or set of questions you hope to ask and consider; and an explanation of why you’re writing the paper.

On the day your proposal is due, you’ll email it to me by 4:00. I will make copies and distribute in class. Students will each have 5 minutes to present/discuss paper proposals. Students will be expected to provide constructive feedback.

**Presentation:** At the beginning of the semester, you will sign up to give one in-class presentation. Presentations should be 15-20 minutes in length, followed by 10-15 minutes of discussion. Presentations should be related to the scheduled topics for that day, but should refer to resources outside of those used in class, and offer a new perspective.

**Final Grade:**
- Paper 1: 20%
- Paper 2: 25%
- Presentation: 25%
- Participation/Attendance: 30%

**Class Schedule:**

**January 10: Introduction**  
Syllabus discussion  
The Ellis/Szasz Debate, *Mental Illness: Fact or Myth?*

**January 17: Theory Introduction**  
Sigmund Freud, “On Beginning the Treatment” (1913)  
Sigmund Freud, “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through” (1914)  
Paul McHugh and Phillip Slavney, “The Concept of Diseases” (1998) from *The Perspectives of Psychiatry*  
Thomas Szasz, “Introduction” (1964) from *The Myth of Mental Illness*  
Michel Foucault, “Madness and Culture” (1954) from *Mental Illness and Psychology*

**January 24: The Case of Neurasthenia**  
S. Weir Mitchell, *From Wear and Tear, or Hints for the Overworked*  
S. Weir Mitchell, *From “Nervousness and Its Influence on Character”*  
S. Weir Mitchell, *From “The Evolution of the Rest Treatment”*  
John Harvey Kellogg, *From The Household Monitor of Health*  
John Harvey Kellogg, *From The Ladies’ Guide in Health and Disease*
The Yellow Wallpaper, Charlotte Perkins Gilman
Student Presentation:

January 31: Now, Voyager
Screening of film: Now Voyager, 1942

February 7: Now, Voyager Discussion
Marion Harland, “What Shall We Do with the Mothers?”
Student Presentation:
Student Presentation:

February 14: Men and Mental Illness
Ken Kesey, One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest (1962)
William Cockerham, “The Mental Hospital Inpatient Experience” (1989) from Sociology of Mental Disorder
Student Presentation:

February 21: One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest
Screening of film: One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest, 1975
Paper proposal presentations/discussion

February 28: Women and Mental Illness
Sylvia Plath, The Bell Jar (Chapters 1-9)
Student Presentation:

March 5: The Bell Jar – class moved to Monday instead of Tuesday
Plath, The Bell Jar (Chapters 10-20)
Student Presentation:
Paper presentations/discussion

March 13
No class – Spring Break

March 20: Sybil
Flora Rheta Schreiber, Sybil (Parts I and II)
Student Presentation:

March 27: Sybil
Schreiber, Sybil (Parts III and IV)
Student Presentation:

April 3: Children and Mental Illness
Screening of film: What’s Eating Gilbert Grape, 1993 (to be arranged outside of class)
Conrad Aiken, Silent Snow, Secret Snow, 1934
April 10: Mental Illness in the Clinic
Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales*
Student Presentation:
Student Presentation:

April 17: Mental Illness and Genius
Screening of film: *A Beautiful Mind*, 2001
Paper proposal presentations/discussion

April 24: Mental Illness in the Century
Elizabeth Wurtzel, *Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America*, 2002
Student Presentation:

May 1: Papers Due