Sociology 376: Topics in Sociology

Mental Health and Society

Mondays and Wednesdays
12:30 – 1:50 PM
University Hall 102

Professor: Mariana Craciun
Contact: mariana.craciun@northwestern.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2 – 4 PM
Office Location: 1812 Chicago Ave, Rm. 109

Teaching Assistant: George Balgobin
Contact: balgobin@u.northwestern.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Office Location: Crowe Café

Course Description

Few fields of knowledge have been more powerful in shaping our ideas of what it means to be a normal human being than the psychological sciences. In this course we will examine the psych sciences’ influence by seeking answers to the following questions: How have psychiatry, psychology and other mental health occupations impacted our understandings of mental health and illness? What are the professional and knowledge dynamics that have shaped treatments and approaches to mental illness? How do people experience mental illness, and how have these experiences been addressed by various cultural and institutional treatment configurations? Moreover, how do treatment approaches perpetuate various social inequalities? And, finally, what are the broader effects of such approaches on how we live our everyday lives? To answer these questions, we will draw on historical, anthropological and sociological scholarship that examines the dynamics of medicalization, and the processes by which diagnoses are intrinsically gendered and racialized. We will read works on the constitution of a “personal problems” jurisdiction, the institutionalization and deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, and other psychiatric interventions intended to cure mental and emotional difficulties. Lastly, we will critically examine the impact of such therapeutic technologies on arenas that are constitutive of our everyday lives (e.g. work, education, family and intimacy).
The course has three parts:

- First, we will examine the processes of diagnosis and medicalization. We start with a brief overview of how mental health and illness are understood, and continue with the social dynamics of diagnosis and medicalization. Next, we focus on anthropological works on the experience of mental illness, and sociological theories of stigma and labeling. We conclude this section with a discussion of gender and race as social categories partially constituted by their intersection with particular psychiatric diagnoses.

- The second part of the course focuses on the psychological professions (e.g. psychiatry, psychology, psychotherapy, psychiatric nursing) and their approaches to mental illness. We will proceed from institutionalization, and early attempts at talk therapies, to psychoanalysis, deinstitutionalization and the turn to pharmaceuticals. We will end this section with a discussion of the rise of the neurosciences.

- We end the course with an examination of how psychological ideas and discourses have reverberated into society more broadly. We will begin with an examination of mental illness in non-Western contexts. Lastly, we will return to modern Western societies to trace such influences in the arenas of work, education, and the family, and, more broadly, in how we think about intimacy and selfhood.

Requirements and Grading

- Attendance and Participation comprise 15% of your grade. We will take attendance every class, and keep track of who participates in discussions. This means that you need to come to class having done the readings, and being prepared to answer and ask questions about them. You may also participate in class discussion by posting questions to the Discussion Board, and answering your classmates’ questions.
  - You may miss one class without penalty. All other absences will count towards your final grade, unless you provide written documentation to justify your absence.
  - You are encouraged to participate in class discussion politely and respectfully. Mental health and illness are sensitive topics, the latter in particular being still marked by stigma (as we will see in Part I of the course). Keep this in mind as you make contributions to class discussions, particularly when drawing on personal opinion and experience.
  - Being physically present in class should be accompanied (and this is not something we can take for granted) by being mentally present. This means that, if you use a laptop computer or a tablet to take notes or access readings, you should refrain from visiting your favorite social media sites. Please use technology responsibly, as your activities can not only add to yours and your colleagues’ experiences in class, but also detract from them.
  - You may not use your phone or any other device to record (audio or video) lectures and/or class discussions without my approval.
• **Two in-class closed-book exams** will count towards 50% of your grade. The first exam will cover material from Part I of the course, and will take place on April 28th. The second exam will cover material from Part II of the course, and will take place in class on May 28th. Each exam counts for 25% of your grade, and will include identification of concepts, and short essay questions.
  
  - **Make-up exams** will only be offered to those who have a medical excuse or other serious justification for missing class on the day of the exam.

• **A final paper** will count for 35% of your grade. You will be required to write a final paper no longer than five, double spaced pages. The assignment will be distributed in class on May 12\textsuperscript{th}, and it will be due at 4PM on June 9\textsuperscript{th}.
  
  - You are expected to submit both a hard copy of the paper (to my mailbox), and an electronic one through *Safe Assignment*. *Safe Assignment* compares your work with that of others to identify possible violations of the university’s academic integrity policy. Should you have any questions about proper citation practices, feel free to ask questions during class, or in office hours.
  
  - **Technological difficulties** are not acceptable reasons for failing to turn in your paper on time. You must back up your files (for example, on an external hard drive, flash drive, or by using cloud storage). You must check your email regularly for messages. You must also check our Blackboard site for announcements.
  
  - **No late papers will be accepted.**

• **Grade contestation** does not guarantee a grade increase, and may result in a lower grade. To contest a grade, you must write a report (at most, three double-spaced pages) identifying the specific questions/ideas/issues you believe you should have been graded differently on, and justifying your belief. You must submit this report no earlier than three days, and no later than a week, after receiving your grade.

A note on email communication

- I am committed to responding to your emails within 24 hours of receiving them. I answer emails between 8AM and 5PM Monday through Friday. The **subject** of your email should contain “Sociology 376” so that I don’t overlook it.

**Academic integrity**

- I strictly enforce Northwestern University’s rules on academic dishonesty. Under such rules, I am obligated to report any suspected instances of plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, abetting dishonesty, obtaining an unfair advantage, or others, to the Assistant Dean for Academic Integrity. Please familiarize yourself with the university’s policy on academic integrity: [http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html).
The most common instances of plagiarism I have encountered have consisted of students appropriating text from internet sites (e.g. Wikipedia) without properly citing the source. This poses two problems: first, assuming that the internet source you’re drawing on is credible, and second, and more importantly for academic integrity, stealing someone else’s words and ideas. This, along with other forms of dishonesty, is unacceptable. In nearly every case, I assign a failing grade in the course.

Accommodations

Please notify me in the beginning of the quarter if you need special accommodations. You should also contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD; 847-467-5530).

Readings

Reading assignments will be posted on the Blackboard site. Please check the documents folder frequently, and, if you cannot locate an item there, check Library Reserves. You may use your laptops and tablets to access readings, or, if you prefer, you can print the week’s assigned articles and chapters and bring them to class. Should you opt for the former, I ask that you be mindful of how you use technology and the web for the duration of our meetings.

READING SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

Mar 31   Introduction to class

PART I – DIAGNOSING, MEDICALIZATION, AND PATIENTHOOD

Apr 2   Mental health and mental illness


**WEEK 2**

**Apr 7  Medicalizing everyday problems**


**Apr 9  Labeling and stigma**


**WEEK 3**

**Apr 14  Constructing psychiatric diagnoses**


**Apr 16  Experiences and narratives of mental illness**


WEEK 4
Apr 21  Gender, sexuality and hysteria


Apr 23  Race and psychiatric diagnoses


WEEK 5
Apr 28  EXAM 1

PART II – APPROACHES TO MENTAL ILLNESS – A HISTORY

Apr 30  The asylum


WEEK 6

May 5  Being institutionalized


May 7  Deinstitutionalization and its consequences


WEEK 7

PAPER ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED

May 12  Psychoanalysis and the consolidation of American psychiatry


May 14  Psychoanalytic ideas and the turn to biology

WEEK 8

May 19  Biology and pharmaceuticals


May 21  The brain, mental illness, and mental health


WEEK 9

May 26  NO CLASS – MEMORIAL DAY

PART III: THE PSYCH SCIENCES AND SELFHOOD

May 28  EXAM  2

Psych sciences and mental illness in non-Western context

Luhrmann, Tanya 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):135-72.

WEEK 10

June 2  Therapeutic lives


June 9  PAPER DUE, 4PM.