

SOCI 5631(b)-FDE
SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH & ILLNESS
Fall 2019

Seminar: Wednesdays 2:30-5:30

Location: AT 3006

Instructor: Dr. Chris Sanders

Office: RB 2038

Office hours: before/after seminar and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This year SOCI 5631 will explore sociological research on mental disorder, focusing on the social constructivist perspective. Mental wellbeing is a complex phenomenon that has been the focus of scholarly debate in several disciplines. The fundamental premise upon which this seminar is based is that mental disorders are social phenomena, which involve interactions between social structural, cultural, institutional, psychological, and biological variables. Using this general framework, we will examine conceptions of mental disorder, social responses to mental disorders, sociological theories of mental health and illness, sociological critiques of psychiatric diagnosis and the DSM, we will reflect upon the work of mental health professionals and policy makers, and, ultimately, we will apply what we have learned to current issues in the sociology of mental health. In each case, a sociological perspective will be applied to understand the social context, origins, and dynamics of mental health and illness.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Acquire general knowledge about the history of western conceptions of mental illness and the psychiatric profession;
- To develop an understanding of how socio-cultural context shapes conceptions of mental disorder, expression of human distress, and health inequalities in populations;
- To become familiar with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), including its history, significance, how it shapes diagnostic practice and informs public awareness of mental disorder, and the controversies surrounding it;
- To develop insight regarding social stigma, the medicalization of social problems, and the role of psychiatry and medicine in social control;
- To understand how a sociological perspective contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of mental wellbeing and mental disorder(s);
- To develop critical thinking and evaluation skills in order to analyze complex social arrangements related to mental disorder, and to effectively communicate this knowledge to colleagues in the seminar and beyond.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The following books are required in addition to supplemental readings posted to the D2L website. They are available from the LU bookstore, online, or they can be borrowed through the LU Library's "Racer" inter-library loan system (allow 2 weeks for requests to be processed and delivered). We'll read the books in the following order:

1. Scheff, Thomas J. 1999. *Being Mentally Ill: A Sociological Theory, Third Edition*. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction.
2. Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc.
3. Conrad, Peter. 2007. *The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders*. Johns Hopkins.
4. Ronson, Jon. 2011. *The Psychopath Test: A Journey through the Madness Industry*. London: Picador.
5. Davidson, Joyce and Michael Orsini (eds). 2013. *Worlds of Autism: Across the Spectrum of Neurological Difference*. Minneapolis, MN: University Press.
6. Lukianoff, Greg and Jonathan Haidt. 2018. *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas are Setting Up a Generation for Failure*. New York: Penguin Press.

EVALUATION

Attendance and participation (25%): Students are expected to attend every class and to have required readings completed prior to seminar. Public speaking, active listening, and civil discussion are required of everyone on a weekly basis and will comprise the participation mark.

Discussant duty (25%): Each student will be in charge of leading 2-3 seminars. You should focus on an analytical appraisal of the readings rather than simple description. This means engaging with significant strengths, weaknesses, and future research directions. This will require advanced preparation, including distributing discussion questions. You may also prepare short presentations and activities.

Analytic reflections (25%): Two minor writing assignments (approx. 5 pages) that may take the form of an: 1) *analytical essay* in which you think through a particular idea or concept (e.g., How gender is represented in the DSM), 2) *argumentative essay* in which you apply an concept beyond the readings (e.g., discuss whether "public speaking anxiety" is medicalization and why); or 3) a *compare/contrast essay* in which you present a comparative argument on two different topics (e.g., analyze the sociological theory, analysis, and implications of weeks 3 and 4).

Final paper (25%): A compare/contrast writing assignment (15-20 pages) that applies course concepts to a topic of your choosing (25%). Options will be discussed in class.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE[‡]

Week 1: September 04 — “The Sociology of Mental Disorder”

- Cockerham, William C. 2017. *Sociology of Mental Disorder, Tenth Edition*. London: Routledge. (Skim Chapters 1, 2; read Chapter 4, pp. 80-90)

Week 2: September 11 — “Deviance and Labelling Theory”

- Scheff, Thomas J. 1999. *Being Mentally Ill: A Sociological Theory, Third Edition*. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine.

Week 3: September 18 — “Conceptualizing Stigma”

- Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc. (read Chapters 1, 3-4; skim Chapters 2 & 5)
- Scambler, Graham. 2009. “Health-Related Stigma.” *Sociology of Health & Illness* 31(3): 441-455.

Week 4: September 25 — “Stress, Distress, and the Life Course”

- Pearlin, Leonard I. 1989. “The Sociological Study of Stress.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 30(3): 241-256.
- Pearlin, Leonard I. 2010. “The Life Course and the Stress Process: Some Conceptual Comparisons.” *The Journals of Gerontology* 65B(2): 207-215.
- Seabrook, Jamie and William R. Avison. 2012. “Socioeconomic Status and Cumulative Disadvantage Processes Across the Life Course: Implications for Health Outcomes.” *Canadian Review of Sociology* 49(1): 50-68.
- Perry, Brea L., Kathi L.H. Harp, and Carrie B. Oser. 2013. “Racial and Gender Discrimination in the Stress Process: Implications for African American Women’s Health and Well-Being.” *Sociological Perspectives* 56(1): 25-48.
- Zimmer, Carl. 2018. “The Famine Ended 70 Years Ago, but Dutch Genes Still Bear Scars.” *The New York Times* (January 31).

Week 5: October 02 — “Social Control and Medicine”

- Conrad, Peter. 2007. *The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.

Week 6: October 09 — Writing Week

- Use this time to write your first analytic reflection.

Week 7: October 16 — Reading week

- No assigned work. Catch up on reading and writing, and enjoy some time off.

[‡] This is a general outline and is subject to change. Contact me for current unabridged version.

Week 8: October 23 — “Diagnosis and the DSM”

- Kleinman, Arthur. 1988. “What is a Psychiatric Diagnosis?” Pp. 5-17 in *Rethinking Psychiatry: From Cultural Category to Personal Experience*. New York: Free Press.
- Paris, Joel. 2013. “The Ideology Behind DSM-5.” Pp. 39-44 in *Making the DSM-5: Concepts and Controversies*, edited by J. Paris and J. Phillips. New York: Springer.
- Kokanovic, Renata, Gillian Bendelow, and Brigid Philip. 2013. “Depression: The Ambivalence of Diagnosis.” *Sociology of Health & Illness* 35(3): 377-390.
- Kessler, Ronald C. 2002. “The Categorical versus Dimensional Controversy in the Sociology of Mental Illness.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43(2): 171-188
- Turowetz, J and D. W. Maynard. 2016. “Category Attribution as a Device for Diagnosis: Fitting Children to the Autism Spectrum.” *Sociology of Health & Illness* 38(4): 610-626.

Week 9: October 30 — Criminality, Labelling, and the Madness Industry

- Ronson, Jon. 2011. *The Psychopath Test: A Journey through the Madness Industry*. London: Picador.

Week 10. November 06 — Autism Spectrum Disorder (Part 1)

- Davidson, Joyce and Michael Orsini (eds). 2013. *Worlds of Autism: Across the Spectrum of Neurological Difference*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. (pp. 1-168)

Week 11: November 13 — Autism Spectrum Disorder (Part 2): Asperger Syndrome

- Davidson, Joyce and Michael Orsini (eds). 2013. *Worlds of Autism: Across the Spectrum of Neurological Difference*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. (pp. 169-330)

Week 12: November 20 — Fragility, Safetyism, Anxiety and Mental Disorder?

- Lukianoff, Greg and Jonathan Haidt. 2019. *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas are Setting Up a Generation for Failure*. New York: Penguin Press.

Week 13: November 27 — Writing Week

- Use this time to write your second analytic reflection.
- Also begin to work on final term paper. Develop an outline and main argument, and meet with me the first week of December to discuss.