Sociology of Mental Illness: A Historical Approach (SOCI 136E)

Winter 2025. MWF 5-5:50pm in CSB 004

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 Office hours: M/W 3-4pm in SSB 474

**Overview**

Psychiatry has long been a productive sight for sociological inquiry. On the one hand, psychiatry is a medical field bolstered by genetics, biochemistry, insurance requirements, and professional training. On the other hand, psychiatry has always been beleaguered by questions over accuracy and professional legitimacy. In this class, we will survey some of the issues psychiatrists have dealt with over the last century and some of the ways sociologists have made sense of this peculiar field. By the end of the course, students should be able to articulate the ways psychiatry has changed over the last century and provide sociological explanations for these changes.

**Assessment**

Assessment for the class will consist of attendance, group assignments, a midterm paper, and a final exam. The breakdown of final grades will be as follows:

Attendance: 10% of your grade.

Memos: 30% of your grade. Each student will submit a total of five reading response memos. You can choose which weeks to write on (the only week you cannot select is week 5). Memos must be submitted by 11:59pm the Friday of the week you are writing on. Memos are 300-500 words, will be graded pass/fail, and are to be submitted via the Assignments page in Canvas. All memos must summarize at least one reading in the syllabus for that week and present a question, criticism, or comment for further discussion. You may also engage with other readings.

Midterm Essay: 20% of your grade. 5-7 double-spaced pages, due Friday of week 5.

Final exam: 40% of your grade. The final exam will take a similar form to the midterm, but with two essay responses.

**Readings**

All texts are available on Canvas. I recommend setting up a VPN to access online readings off campus. See instructions [here](https://blink.ucsd.edu/technology/network/connections/off-campus/remote-desktop/index.html) Please let me know if you have trouble accessing the readings.

Some readings will contain technical genetics terms. I strongly recommend that you consult publicly available resources like Wikipedia.

**Course policies**

Cheating and plagiarism:

Students are expected to do their own work and to cite sources according to established norms as outlined in the UCSD Policy on Academic Integrity. The policy can be found here: h: http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/Appendices/2. A FAQs page on what counts as cheating can be found here: [http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/faq/index.html](http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/faq/index.html%20).

Cheaters will receive a failing grade on the assignment or exam and/or the entire course. They may also be referred for additional disciplinary action elsewhere at UCSD. If you are unsure about what is considered either plagiarism or cheating, please ask.

Missing/late exams and assignments:

Failure to turn in your take-home exams on time without a valid excuse will result in the deduction of one half-letter grade for every day (or part thereof) after the deadline. Excuses communicated after the deadline will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.

Contesting grades:

You may contest any grades by sending the assignment or exam to me.

Struggles with the class:

If you are having trouble with any aspect of the class, including deadlines, it is always best to contact me as soon as possible. That way we can address the problem before you have fallen too far behind or lost too many points from your final grade.

Disability accommodations:

Students requesting accommodation for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaisons in the Sociology Department in advance so that accommodation may be arranged.

**Week 1: Society, Institutions, and Madness**

*Monday (1/6)*

Introduction, no reading

*Wednesday (1/8)*

Scull, A. (2014) *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Chapter 4, “Melancholie and Madnesse”)

*Friday (1/10)*

Scull, A. (2014) *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Chapter 7, “The Great Confinement”)

**Week 2: Psychiatry and Social Control**

*Monday (1/13)*

Foucault, M. (2006) *Psychiatric Power*. New York: Picador. (Lecture 5-6, pp. 123-142).

*Wednesday (1/15)*

Foucault, cont.

*Friday (1/17)*

Conrad, P. (1975) ‘Discovery of Hyperkinesis: Notes on the Medicalization of Deviant Behavior,’ *Social Problems* 23(1): 12-21.

**Week 3: Freudianism and Early 20th-Century Psychiatry**

*Monday (1/20)*

No class, MLK Jr. Day!

*Wednesday (1/22)*

Porter, R. (2002) ‘The Century of Psychoanalysis?’ in *Madness: A Brief History*. NY: Oxford University Press, 183-214.

Mitchell, Stephen A. and Margaret J. Black 1995. “Sigmund Freud and the Classical Psychoanalytic Traditions” in Freud and Beyond. NY: Basic Books, 1-22.

*Friday (1/24)*

Scull, A. (2014) *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Chapter 11, “A Meaningful Interlude”)

**Week 4: Anti-Psychiatry**

*Monday (1/27)*

Rosenham, D. (1973) ‘On Being Sane in Insane Places,’ *Science* 179(4070): 250-258.

Szasz, Thomas S. 1960. “The Myth of Mental Illness,” *American Psychologist* 15(2):113-18.

*Wednesday (1/29)*

Goffman, E. (1961) ‘The Moral Career of the Mental Patient,’ *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes* 22(2): 123-142.

*Friday (1/31)*

TBD

**Week 5: Review and Midterm Exam**

*Monday (2/3)*

Review, no reading

*Wednesday (2/5)*

Review, no reading

*Friday (2/7)*

Midterm Exam

**Week 6: A New Way of Treating the Mentally Ill**

*Monday (2/10)*

Healy, D. (2002) The Creation of Psychopharmacology, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (Chapters TBD)

*Wednesday (2/12)*

Gong, N. (2019) “Between tolerant containment and concerted constraint: Managing madness for the city and the privileged family.” *American Sociological Review* 84(4): 664–689.

*Friday (2/14)*

Gong, cont.

**Week 7: DSM-III and Diagnostic Psychiatry**

*Monday (2/17)*

Scull, A. (2014) *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Chapter 12, “A Psychiatric Revolution?”)

*Wednesday (2/19)*

Horwitz, A.V. (2015) ‘How Did Everyone Get Diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder?’ *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 58(1): 105-119

*Friday (2/21)*

Horwitz cont.

**Week 8: Genes, Looping Effects, and Diagnostic Change**

*Monday (2/24)*

Hacking, I. (2006) Making up people,’ *London Review of Books*, August 17, 23-26.

*Wednesday (2/26)*

Navon, D. and Gil Eyal. (2016) ‘Looping Genomes: Diagnostic Change and the Genetic Makeup of the Autism Population.’ *American Journal of Sociology* 121(5): 1416-1471.

*Friday (2/28)*

Navon & Eyal, cont.

**Week 9:** **Expansion of Biological Psychiatry**

*Monday (3/3)*

Lakoff, Andrew. 2006. *Pharmaceutical Reason: Knowledge and Value in Global Psychiatry*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (Ch.2 “Medicating the Symptom” 43-72).

*Wednesday (3/5)*

Lakoff, cont.

*Friday (3/7)*

Luhrmann, TM, R Padmavati, H Tharoor and A Osei. (2015) ‘Differences in Voice Hearing Experiences of People with Psychosis in the USA, India and Ghana: Interview-Based Study,’ *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 20(1):41-44.

**Week 10: Colonial Psychiatry and Final Review**

*Monday (3/10)*

Edington, C. (2013) ‘Going in and Getting Out of the Colonial Asylum: Families and Psychiatric Care in French Indochina, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55(3): 725-755.

*Wednesday (3/12)*

Review

*Friday (3/14)*

Review