Sociology 194a: Sociology of Mental Health and Illness

This course examines sociological approaches to mental health and illness. The focus of the course will be more on the history, definitions, social responses and consequences of conceptualizations and treatment of mental illness than on the development of individual conditions we deem to be mental disorders. While there will be some discussion of social factors related to mental disorder and types of mental health treatment, we will mostly examine these in the context of the social definition and response to what are seen to be psychiatric conditions. The majority of the reading in the course will be from the required books with some supplementary (and important) articles on LATTE. We will include both classic and contemporary sociological writings on mental health.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand sociological approaches to mental health and illness.
- Become familiar with issues in the history of mental illness and treatment.
- Evaluate the origins and consequences of social policies toward mental disorder.
- Examine the emergence and application of specific categories of mental disorder.
- Examine the integration of social and biomedical approaches to mental illness.
- Encounter the experience of mental illness and treatment.
- Assess the spread of Western psychiatric ideas and the globalization of diagnoses and treatment.

Expectations:

Students are expected to attend class regularly and be prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that week. I expect written assignments to be submitted on the day they are due and late submissions of written work will not receive full credit.

There will be two take-home essay examinations (mid-term and final) and the option of an independent research paper or power point presentation (on a topic to be approved) required of each student. Details of these assignments will be handed out in class and posted on LATTE. Midterm and final each constitute 30% of grade, independent paper or presentation 20% and class participation (including attendance) 20%.

Students are expected to adhere to university policies of academic integrity (see HYPERLINK "http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai"http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai). Suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Student Development and Conduct with appropriate sanctions and related consequences.
If a student has a documented disability please inform the professor at the beginning of the course and we will make necessary accommodations.

**Books:**
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (1965)

**Articles (all posted on LATTE):**
Franz Kafka, excerpts from *The Metamorphosis*
David Karp, "Taking anti-depressant medications: Resistance, trial commitment, conversion, disenchantment." *Qualitative Sociology* 16 (4): 337-359
Latif Nasser, “Do some cultures have their own way of going mad?” *Boston Globe*, 2012

**Course Schedule:** (dates may be shifted a bit depending on class progress)

Introduction to Class  (Jan. 17)
History of Madness (Jan. 20 & 24)
Conceptualizing the mad from the bad
Institutionalizing Madness
Readings:
Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, pp. 1-100
Burns, *Psychiatry*, pp. 1-34

The Rise of the Profession of Psychiatry and the Medical Model (Jan. 27)
Readings:
Burns, *Psychiatry*, pp. 35-53

Psychiatry and Social Control (Jan. 31)
Institutionalization and the law
Insanity defense
Mental patients rights
Readings:
Goffman, *Asylums*, pp.1-169
Rosenhan, “On being sane in insane places” (LATTE)
Burns, *Psychiatry*, pp.64-99, 120-23
Guest lecture: Aaron Wirth, Dept. of History (Feb. 3)

Triumphs and failures of public mental hospitals and deinstitutionalization (Feb. 7)
Transinstitutionalism
The myth of the mentally ill homeless
Readings:
Rothman, “The Enduring Asylum” (LATTE)
Websites:
The State Hospital: In Memoriam – Website: www.1856.org
Abandoned Asylum Website – www.abandonedasylum.com

The coming of diagnostic psychiatry (Feb. 10 & 14)
Categorizing mental disorders: DSM-1 through DSM-5
Diagnostic psychiatry and medicalization
Readings:
Horwitz, pp.1-83
Frances, “Normal Grief or Depression in DSM-5” (see link above)
Latif, “Do some cultures have their own way of going mad?” (See link)

Mental illness and stigma (Feb. 17)
“Labeling” theory, stigma and identity
Inequalities: Race, class and gender
Readings:
Link et al., “Public conceptions of mental illness.”
Review Rosenhan and Goffman

Midterm Essay due Friday Feb. 17 in class
Paper or Power point assignment given out Feb. 17
One page proposals due on March 16

[Winter Break Feb. 20-24]

The Experience of Mental Illness (Feb. 28)
- Kaysen, *Girl Interrupted* (read book, view film)
- Karp, “Taking anti-depressant medications:…”
- Kafka, excerpts from *The Metamorphosis* (LATTE)

Pharma and everyday ill (March 6)

The age of anxiety and new wonder drugs: Miltown, Valium, Prozac

The increasing pharmaceuticalization of everyday life

Readings:
- Guest Lecture: Alison Bass, Journalism, Brandeis (March 9)
- Film: Selling Sickness (March 13)


Three cases:
- Depression (March 16)
  - Reading:
    - Horwitz and Wakefield, “Is there really an epidemic of depression?”
    - Herzberg, pp. 150-92
- ADHD (March 20)
  - Reading:
    - Conrad and Potter, “From Hyperactive Children to ADHD Adults.” (LATTE)
- SAD and Paxil (March 27)
  - Reading
    - Lane, “The Selling of Social Anxiety Disorder.” (LATTE)

The Globalization of American Psychiatry (March 30, April 3)

Reading:
- Watters, *Crazy Like Us*, pp. 1-63, 127-185, pp. 249-56..

Mental Health and Human Rights (April 17)

Guest Lecture: Dr. John Sargent, Tufts Medical School

Reading: TBA

Newest directions biological psychiatry: neuroscience and genetics

Guest Lecture: Dr. Andrew Neirenberg, MGH (April 20)

Reading: TBA

Student power point presentations (April 24, 27, May 1)
8-10 page independent paper due April 24
Senior final essays due May 8, others due May 15

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