“A serious historical study of the female malady should not romanticize madness as one of women’s wrongs any more than it should accept an essentialist equation between femininity and madness. Rather, it must investigate how, in a particular cultural context, notions of gender influence the definition and, consequently, the treatment of mental disorder.” – Elaine Showalter

COURSE DESCRIPTION
For feminist scholars, mental illness is both a significant and a very complicated issue. On the one hand, psychological theories about what makes a woman mentally “healthy” are often deeply embedded in traditional, patriarchal assumptions about proper feminine behavior and social roles. This fact has led some feminists to argue that women labeled as mentally ill may simply be rebelling, in covert and confused ways, against the unreasonable demands of society. On the other hand, the idea that our society is “toxic” for girls and women, encouraging self-destructive behaviors and mental distress, has played a prominent role in the women’s movement. Thus, feminist scholars often draw on psychological theories and models in their own explanations of what is wrong with current society and how it should be fixed.

This course will examine the multiple meanings of women’s mental illness in the United States from the 16th century, through end of the 19th century, and on to the present. We will draw on a broad range of psychological, historical, sociological, and literary writings on mental illness. Although the primary focus of the course is on sociological explanations for mental illness, the course is not intended to be anti-psychiatric or anti-medical. We will take seriously current theories that much mental illness is the result of organic problems and can be treated with medications. However, we will also aim for a more complicated understanding of what mental disease means and how it functions within particular, gendered social contexts. Topics include psychoanalysis, the relationship between mental illness and women’s family roles, mental illness and women’s creativity and self-expression, and the effect of gendered notions of “abnormal” on juvenile/criminal justice responses. A major theme of the course will be the intellectual and political dangers inherent in drawing a line between “normal” and “abnormal” women.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
By the end of the quarter, you will be acquainted with a wide range of approaches to mental illness. The goal is to recognize and explore the crucial issues that feminists face in conceptualizing mental illness and mental health. These issues include:

- the political nature of psychological and psychiatric knowledge
- the historical relationship between psychiatric practice and the control of women’s lives
- the gendered nature of mental illness—that is, the way that both diagnostic labels and symptoms have been implicitly characterized as either male or female
- the effect of social structures and social interaction on gendered forms of mental illness
- the consequences of gendered psychiatric labeling on the social control of men and women
REQUIRED TEXTS
1. The following books are available at the PSU bookstore:
2. Required readings are available via a Smart Copy course packet [referred to throughout this syllabus as “CP”]. Smart Copy is located at 1915 SW 6th Ave.
3. Additional required readings are available via D2L. See https://d2l.pdx.edu/ to access D2L and click on the “Readings” folder.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (TOTAL OF 400 POINTS)
1. Active class participation. Students must come to lecture prepared to discuss the day’s readings. A total of 6 in-class exercises (group discussion/individual write-ups and quizzes) will be given throughout the term. Each exercise will be worth 10 points. The top five in-class exercise grades will count toward your grade, and you will be able to drop one in-class grade with no penalty. Be sure to do the assigned readings for each day before coming to lecture, as the exercises may cover those readings. (50 pts)
2. Exam #1. Historical images of gender and mental illness and theoretical explanations for gender differences. (100 pts)
3. Group Presentation. Group analysis of The Testosterone Files. (100 pts)
   • Presentation requirements will be discussed in class.
4. Final exam or Paper. The final exam is cumulative, but focuses on the consequences and social control of mental illness. Alternatively, 426 students may choose to write a 5-7 page paper that analyzes the book by Danqah, Willow Weep for Me. Specific paper requirements are listed on the last page of this syllabus. Those who write the paper will not take the final exam. 526 students are required to write a final paper (see 526 syllabus for paper details) (150 pts).

COURSE POLICIES AND INFORMATION
• Deadlines and Make-ups. Assignments and readings should be completed by the beginning of class on their due date, and I prefer that a hard copy of assignments be turned in. Prior approval is required for emailing assignments. (Email assignments at your own risk – they sometimes get lost in my inbox.) Late work is penalized 10% per each class day. Please document any family or medical emergency and notify the professor or TA before class. Missed in-class participation opportunities and exams cannot be made-up without prior approval. Make-up exams must be arranged with and taken in the testing center [(503) 725-5301 or testing@pdx.edu].
• Class Notes. If you must miss class, see the PowerPoint slides on D2L, and/or copy the notes from one of your classmates. Then see the TA or professor to clarify anything you do not understand.
• Useful Contact Information. The following are resources that may be helpful this quarter or in the future:
   • SHAC Center for Student Health & Counseling: Website: http://www.shac.pdx.edu/caps/
   Phone: 503-725-2800
The Writing Center: **Website:** [http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu/](http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu/) **Phone:** 503-725-3570

- D2L: **Website:** [https://d2l.pdx.edu/](https://d2l.pdx.edu/). It is your responsibility to check Blackboard frequently for announcements and grades. Please contact the professor or the TA (sooner rather than later) if your grades are not accurately reflected on Blackboard.
- Additional information for current PSU students: [http://www.pdx.edu/students.html](http://www.pdx.edu/students.html)
- **Documented Disability.** If you are a student with a documented disability and registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), please contact me immediately to facilitate arranging academic accommodations. The DRC is located in 435 Smith and can be contacted at 725-4150 or by email at [drc@pdx.edu](mailto:drc@pdx.edu). Visit their site at [www.pdx.edu/uasc/drc](http://www.pdx.edu/uasc/drc).
# COURSE SCHEDULE

Course schedule subject to change with reasonable notice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan 9</strong></td>
<td><strong>PART I: HISTORICAL IMAGES OF GENDER AND MENTAL ILLNESS</strong> Course Introduction: Welcome!</td>
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<td><strong>Jan 11</strong></td>
<td><strong>Witches: Weakness &amp; “Evil” Women</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Read:</strong> CP “Witchcraft – wickedness or women hatred?” Chapter 3 in <em>Women’s Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness</em> by Jane Ussher</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan 13</strong></td>
<td><strong>Victorian Era: Weak/Passive/Dependent Women &amp; the “Rest Cure”</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Read:</strong> Gilman “The Yellow Wallpaper”</td>
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<td><strong>Pp. 9-36</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan 16</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS: Martin Luther King, Jr Day</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan 18</strong></td>
<td><strong>Victorian Era…to Freud</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Read:</strong> CP “Almost Beside Herself: The Case of Dora” Chapter 6 in <em>Crazy for You: The Making of Women’s Madness</em> by Jill Astbury</td>
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<td><strong>Jan 20</strong></td>
<td><strong>“Madwives” in the 1950s</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Read:</strong> CP “Women, Trouble, and Madness” Chapter 1 in <em>Madwives: Schizophrenic Women in the 1950s</em> by Carol Warren</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Jan 23</strong></td>
<td><strong>PART II: THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS FOR GENDER DIFFERENCES</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mental Illness as Caused by Internal/External Factors: Positivist Theories</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Read:</strong> D2L “The Role of Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder in the Subjectification of Women” by Ussher (2003), <em>Journal of Medical Humanities</em> 24:131-146</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan 25</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mental Illness as a Social Product: Positivist Theories</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Jan 27</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mental Illness as a Social Construct: Social Constructionist Theories</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Read:</strong> CP “Gender and Normality” Chapter 5 in <em>Gender &amp; Mental Health</em> by Prior</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan 30</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mental Illness as a Social Product or Social Construct</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Feb 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mental Illness as a Social Product or Social Construct</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>No assigned reading (class will focus on Busfield reading from January 25)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Feb 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>EXAM #1, covering material through Feb 1</strong></td>
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Week 5  **PART III: GENDER AND CURRENT PSYCHIATRIC LABELING**

Feb 6  Defining and Measuring Mental Disorder
Read: CP “Taxonomy as Destiny? The Birth of Labels” Chapter 2 in *Through the Looking Glass* by Dana Becker

Feb 8  Defining and Measuring Mental Disorder…to Types of Mental Illness
Read: CP “Gender Differences in Mental Disorders in the U.S. National Comorbidity Survey” by Kessler (2004), *The Economics of Gender and Mental Illness* 15:7-25

Feb 10  Types of Mental Illness

Week 6  Types of Mental Illness, continued

Feb 15  Types of Mental Illness, continued
Read: [1] CP “Making ‘a Way outa No Way’” Chapter 1 in *A Hunger So Wide and So Deep* by Becky Thompson

**PART IV: GENDER AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL CAUSES OF MENTAL ILLNESS**

Feb 17  Types of Mental Illness…to Stress/Multiple Roles

Week 7  Marriage, Divorce, Child-Rearing, Housework & Social Class/Employment

Feb 22  Marriage, Housework, etc.…to Violence Victimization
Read: CP “A Developmental Examination of Violence against Girls and Women” Chapter 2 in *Handbook of the Psychology of Women and Gender* edited by Unger

Feb 24  Violence/Abuse/Neglect Victimization
Read: D2L “The Impact of Childhood Abuse and Neglect on Adult Mental Health…” by Horwitz et al. (2001) *Journal of Health & Social Behavior* 42:184-201
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 8</th>
<th>Feb 27</th>
<th><strong>PART V: INSTITUTIONS, GENDER, AND POWER</strong></th>
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| **Psychiatric Treatment** | **Read:** [1] D2L “Gender Differences in the Use of Outpatient Mental Health Services” Chap. 2 in *Women’s Mental Health Services*, Levin, Blanch & Jennings  
| Feb 29 | **Psychiatric Treatment, continued** | **Read:** CP African American Women and Mental Health” Chapter 3 in *Contemporary Mental Health Issues Among African Americans* edited by Debra A. Harley and John Milton Dillard |

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<tr>
<th>Week 9</th>
<th>Mar 5</th>
<th><strong>GROUP PRESENTATIONS</strong></th>
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| Mar 7 | **Crime & Mental Disorder** | **Read:** [1] CP “Deinstitutionalization or Trans-Institutionalization? Girls & the Mental Health System” Section in *Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice* by Chesney-Lind and Shelden  
[2] CP “Mental Illness and Women Prisoners” Section in *Ill-Equipped: U.S. Prisons and Offenders with Mental Illness* by Human Rights Watch |
| Mar 9 | **Juvenile/Criminal Justice System** | **Read:** CP Specific Needs of Women Diagnosed with Mental Illness in U.S. Jails” Chapter 17 in *Women’s Mental Health Services: A Public Health Perspective* edited by Bruce Lubotsky Levin, Andrea K. Blanch, and Ann Jennings |

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<th>Week 10</th>
<th>Mar 12</th>
<th><strong>Criminal Justice System and the Law</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 14</td>
<td><strong>Legal Responses to Mental Illness</strong></td>
<td><strong>Read:</strong> D2L “The Law and Mental Disorder” Chapter 8 in <em>Gender &amp; Mental Health</em> by Pauline M. Prior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 16</td>
<td><strong>Discussion &amp; Review</strong></td>
<td>No required readings</td>
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**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21 FINAL EXAMINATION: 12:30-2:20pm**
The class will be divided into groups of 4-5 students, and each group will develop a 10-12 minute class presentation based on your group’s analysis of The Testosterone Files. At the beginning of the term, groups will be formed based on students’ topical interests. Each group will be responsible for analyzing Max’s transition from a given perspective and developing an academic argument based on this perspective.

The perspectives you may choose from to analyze the text include the following:
Biological; Behaviorist (psychological); Conflict (social constructionist); Feminist; Labeling (social constructionist); Psychoanalytic (psychological); Social causation (sociological)

Requirements for assignment:

- Prior to your presentation:
  - Create a written plan for division of labor among group members. Hold onto this plan because you will need to refer to it after your presentation is complete.

- During your presentation:
  - Make sure that your presentation includes a definition/explanation of your theoretical perspective
  - Make an argument as to why/how your perspective can explain Max’s transition
    - An academic argument includes 1) a thesis statement with a question and a position and 2) at least one claim that is supported by 3) evidence and theory. By evidence I mean findings based on empirical research, not merely your own anecdotal evidence. For more information about how to make an academic argument see “Establishing Arguments” at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/01/.
  - Tell us if your perspective might be limited in its ability to explain Max’s transition.
    - Why or why not?
  - How might another perspective help explain the transition? (choose at least one)
  - Tell us what you have learned (something new) about gender and mental illness from analyzing the text for this assignment
  - Your presentation must be informed by at least ONE type of EACH of the following sources:
    - The Testosterone Files (you must integrate a quote with a page #)
    - Assigned course reading other than The Testosterone Files
    - Academic source not assigned for this course (could be academic book, book chapter or journal article)
    - Non-academic on-line source (e.g. blog, magazine/newspaper article)
  - Your presentation must incorporate some type of visual aid (e.g., PowerPoint slides)

- During other groups’ presentations:
  - You will be required to evaluate each presentation based on evaluation criteria given to you on the day of the presentations

- After your presentation:
  - Assess group members’ participation (including your own) as it relates to original division of labor (i.e., did each member do what they were supposed to do?)

- What you need to turn in by Mon. March 5th:
  - Original plan for division of labor
  - List of references used in your presentation (please use MLA, ASA or APA format)

- What you need to turn in by Fri. March 9th:
  - Assessment of group members’ participation (including your own)
  - Evaluation of other groups’ presentation
This paper focuses on the book by Meri Nana-Ama Danquah, *Willow Weep for Me*. This book recounts the author’s experiences with depression and the mental health system. Her experiences raise questions about the causes of mental illness and how to best respond to mental illness once it occurs.

Your goal in this paper is to relate Danquah’s experiences to the course material on gender and mental illness. The paper assignment asks that you write descriptively about Danquah’s experiences, but that you also go beyond mere description to discuss the ways in which her experiences relate to more general questions about the causes of mental illness, the effects of mental illness labeling, and the best means for reacting to and/or preventing mental illness from occurring in the first place.

Specifically, you should consider the following questions and write a 5-7 page paper that addresses them. You do not need to answer the questions in their given order. In fact, the best papers will integrate the answers to the questions into a coherent paper. **To receive full credit, each of the following questions must be addressed in your paper:**

1. In your opinion, was Danquah’s depression *caused* by social factors or was it a *social construction*? You may also discuss biological and psychological causes, but your focus must be on either the social causation or the social construction perspective (or both). Provide evidence from the book and from class to support your response.

2. How did race, culture, gender, and social class affect Danquah’s self-concept and the reaction of others to her and her illness?
   - How do stereotypes of mental illness (and those who are typically labeled “mentally ill”) affect reactions to labeled mental illness? How do these stereotypes affect the self-concept of people who are labeled mentally ill?

3. By the end of the book was Danquah “cured?” If so, what factor(s) contributed to her “cure?” If not, explain what factor(s) indicate that she is still mentally ill.
   - What effect did the mental health system have on Danquah?

4. What (if anything) could have been done to prevent Danquah’s illness (or her mental illness labeling if you believe she’s not “really” mentally ill)?

5. Why do you think Danquah chose to write this book? What is her main point?

The paper that you write for this assignment should be 5-7 pages in length, typed, and double-spaced. You will be graded on the technical quality of your writing, the clarity and accuracy of your arguments, and the coherence of your paper. The primary consideration in grading will be your ability to successfully tie class material to the book. Thus, as an example, a discussion of the cause(s) of Danquah’s depression would be incomplete without a discussion of whether mental illness is a social product or a social construction. When you refer to the Danquah book or to class notes/readings, be sure to provide a citation [e.g., (Jackson 2006), or (class notes 2/17/2010), or (Danquah 1998, p. 105)]. You are not required to use any outside references (i.e., books/articles that are not read/discussed in class), but are welcome to do so.