COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to give you an overview of the ways a sociological perspective informs our understanding of mental health and illness. While sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and others all deal with issues of mental illness, they often approach the topic in very different ways. In general, a sociological perspective tends to focus on aspects of the social environment that we often ignore, neglect, or take for granted. It calls attention to how society or groups are organized, who benefits or is hurt by the way things are organized, and what beliefs shape our behaviors. In viewing mental illness, sociologists have primarily challenged dominant views of mental illness, examined how social relationships play a role in mental illness, questioned the goals and implications of mental health policy and researched how mental health services are organized and provided.

The course is divided into three sections, each exploring different aspects of this sociological view of mental illness. In the first section we will explore various definitions of mental illness, critically analyze different forms of mental illness, and examine the social process of labeling mental illness. In the second section we will analyze theories of mental disorder and how factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, race, and age affect mental disorder. The third section will examine historical and current social responses to mental illness.

Students are expected to read one textbook and two biographies of women diagnosed with mental illnesses. A small group presentation, one paper, and two examinations are also required. Finally, students are expected to participate in class and small group discussions.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course was designed with four objectives in mind:

1. To introduce a sociological perspective on mental illness, and to discuss how this perspective differs from those offered by psychiatry, psychology, and other relevant disciplines.
2. To describe and analyze the history of definitions of mental illness and of the dominant treatment modalities, particularly in the United States.
3. To provide basic information about the distribution of mental illness and psychological distress in the population, and about the theories that have been offered to explain the distribution.
4. To improve students’ skills at reading and critiquing sociological theory and research, and at applying sociological concepts to examples of mental illness.
REQUIRED TEXTS (available at PSU bookstore)


COURSE POLICIES AND INFORMATION

- **Late/Missed Assignments.** Assignments, exams, and readings should be completed by the beginning of class on their due date. Late work is penalized 10% per day. Please document any family or medical emergency and notify the professor or TA before class (email preferred). Missed in-class participation activities will not be accepted without documentation of a PSU excused absence.

- **Exams.** Each examination will include multiple choice and essay questions. The examinations are intended to test your knowledge of the major theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from the sociology of mental illness. They will cover material from readings, group discussions/presentations, lectures, and films. Make-up exams are only allowed in the event of a documented emergency. You must contact me before the test to arrange a make-up exam (email preferred).

- **Class Notes.** If you must miss class, copy the notes from one of your classmates. Then see the TA or professor to clarify anything you do not understand. Sometime after each class (typically within the next 24 hours), I will post the PowerPoint slides on D2L so you can view missed notes (D2L can be accessed at d2l.pdx.edu). One note of warning, however: I view my PowerPoint slides as an outline of the day’s lecture and they should in no way be considered sufficient as a replacement for attending class, paying attention, and taking your own notes.

- **Documented Disability.** If you are a student with a documented disability and registered with the Disability Resource Center, please contact me immediately to facilitate arranging academic accommodations.

- **Classroom Etiquette.** Failure to meet minimal standards of classroom etiquette is disruptive to your classmates. Therefore, you are expected to come to class on time, stay throughout the class period, and to refrain from inappropriate conversation. You are also expected to turn your cell phones off. If you are using a laptop, you are expected to use it only for note taking purposes and not for checking email, playing games, or any other purpose.

- **Academic Misconduct.** According to the PSU Student Code of Conduct, a student is subject to disciplinary action for academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is the act of knowingly or intentionally seeking to claim credit for the work or effort of another person or participation in such acts. This includes, but is not limited to: (a) cheating, (b) fraud, (c) plagiarism, such as word for word copying, using borrowed words or phrases from original text into new patterns without attribution, or paraphrasing another writer’s ideas; (d) The buying or selling of all or any portion of
course assignments and research papers; (e) Performing academic assignments (including tests and examinations) for other persons; (f) Unauthorized disclosure or receipt of academic information.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

10% **Active class participation.** Students must come to lecture prepared to discuss the day’s readings; this will be measured via group discussion write-ups and individual exercises.

10% **Small group presentation.** Students are required to participate in a short (10 minute) group presentation on a topic related to mental illness. More detailed information on the group presentations will be handed out during the first week of class.

30% **Midterm Exam.** Multiple choice and essay exam.

20% **Paper.** You are required to write and submit one 5 page paper, chosen from among three available paper assignment options.

- Two of the options (assignments #1 and #3, numbered in order of due date) ask that you analyze the experiences of two women who lived in mental hospitals (recounted in the Kaysen book and the Sheehan book) using concepts from the lectures and the text. The other option, paper assignment #2, asks that you write a short paper about one specific psychiatric disorder, based on an interview with a mental health professional and/or research articles on the disorder.
- The paper assignments are designed to help you learn how to apply the concepts from the course to real-life examples, and to improve your ability to recognize and discuss alternative perspectives on mental illness.
- Details of the three paper options are provided following the course schedule on pages 7, 8, and 9 of this syllabus.
- Papers must be handed in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. NOTE: My policy is to deduct 10% for EVERY DAY late (NOT every class day).
- **Please note that the two books are required reading, and will be covered on the examinations, whether or not you choose to write papers on them.**

30% **Final examination or Final paper.**

- The final exam is cumulative, but focuses on material covered after the midterm exam.
- Alternatively, you may choose to write a 9-12 page research paper on any topic related to the sociology of mental illness.
  - Specific paper requirements and topics will vary depending on your interests and career objectives.
  - You **must meet with the professor to receive approval for writing the paper** and to receive approval on your topic.
  - Graduate students are required to write the paper, but it is optional for undergraduates.
  - Those who write the paper will not take the final exam; this paper is due Thursday, June 13 by 10:15am (it can be emailed to the professor, sent via D2L, dropped off during the final exam, or placed in Professor Thompson’s mailbox in 217 Cramer Hall).
## Course Schedule

Course schedule subject to change with reasonable notice

### Week | Required Reading
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#### Week 1

**April 2:** Course Introduction

**PART I: THE SOCIAL DEFINITION AND DISTRIBUTION OF MENTAL ILLNESS**

- **April 4:** What is Mental Illness?
  - Begin reading Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*
  - M & W: Bruce “Mental Illness as Psychiatric Disorder” [pp. 26-36]

#### Week 2

**April 9:** What is Mental Illness?, continued

- M & W: Conrad and Schneider “Medical Model of Madness…” [pp. 3-26]

**April 11:** Historical and Cultural Perspectives on Mental Illness

- M & W: Kleinman “What is a Psychiatric Diagnosis?” (pp. 63-74)

#### Week 3

**April 16:** Theories of Mental Illness

- M & W: Scheff “The Role of the Mentally Ill & the Dynamics of…” [pp. 409-421]
- ***on D2L*** Rosenhan “On Being Sane In Insane Places”

**April 18:** Theories of MI, continued


***Sign up for group presentations—15 minutes to meet with your group***

#### Week 4

**April 23:** Common Forms of MI, continued

- Finish reading Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*

**PART II: THE SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY OF MENTAL ILLNESS**

- **April 25:** Validity and Reliability of Psychiatric Diagnosis
  - Begin reading Sheehan, *Is There No Place On Earth For Me?*

#### Week 5

**April 30:** Psychiatric Epidemiology

• M & W: Kessler et al. “Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of Mental Disorders …” [pp. 140-157]
  ***Paper Option #1 due April 30***

May 2: The Social Stress Model, SES and (Un)Employment
• M & W: Pearlin “The Sociological Study of Stress” [pp. 170-188]
• M & W: Miech et al. “Low Socioeconomic Status & Mental …” [pp. 294-315]

Week 6

MAY 7: MIDTERM EXAM

May 9: Stress/SES, continued, & Race, Ethnicity, and Culture
• M & W: Tausig and Fenwick “Recession and Well-Being” [pp. 316-335]
• M & W: Williams et al. “Racial Differences in Physical …” [pp. 336-357]
  ***Group presentation check-in: 15 minutes to meet with your group***

Week 7

May 14: Gender, Parenthood, Marital Status, and Age
• M & W: Evenson and Simon “Clarifying the Relationship …” [pp. 273-294]
  ***Paper Option #2 due on May 14***

May 16: Gender, Parenthood, Marital Status, and Age, continued
• M & W: Mirowsky and Ross “Sex Differences in Distress…” [pp. 233-249]
• M & W: Simon “Revisiting the Relationships among Gender, …” [pp. 249-272]

PART III: SOCIAL RESPONSES AND TREATMENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Week 8

MAY 21: GROUP WORK DAY: meet with your group & finalize presentation

May 23: Presentation Day #1
1. Are too many children diagnosed with ADHD?
2. Is “mental illness” too broadly defined?
3. Is there gender bias in psychiatric/psychological labeling and treatment?
4. Should antidepressants be given to children?
5. Is electroconvulsive therapy harmful or an effective treatment for mental disorder?

Week 9

May 28:
- First half of class: Presentation Day #2
  1. Does institutionalization help or harm mentally ill individuals?
  2. Should advertisements for prescription psychotropic drugs be directed to consumers?
  3. Should mental illness receive the same amount of health care coverage as physical illnesses?

(see next page for 2nd half of May 28 class)
- Second half of class: Mental Hospitalization and Deinstitutionalization
  - ***on D2L*** Mechanic & Rochefort “Deinstitutionalization: An Appraisal of Reform”

May 30: Help-Seeking and Stigma
- Finish Sheehan, *Is There No Place On Earth For Me?*

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<tr>
<th>Week 10</th>
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<td>June 4: MH Treatment; Mental Health and Crime</td>
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<td>- M &amp; W: Morrissey and Goldman “Cycles of Reform in the Care …” [pp. 569-585]</td>
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<td>- M &amp; W: Markowitz “Psychiatric Hospital Capacity, …” [pp. 585-604]</td>
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<tr>
<td><em><strong>Paper Option #3 due on June 4</strong></em></td>
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June 6: Mental Health, Crime, and the Law & Wrap up of Course
- M & W: Teplin and Pruett “Police as Streetcorner Psychiatrist…” [pp.733-753]
- M & W: Silver and Teasdale “Mental Disorder and Violence …” [pp.753-771]

| THURSDAY, JUNE 13 FINAL EXAMINATION: 10:15am-12:05pm |
**Paper Assignment Option #1**  
Due Tuesday, April 30th at the beginning of class

This paper focuses on the book by Susanna Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*. This book recounts the author’s experiences in a mental hospital where she was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. Her experiences raise questions about how mental illness is defined and diagnosed, and about the long-term effects of being in a mental hospital.

Your goal in this paper is to relate Kaysen’s experiences to the course material on models of mental illness, the social construction of mental illness, labeling theory, and diagnostic behavior. Specifically, consider the following questions and write a short paper that addresses them. You do not need to answer the questions one-by-one. In fact, the best papers will integrate the answers to the questions into a coherent paper. The paper assignment asks that you write descriptively about Kaysen’s experiences, but that you also go beyond mere description to discuss the ways in which her experiences relate to more general questions about how mental illness is defined, diagnosed, and experienced. **To receive full credit, each of the following questions must be addressed in your paper:**

1. What were the symptoms that caused Kaysen to be admitted and diagnosed as mentally ill?

2. What is the point of the page on “etiology” (p. 15)? How does it relate to different models of mental illness we discussed in class and that were described in the text?

3. What are “checks”? What do checks and other things like privileges tell you about the world of mental patients?

4. What does Kaysen mean when she says “(s)omeone who acts ‘normal’ raises the uncomfortable question, What’s the difference between that person and me? Which leads to the question, What’s keeping me out of the looney bin? This explains why a general taint is useful.”? How does this relate to labeling theory?

5. On pages 147-159, Kaysen discusses her diagnosis. What does her discussion imply about the medical and labeling models? What does it suggest about the objectivity of psychiatric diagnosis?

6. What does Kaysen’s life many years after she is discharged say about labeling theory? In what ways do her later experiences support labeling theory? In what ways do they refute it?

The paper that you write for this assignment should be 5 pages in length, typed, and double-spaced. You will be graded on the quality of your writing, the clarity and accuracy of your arguments, and the overall coherence of your paper. The primary consideration in grading will be your ability to successfully tie class material to the book (therefore, you are expected to refer to class material, such as lecture and required readings). When you refer to the Kaysen book or to class notes/readings, be sure to provide a citation [e.g., (McLeod & Wright 2010) or (class notes 4/16/2013)], and provide a references page. 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.
Paper Assignment Option #2
Due Tuesday, May 14th at the beginning of class

This paper asks that you investigate current psychiatric research on the distribution, causes, and/or course of a specific psychiatric disorder. You may acquire information about the disorder from a variety of sources: an interview with a mental health professional who is knowledgeable about the disorder, research articles on the disorder, or a chapter from a psychiatric textbook related to the disorder. (Other sources may be acceptable but must be cleared before the paper is written). You should choose at least three sources for this paper.

The paper that you write should review the information presented by your sources, and discuss the ways in which that information is consistent or inconsistent with sociological research on mental illnesses. Specifically, consider the following questions as you write the paper. (Depending on the sources you identify, some parts of the questions may not be relevant to you, but you must address as many of the following questions as you possibly can).

1. What disorder did you investigate? What sources did you find for your paper? Please include complete citations for published materials.

2. According to your sources, what are the primary causes of the disorder? If causes have not been established, what possible causes are drawing the attention of current research? What types of evidence have been used to evaluate the causes of the disorder?

3. Describe the distribution of the disorder in the population. What subgroups are most likely to experience this disorder? What explanations do your references give for this distribution?

4. What is the typical course of this disorder? When does it typically begin? Do people who experience the disorder usually get better? Is the disorder episodic?

5. To what extent were sociological understandings of the disorder apparent in the sources? How might a sociologist respond to the information that you gathered? Based on what you have learned about this disorder, is there anything sociology can contribute to our understanding of this disorder?

Finding sources for this paper may prove to be a challenge. Please come see me early in the quarter if you would like to consider this assignment – I can help. You might consider beginning with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV, which can be found in the PSU library with the call number: RC455.2 .C4 D536 2000; it is also available at most other libraries. The manual includes information about the diagnostic criteria for various psychiatric disorders and some (but very limited) information about the distribution and causes of disorders. Other possible sources include textbooks on abnormal psychology, the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, and Clinical Psychology Review. You might also try a search for relevant sites on the web (but be aware that not all websites have reliable information; if there is any reason to suspect the website’s veracity, it should not be used).

The paper that you write for this assignment should be 5 pages in length, typed, and double-spaced. You will be graded on the quality of your writing, the clarity and accuracy of your arguments, and the overall coherence of your paper.
Paper Assignment Option #3
Due Tuesday, June 4th at the beginning of class

This paper focuses on the book by Susan Sheehan, *Is There No Place on Earth for Me?* The book recounts the experiences of Sylvia Frumkin (a pseudonym), a young woman diagnosed with schizophrenia. Her experiences resonate with some of the material that we will read and discuss about treatment for mental illness and about the changes that occurred in the treatment system during the last half of the 20th century.

Your goal in this paper is to relate Sylvia’s experiences to material from the class sessions and from the readings. Specifically, consider the following questions, and write a short paper that addresses them. You do not need to answer the questions one-by-one. In fact, the best papers will integrate the answers to these questions into a coherent essay. As you will see from the questions, the paper asks that you write both descriptively and persuasively. That is, you will need to describe Sylvia’s experiences and also extrapolate from her experiences to make more general arguments about treatment options for mental illness. **To receive full credit, each of the following questions must be addressed in your paper:**

1. Briefly describe the history of Sylvia’s psychiatric problems. When did she first begin to experience serious problems? How long did her problems last? Were her problems ever successfully treated?

2. What are the main treatment options that Sylvia used? Were some more successful than others? Why were they more successful? Why did they eventually fail?

3. Throughout this book, the author argues strongly (although not always explicitly) that thoughtful, systematic, and consistent drug therapy is a fundamental necessity for Sylvia’s successful functioning. At the same time, the community programs Sylvia entered were also very important to her ability to remain out of the hospital. Drug therapies and community-based programs represent distinct (although not necessarily mutually exclusive) alternatives for treating mental illness. Based on the experiences described in this book, how would you summarize the role of each approach in treating Sylvia’s schizophrenia? Was one type of program more important than the other? Is it possible for one type of program to be successful without the other?

4. When did Creedmoor undergo deinstitutionalization? What changes were made to the hospital’s programs? How did these changes reflect the ideals of deinstitutionalization and community mental health that were discussed in class and/or in required readings? (hint: see Mechanic and Rochefort’s article on D2L). What general problems with the changes do Sylvia’s experiences point out?

The paper that you write for this assignment should be 5 pages in length, typed, and double-spaced. You will be graded based on the quality of your writing, the clarity and accuracy of your arguments, and the overall coherence of your paper. The **primary consideration** in grading will be your ability to successully tie class material to the book (therefore, you are expected to refer to class material, such as lecture and required readings). When you refer to the Kaysen book or to class notes/ readings, be sure to provide a citation [e.g., (McLeod & Wright 2010) or (class notes 4/16/2013)], and provide a references page. 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.
Recommended reading (not required for the class, but encouraged as time allows):

- Anton Chekhov, *Ward No. 6*
- David Karp, *Speaking of Sadness: Depression, Disconnection, and the Meanings of Illness*
- Elizabeth Etterre and Elinanne Riska, *Gendered Moods: Psychotropics and Society*
- Arthur Kleinman, *Rethinking Psychiatry*
- Verta Taylor, *Rock-a-by-Baby: Feminism, Self-Help, and Postpartum Depression*
- Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*
- R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience*
- R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self*
- Barbara Gordon, *I'm Dancing as Fast as I Can*
- Susan Baur, *The Dinosaur Man: Tales of Madness and Enchantment from the Back Ward*
- Thomas Scheff, *Mental Illness and Social Process*
- Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness*
- Allan Horwitz, *The Social Control of Mental Illness*
- Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis*
- Peter Sedgwick, *Psycho Politics: Laing, Foucault, Goffman, Szasz, and the Future of Mass Psychiatry*
- Andrew Scull, *Decarceration: Community Treatment and the Deviant*
- Paul Lerman, *Deinstitutionalization and the Welfare State*
- Robert Castel, Francoise Castel, and Anne Lovell, *The Psychiatric Society*
- Phil Brown, *The Transfer of Care: Psychiatric Deinstitutionalization and its Aftermath*
- Robert Perrucci, *Circle of Madness*
- Morris Schwartz and Alfred Stanton, *The Mental Hospital*
- Anselm Straus et al., *Psychiatric Ideologies and Institutions*
- John K. Wing and George W. Brown, *Institutionalism and Schizophrenia*
- David Rochefort, *From Poorhouses to Homelessness: Policy Analysis and Mental Health Care*
- Stuart Kirk and Herb Kutchins, *The Selling of DSM*
- Stuart Kirk and Herb Kutchins, *Making Us Crazy: DSM -- The Psychiatric Bible and the Creation of Mental Disorders*
- Paula Caplan, *They Say You're Crazy*
- George Becker *The Mad Genius Controversy*
- Barry Panter et al., *Creativity and Madness*
- Frank Barron, *Creativity and Psychological Health*
- Edrita Fried, *Artistic Productivity and Mental Health*
- D. Jablow Hershman and Julian Lieb, *The Key to Genius*
- Arnold Ludwig, *The Price of Greatness*
- Albert Rothenberg, *Creativity and Madness*
- Mark Freeman, *Finding the Muse: A Sociopsychological Inquiry into the Conditions of Artistic Creativity*
- Allan Horwitz, *Creating Mental Illness*
- Peter Conrad, *The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders*
- Allan Horwitz and Jerome Wakefield, *the Loss of Sadness: How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow into Depressive Disorder*