Sociology 397AM: Asylums, Madness, and Mental Illness in American Culture

Janice Irvine
University of Massachusetts Amherst, irvine@soc.umass.edu

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Course Summary
This course uses the rise and fall of the asylum movement to examine shifting ideas about “mental illness” and its treatment, from the mid-19th century to the deinstitutionalization movement in the 1970s. Born of a utopian spirit dedicated to healing minds broken by the modern world, insane asylums devolved into “theaters of madness” where “lunatics” were stigmatized and warehoused. Race, class, gender, and sexuality shaped how “mental illness” has been conceptualized and treated in American culture. Using sociological and historical research, as well as popular culture such as films, novels, and television, we examine the paradoxes of asylums and their role in a pivotal century in America.

Course Objectives

1. Analyze the asylum movement through a sociological lens, using concepts such as social norms, social control, and social hierarchies.
2. Analyze the role of place and the sociology of buildings in relation to shifting ideas of social difference and the treatment of difference.
3. Explain how social categories and social inequality shaped definitions of madness/mental illness, institutionalization, and treatment.
4. Analyze the historical role of asylums in societal, institutional, and cultural responses to individual difference.

Course Requirements
Assignments for this course include: discussion postings, quizzes, journal entries, short papers, and comments on Voice Thread. I will assess your mastery of class material based on these written assignments, quizzes, and online discussion posts.

Online Discussions: 25%.
Participation in online discussion is an essential component to this course. You must both post your own original comments, and respond to at least one other student’s comments, weekly. There are a total of 6 discussion threads over the course of the summer session. You will be graded on the quality of both your posts and your responses (each worth 5 points). Posts should involve insightful responses to prompts that critically engage with the course material, provide evidence of your mastery of key concepts from the readings, at times draw connections
from your own lives, and provide provocative questions for your classmates to engage with. Your responses to your peer’s posts should build on what they had to say, while still showing engagement with the material and involve meaningful interaction. See the Online Discussion Rubric for more details about the grading of discussion. Please see the “Netiquette” File on the Welcome Page for norms and expectations about online discussions.

Quizzes: 15%.
There will be a short online quiz for each week. This is to make sure you’re keeping up on readings and that you’re grasping key concepts. These quizzes will help us gauge if you need further clarification. The questions are multiple choice and true-false formats. You will receive immediate feedback about the correct answers.

Papers: 35%.
Each week there is a short paper assignment, with a topic specific to the material for that week. The topics will vary, as will the word-length requirement. The essential goal for the papers is to address the topic through a sociological lens, using the concepts covered in the readings and Powerpoint slide lectures. More detail is provided in the assignment space and the grading rubric.

Journal Entries: 25%.
The journal is a space for you to reflect on the material of the week and the entire course, to answer any specific question posted for that week’s journal entry, and to communicate privately with me. Some of the weeks are open-ended, while some weeks I ask you to address specific topics. While it is a private space for creative expression, you should also integrate the course concepts and directly respond to readings. The journal is a private communication space—I am the only one who will see it. Please address the specific topic for the week, or a topic of your choice on the weeks with no specific topic. Your post should address the material for the week (and feel free to include material from the course overall), and you can relate the material to circumstances in your daily life or topics in the news or another angle of your choosing. Posts should be at least 300 words, and not more than 500 words.

Grading.

There is a grading rubric for every assignment. When assigning final letter grades I will use the following schema:

94-100: A
90-93: A-
87-89: B+
83-86: B
79-82: B-
75-78: C+
All assignments and quizzes should be submitted by the due date. Late work will be accepted as time allows, at the discretion of the Professor.

**Course Schedule and Being Online**

This course is fully online. The content is a mix of print materials, and audio and video materials. All materials are available on Blackboard. Blackboard will also be used for online discussion, posting assignments, and Voice Threads. Each week there is a brief introductory overview in Voice Thread, with a Powerpoint lecture. You can practice using Voice Thread in the Introduction thread of Week 1—this first post will be monitored but not graded.

While you can complete the readings and assignments at the times that work best for you each week, each week’s assignments, discussion posts & and quizzes must be completed by **Sunday evenings, midnight. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FINAL WEEK IS SHORT—IT ENDS ON JUNE 29. ALL WORK MUST BE COMPLETED BY THEN.**

There is a Blackboard page for this course. I will use Blackboard to send you announcements, emails, and class related information. You can email me through Blackboard, and also directly at: irvine@soc.umass.edu. You can access Blackboard via your spire log on. For technical problems with Blackboard, 1-855-757-7055.

**Week 1: Why Asylums?: May 21-27.**

**Lectures:**
Welcome, and Introduction.

**Course Material:**


**Discussions:**
Week 1: Welcome.
Week 1: Stigma and Language.


Week 2: Visiting the Past, May 28-June 3.
Lecture:
Introduction.

Course Materials:


Video: Dorothea Dix: The Face of Mental Health Reform.

Discussions:
Week 2: “Asylum Stories.”

Assignments:
Paper: “A Cultural History of Insanity,” from All In the Mind, July 24, 2016, Podcast (with transcript); Quiz 2; Journal Entry 2.

Week 3: Buildings and Places, June 4-10.
Lecture:
Introduction.

Course Materials:


**Discussions:**
Week 3: Kirkbride Buildings.

**Assignments:**
Short Paper, Kirkbride Buildings; Quiz 3; Journal Entry 3; Mid-Term Assessment (required and graded).

**Week 4: Treatment and Intersectionality, June 11-17.**

**Lecture:**
Introduction.

**Course Materials:**


**Discussions:**
Week 4: Early Treatment of Mental Disorders.

**Assignments:**
Critical Film Analysis: *Committed*, in Kanopy; Quiz 4; Journal Entry 4.

**Week 5: Representation, Art, and Popular Culture, June 18-24.**

**Lecture:**
Introduction.

**Course Materials:**


Discussions: Week 5: Cultural Representation and Stigma.

Assignments:
Critical Film and Podcast Paper: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*; Quiz 5; Journal Entry 5.

Lecture:
Introduction.

Course Materials:


Discussions:
Week 6: From Lunatic to Person.

Assignments:

Policies
Academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Plagiarism means making someone else’s words or ideas seem as if they were your own. This
includes taking things (including something as short as a sentence) from books, magazines, newspapers, the Internet without making it clear that they are not your words or ideas. At a minimum, any assignment which shows involvement in plagiarism will receive a failing grade. Any act of plagiarism or academic misconduct may also result in a failing grade for this course and/or a report to the Dean of Student Affairs. More information about academic honesty is available at the following weblink:

http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/.

Disability Accommodation Statement
The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to making reasonable, effective and appropriate accommodations to meet the needs of students with disabilities and help create a barrier-free campus. If you have a disability and require accommodations, please register with Disability Services (161 Whitmore Administration building; phone 413-545-0892) to have an accommodation letter sent to your faculty. Information on services and materials for registering are also available on their website www.umass.edu/disability.

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