

Madness: From Psychiatry to Neurodiversity



Instructor	: Edvard Avilés-Meza
Course Code	: PHIL1112
Time	: MW 11:40am - 12:55pm
Place	: Hollister Hall 372
Office Hours	: W: 1:00pm or by appointment
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Course description:

Madness has been acknowledged since the dawn of humanity, but its systematic medicalization is a relatively recent phenomenon. In this course, we will discuss the philosophy and history of mental disorder through different conceptions, from the standard psychiatric picture to the more recent neurodiversity movement. Unlike most psychiatrists, we don't want a taxonomy or a list of statistically abnormal behaviors that correlate with a mental disorder; our question is more fundamental, that is, we want to know what it is for someone to have a mental disorder and whether it makes one intrinsically worse off. To answer that question, we will examine normative concepts like health, well-being, rationality, etc. We will also touch on contemporary challenges to our mental health, such as the use of generative AI ("AI psychosis"), the attention economy, the burnout society; and new opportunities, like the use of psychedelics in therapy ("the psychedelics renaissance"). Since this is a writing course, a lot of the work will be focused on crafting argumentative essays that will refine our understanding of these issues.

Core questions:

- The conceptual problem: *what is a mental disorder? How do they relate to cognitive disabilities?*
- The normative problem: *are mental disorders dysfunctions? are they intrinsically bad? are they irrational?*
- The naturalism problem: *are mental disorders brain disorders? Do we need an evolutionary framework?*
- The demarcation problem: *is psychiatry a science? is it an autonomous discipline?*
- The classification problem: *are all nosological entities legitimate? what is the best taxonomic system for psychiatric diagnosis and medical practice?*
- The therapeutic problem: *should mental disorders be treated at all? Do they require medicalization and hospitalization? Is AI detrimental to mental health? Do psychedelics provide a legitimate alternative? Do individual therapies work in the context of burnout societies?*
- The political problem: *Is psychiatry an ideology? Are psychiatric categories used to exercise oppression? Is the antipsychiatry movement rightful? Should psychiatry embrace neurodiversity?*

Course Learning Goals:

- Develop the ability to think critically about mental disorder and psychiatry.
- Craft clear, coherent, and well-organized essays.
- Analyze and interpret philosophical texts effectively.
- Construct and support arguments with logic & evidence.

Guidelines for Canvas Submission of Written Work:

- Submit your work on Canvas in doc/.docx format.
- Use a standard font (e.g., Times New Roman, Garamond) in 12-point size.
- Number all pages.
- Include your name, the date, and the essay number/title at the top of the first page.
- Proofread and spell check your work before bringing any drafts to class.
- Cite sources clearly where appropriate.

Very Important note: Though this is a course in the philosophy of psychiatry and mental health, *we don't provide psychological advice or counseling of any kind* with the exception that if you are going through a difficult time, or you think you need help, reach out to the resources available at Cornell Health: health.cornell.edu/services/mental-health-care

Grading Breakdown

- Participation: 10%
- Essay 1: Not graded
- Essay 2: 10%
- Essay 3 (final draft): 20%
- Essay 4 (final draft): 30%
- Essay 5 (final draft): 30%

Participation

Participation includes attendance, assignments, in-class participation, and engagement with course materials. Credit can be earned as follows:

- Attendance: Regular attendance is mandatory, and students must arrive on time. **Late arrivals will result in a loss of participation points.**
- In-Class Participation:
 - Verbal Contributions: Share thoughts during class discussions.
 - Small Group Discussions: Engage in smaller breakout groups.
 - Written Contributions: Participate by writing down your thoughts on shared Google Doc.
 - Note-taker

Rewrite Policy:

The grade you receive on your initial paper draft does not count toward your final grade for the course. Instead, it establishes the minimum grade for your paper rewrite. This policy emphasizes the importance of substantial revision. *Presenting an initial first draft is a necessary condition to submit the final draft.*

AI Use:

Using AI to **create** your assignments is considered plagiarism and is not permitted in this class.

Extension Policy:

If you would like an extension, you must ask for it at least 24 hours before the due date. Late extension requests will not be accepted.

Late Submission Penalties:

- Late papers will be penalized.
- For each day a draft is late, the minimum grade you get on the draft will drop by $\frac{1}{3}$ of a letter grade.
- Rewritten late papers will also be penalized in the same way as the first draft, affecting your final grade.

Absence Policy:

- You can have up to two unexcused absences during the semester.

University Policies and Regulations:

This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to matters such as: the observation of religious holidays; accommodations available to remedy inequities both visible and invisible; sexual harassment; racial or ethnic discrimination; plagiarism and other violations of community values regarding academic conduct. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.

Academic Integrity:

All work you submit in this course must be written specifically for this course and must be your original work. You must fully and specifically acknowledge all sources you use. Carefully read Cornell's Code of Academic Integrity, which is included in The Essential Guide to Academic Integrity at Cornell. This guide is distributed to all new students during orientation and covers how to acknowledge others' work, use online sources, work collaboratively, and avoid cheating. You can view it online at Cornell's Academic Integrity Page. In this course, any violation of the code will result in an 'F' for the term.

Additional Course Policies:

If you are dealing with medical or personal issues that are affecting or may affect your attendance or performance in class, please inform me as soon as possible. I will do my best to accommodate your needs, including those of students with documented disabilities. To learn more about Cornell Student Disability Services, visit the website <https://sds.cornell.edu/>

Cornell Writing Centers

The Cornell Writing Centers (CWC) provide support for individuals at any stage of the writing process. It is a free resource available to everyone on campus—faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students—for nearly any kind of writing project: applications, presentations, lab reports, essays, papers, and more. Tutors (trained peers) serve as responsive listeners and readers who can address questions about the writing process or about particular pieces of writing. They can also consider questions of confidence, assignment expectations, critical reading, analytic thought, and imagination. All tutors have training in supporting multilingual writers, working with writers remotely online, and in supporting writers working on application materials. The CWC welcomes walk-ins, but we also encourage writers to make appointments through our scheduling platform: <https://cornell.mywconline.net/>

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	W. Tasks
1	Mon Aug 25	Introduction	-	
	Wed Aug 27		-	Phil Thinking
2	Mon Sep 01		-	Labor Day
	Wed Sep 03	Mental Disorder	Wakefield / Bolton	Narrative Essay 1 due
3	Mon Sep 08	(Mental) Health	Boorse / Barnes	
	Wed Sep 10			Structure
4	Mon Sep 15	(Cognitive) Disability	Barnes	
	Wed Sep 17			Framing I
5	Mon Sep 22	Well-Being	Barnes / Kukla	
	Wed Sep 24			Framing II Essay 2 due
6	Mon Sep 29	Rationality: Belief	Bortolotti / Flores	
	Wed Oct 01			Drafting
7	Mon Oct 06	Rationality: Action	Frankfurt / Pickhard / Holton	Essay 3 draft due
	Wed Oct 08			Clarity & Conciseness
8	Mon Oct 13	Naturalism: Evolution & Neuroscience	Nesse / Graham / Kendler & Craver	Indigenous Peoples' Day
	Wed Oct 15	Natural Kinds & Social Construction I	Hacking / Khalidi	Arguments I
9	Mon Oct 20	-	-	-
	Wed Oct 22	Natural Kinds & Social Construction II	Haslanger / Sveinsdottir	Arguments II Essay 3 due
10	Mon Oct 27	Classification & Diagnosis	Murphy / Saunders / Cooper	
	Wed Oct 29			Feedback I
11	Mon Nov 03	Medicalization	Horwitz & Wakefield / Moncrieff	Essay 4 draft due
	Wed Nov 05			Feedback II
12	Mon Nov 10	Oppression, Authority, & Capitalism	Foucault / Szasz / Han	
	Wed Nov 12			Editing Essay 4 due
13	Mon Nov 17	Epistemic Injustice	Fricker / Crichton	
	Wed Nov 19			Style
14	Mon Nov 24	Conceptual Ethics	Haslanger / Conrad	Essay 5 draft due
	Wed Nov 26			Thanksgiving Break
15	Mon Dec 01	Neurodiversity	Chapman	Wrapping up
	Wed Dec 03	AI Psychosis & Psychedelic Therapy	Nutt / Morrin	Essay 5 due

References

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