The Concept of Mental Disorder: SPRING 2017 (7AAN2003)

Credits: 20 units

Tutor: Derek Bolton
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Teachers: Derek Bolton, Norman Poole, Mohammed Abouelleil Rashed
Consultation Hours: TBD*
Lecture Hours: TBD

* Please note: since Prof. Bolton is based at Denmark Hill, rather than at the Strand, you might prefer just to email him—or the other two teachers in the course—rather than trying to get along to his consultation hours in person: derek.bolton@kcl.ac.uk, m.rashed@ucl.ac.uk, norman.poole@gmail.com.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will critically appraise several main approaches to the concept of mental disorder. First, the critiques of mainstream psychiatry, beginning in the 1960s and still current, mainly to the effect that normal distress or social deviance is being inappropriately pathologized; second, conceptualisations of mental disorder in the standard psychiatry diagnostic manuals of the World Health Organisation and the American Psychiatric Association; and third, ‘naturalist’ approaches to the definition of mental disorder that invoke population statistical or evolutionary theory based norms. Distinctive features include coverage of various approaches to this multi-faceted problem.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the module, students will be able to demonstrate intellectual, transferable and practicable skills appropriate to a level-7 module. In particular they will be able to demonstrate:

1. Understanding of contemporary controversies about the nature and extent of mental disorder, conceptualisations used in mainstream psychiatry, and theoretical definitions in terms of human nature.
2. Knowledge of the main positions in the philosophy of psychiatry relevant to the definition of mental disorder.
3. Ability to assess and develop these positions
4. Ability to exercise their powers of intellectual criticism by critically commenting upon the views discussed
5. Ability to relate material from the philosophy of psychiatry to other branches of philosophy, such as philosophy of psychology or philosophy of medicine
6. Ability to form philosophical views of their own which they are prepared to defend or amend in light of criticism.
7. Ability to read closely and gain understanding of relevant texts.
ASSESSMENT

Formative Assessment: 1 x 2000 - 3000 word essay
Essay due by 16:00 on 31 March 2017. Please send your essay in the first instance to Derek Bolton, derek.bolton@kcl.ac.uk, who will direct it to the appropriate module teacher for feedback.

Summative Assessment: 1 x 4000 word essay
Essay due by Wednesday 26 April 2017, 16:00

READING

The readings for the course are separated into the following two categories:

Core Reading: reading that everyone who wants proper coverage of the subject must read.

Further Reading: additional readings to help further develop your views on a particular subject.

Many of the readings for the course can be found online and some in the following collection of essays:


The following are helpful texts – book length – with broad coverage of the issues, the first covering the ‘60s developments and the second updated:


PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction To The Problems And The Module

No specific reading. Students are welcome to prepare for the module as a whole and this sessions using the texts above or for week 2 below.

Week 2: Is Mental Disorder Being Over-Diagnosed? 1960s Critiques To The Present

Norman Poole

Core Reading


Further reading

Week 3: Social Identity And Challenges To The ‘Mental Disorder’ Label
Mohammed Rashed

Core reading

Further reading

Week 4: Folk Psychiatry: The Case Of Capgras Delusion
Norman Poole

Core Reading
• Boyer P. (2011) Intuitive expectations and the detection of mental disorder: A cognitive background to folk-psychiatries, Philosophical Psychology, 24, 95-118, DOI: 10.1080/09515089.2010.529049

Further reading
**Week 5: Mental Disorder & Culture I: Key Issues**
Mohammed Rashed

**Core reading**

**Further reading**

**Week 6: Are Mental Disorders Brain Disorders?**
Derek Bolton

**Core reading**

**Further reading**

**Week 7: Naturalist Definitions Of Mental Disorder (1): Biostatistical Theory**
Derek Bolton

**Core Reading**

**Further reading**
**Week 8: Naturalist Definitions Of Mental Disorder (2): Evolutionary Theoretic Dysfunction**

Derek Bolton

**Core reading**


**Further reading**


**Week 9: Mental Disorder & Culture II: Boundaries of Illness**

Mohammed Rashed

**Core reading**


**Further reading**


**Week 10: The Origins And Evolution Of The Mainstream Conceptualisations Of Mental Disorder In The Dsm And The Icd**

Derek Bolton

**Core reading**


**Further reading**
QUESTIONS FOR FORMATIVE ESSAY

1. Explain and critically evaluate the conceptualization of mental disorder in the DSM-IV.

2. Explain what is meant by a ‘naturalist’ account of mental disorder and what motivates this approach. Critically evaluate one naturalist position – either Boorse’s biostatistical theory or Wakefield’s harmful dysfunction analysis.

3. Give arguments for and against regarding impairment of social functioning as essential to mental disorders. What is your view of the matter and how would you defend it from criticisms?

4. Assess the claim that 'madness' is a sociopolitical identity and not a disorder of the mind. Include in your assessment an evaluation of the analogy between 'Mad Pride' and 'Gay Pride'. Whichever position you arrive at, defend it against possible objections.

5. Evaluate the claim that mental disorders have a universal basis (understood as an underlying dysfunction or core phenomenology) obscured by culturally-variant expressions/illness behaviours.

6. How are folk attributions of illness arrived at? How far is psychiatry from folk psychiatry?

7. Is mental disorder over-diagnosed? Explain how you arrive at your conclusion, what criticisms it faces, and how you will defend against these criticisms.

8. Describe the different ways in which culture defines/limits the domain of health-care. What, if any, are the implications of this for debates surrounding the concept of mental disorder?

9. Are mental disorders brain disorders? Explain how you arrive at your conclusion, what criticisms it faces, and how you will defend against these criticisms.