What is the moral meaning of mental illness? What is it like to be mentally ill? How can we, as healthcare professionals, best care for sufferers of mental illness, as well as their families and friends? To answer these questions, we turn to sufferers and their loved ones themselves, as this course explores (auto)biographical works that concern mental illness, an intellectual enterprise in medical humanities sometimes referred to as “pathography,” as well as cinematic representations of mental illness.

The class will consist of a number of seminar sessions (probably 12 or so). Most of these sessions will focus on the class readings, and, in general, sessions will focus on a particular pathography of mental illness, such as: Sylvia Nasar’s *A Beautiful Mind* (a biography of mathematical genius John Nash); Lionel Dahmer’s *A Father’s Son* (a memoir written by the father of serial-killer Jeffrey Dahmer); Nick Flynn’s *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City* (a memoir about a delinquent father and substance abuse); William Styron’s *Darkness Visible* (a memoir of depression/melancholia); and Kay Jamison’s *An Unquiet Mind* (a memoir of bipolar disorder/manic-depression). The books for this course will vary from year to year. Additional reading about mental illness, such as critical journal articles and book chapters, will also be required. This course, then, is reading-intensive. The remaining sessions will focus on cinematic representations of mental illness, such as *One Flew over the Cuckoo Nest* and *A Beautiful Mind*. It should be noted that each class meeting will be discussion-based, not lectured-based—that is, the class meetings will be conducted as a humanities-style graduate seminar.

**Material Covered:**
After taking this course, students will be able to:
1) articulate the significance of a “memoir approach” to understanding mental illness;
2) apply theoretical insights, in writing, from medical humanities to a memoir of mental illness;
3) identify, in a class presentation, moral and ethical issues in a particular memoir of mental illness (this identification should be based on the student’s previous ethics education at UTHealth);
4) describe, in the form of an essay and drawing from class readings, how writing about mental illness helps sufferers to make meaning of mental illness; and
5) reflect, in writing, on how you think that reading pathographies of mental illness will affect your clinical skills.

**Skills Acquired:**
After taking this course, students will acquire:
1) the skill of reading a memoir as an academic exercise;
2) the skills of applying psychological categories, as well as humanistic theories of suffering, to biographical works in presentations and discussions;
3) the skill of writing an academic paper in the humanities.

**Activities Of Elective**

**Number Of New Patients/Student/Week:** N/A; students will not see patients

**Responsibilities Of Student For Assigned Patients:** NA

See course outline below.
**How Is Student Evaluated:**

Students will be evaluated in four areas – Attendance (20%), Participation (20%), Class Presentation (30%), and Final Paper (30%)

**Who Evaluates Students:**

Faculty/course director, Nathan Carlin, Ph.D.

**Unique Features Of This Elective:**

This course will use biographical materials, as well as film, to explore psychosocial dimensions of mental illness.

**Course Dates**

May – Specific dates TBA.

**Course Texts**

Texts vary by year – TBA.

**Sample (Not Actual) Outline of Class**

1. Class Introduction – Theoretical Background and Justification
   
   **Reading**
   George Engel, “The Clinical Application of the Biopsychosocial Model”
   Anne Hawkins, “Pathography: Patient Narratives of Illness”
   Eric Cassell, “Diagnosing Suffering: A Perspective”

2. Class Movie – *One Flew Over the Cuckoo Nest* (1975)

3. William Styron and Melancholia/Depression
   
   **Reading**
   William Styron, *Darkness Visible*
   Donald Capps, “A Howling Tempest in the Brain,” in *Fragile Connections*  
   *DSM-IV-TR*, “Depressive Disorders,” pp. 369-382

4. Kay Jamison and Manic-Depression/Bipolar Disorder
   
   **Reading**
   Kay Jamison, *An Unquiet Mind*
   *DSM-IV-TR*, “Bipolar Disorders,” pp. 382-397

5. Jeffrey Dahmer – Mr. Jones (1993)

6. Jeffrey Dahmer: Mad or Bad?
   
   **Reading**
   Lionel Dahmer, *A Father’s Story*
   Nathan Carlin, “The Theologian as Diagnostician: Jeffrey Dahmer and (D)evil as a Theological Diagnosis”

   **In-class Viewing**
   Inside Evil – Stone Phillips Interview with Jeffrey Dahmer, Dateline NBC

7. John Nash and Schizophrenia
   
   **Reading**
   Sylvia Nasar, *A Beautiful Mind*
   *DSM-IV-TR*, “Schizophrenia and Other Psychotic Disorders,” pp. 297-343


9. A Delinquent Father and Substance Abuse
10. Sue Miller’s Father and Alzheimer’s

   Reading
   Sue Miller, *The Story of My Father*
   *DSM-IV-TR*, “Dementia,” pp. 147-171


12. Caring for Sufferers

   Reading
   Donald Capps, *Understanding Psychosis*
   *Final paper due at the beginning of class.*