Course Objective

What is it like to be mentally ill? How can we 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, as this course focuses on (auto) biographical works that concern mental illness—an intellectual enterprise in medical humanities sometimes referred to as “pathography.”

The class will consist of a number of seminar sessions (approximately 11 to 12). These sessions will focus on the class readings. 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); Elizabeth Wurtzel’s *Prozac Nation* (a memoir written about the author’s struggle with depression and treatment); 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. 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 “pathography approach” in understanding mental illness; and
2) identify, in a class presentation, ethical and clinical issues in a particular pathography of mental illness (this identification should be based on the student’s previous ethics education at UTHealth).

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

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

Responsibilities Of Student For Assigned Patients: NA

See sample course outline below.

Students will be evaluated in three areas – Attendance (60%), Participation (20%), and Class Presentation (20%).
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
Block 10 – Specific dates TBA.

Course Texts
Texts vary by year – TBA.

Sample (Not Actual) Outline of Class

1. Class Introduction: Experience of Psychiatric Hospitals; Depressive Disorders; Personality Disorders: Borderline
   Reading
   William Styron, *Darkness Visible*
   Rose Styron, “Strands”
   Susanna Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*
   Anne Hawkins, “Pathography: Patient Narratives of Illness”

2. Bipolar and Related Disorders; Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders
   Reading
   Kay Jamison, *An Unquiet Mind*
   Steven Miles, “A Challenge to Licensing Boards: The Stigma of Mental Illness”
   Emily Colas, *Just Checking*

3. Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders (Alcohol)
   Reading
   David Sheff, *Beautiful Boy*

4. Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders (Beyond Alcohol)
   Reading
   Nic Sheff, *Tweak: Growing Up on Methamphetamines*

5. Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders
   Reading & TedTalk
   Elyn Saks, *The Center Cannot Hold*
   TED Talk: https://www.ted.com/speakers/elyn_saks

6. Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorders
   Class Movie: *Bowling for Columbine*
   Music: “Pumped Up Kicks” by Foster the People
   Reading
   Sue Klebold and Andrew Solomon, *A Mother’s Reckoning*
   Garen Wintemute, “The Epidemiology of Firearm Violence . . .”

7. Personality Disorders: Antisocial Personality Disorder
   Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders
Class Viewing: “Inside Evil,” Stone Phillips Interview with Jeffrey Dahmer

Reading

Derf Backderf, *My Friend Dahmer*
David Morris, *The Evil Hours*

8. Eating Disorders: Anorexia and Bulimia

Reading

Marya Hornbacher, *Wasted*
Joan Jacobs Brumberg, “Fasting Girls”

9. Autism Spectrum Disorder and Anxiety Disorders

Reading

Naoki Higashida, *The Reason I Jump*
Daniel Smith, *Monkey Mind*

10. Somatic Symptom and Factitious Disorders

Reading

Julie Gregory, *Sickened*
Donald Capps, “Jesus the Village Psychiatrist”
Donald Capps, “A Summary of Jesus”

11. Neurocognitive Disorders: Alzheimer’s and Dementia

Reading

Alex Witchel, *All Gone*
Arthur Kleinman, *The Soul of Care*