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? To answer these questions, we turn to experiential (auto) biographical works—an intellectual enterprise in medical humanities sometimes referred to as “pathography.”

The class consists of a number of seminar sessions (typically 8 to 10) that focus on assigned readings and other materials.

Learning Objectives:

After taking this course, students will be able to:
1. articulate the significance of a “pathography approach” to understanding mental illness; and
2. analyze, via class presentations, ethical, existential, and clinical issues in various pathographies of mental illness.

Material Covered:

In general, sessions focus on a particular pathography of mental illness, such as: William Styron’s *Darkness Visible* (a memoir of depression/melancholia); Kay Jamison’s *An Unquiet Mind* (a memoir of bipolar disorder/manic-depression); Elyn Saks’ *The Center Cannot Hold* (a memoir of schizophrenia); and more. The books for this course vary from year to year. Each class meeting is discussion-based, *not* lecture-based—that is, the class meetings are conducted as a humanities-style graduate seminar.

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.

Activities Of Elective

Students will attend 2-3 sessions per week, each approximately 3-4 hours to account for 10 hours of structured time. The sessions will be discussion-based. Students will have assigned readings, including pathographies supplemented by articles and other materials.

All students will lead one class session, presenting brief descriptions of the readings, identifying key themes, and leading discussion. They will also relate the readings to clinical information from the DSM-5-TR. Students will be evaluated in terms of attendance, class participation, and their presentations, in connection with the two learning objectives.

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.

Scheduled Duties of Student:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of rounds on patients</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents patients to preceptor or attending physician</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly schedule of required teaching sessions</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe Optional Rounds And Activities, If Any:

N/A

Other Required Activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading/review of current literature</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing or presenting a paper</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Students are required to participate in class discussions. Leading a class discussion counts as the presentation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Is Student Evaluated:

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

Who Evaluates Students:

Faculty/course director, Nathan Carlin, PhD

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*