

HHS 35500: Narratives of Psychological Distress and Confinement

Fall 2024

Class: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00pm-3:15pm Coleman Morse Center 216C

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Evans (they/them)

Email: aevans23@nd.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays 3:30pm-4:30pm 219C O'Shaughnessy Hall

Course Description:

This course will examine the intersection between psychological distress and confinement. As such, it draws from the disciplines of mental healthcare, psychology, criminal justice, literature, and philosophy. Together, we will examine narratives and lived experiences of mental illness, including first person accounts, essays, works of fiction, poetry, films, videos, and scholarly articles. Through these materials, we will consider questions such as: What is psychological suffering? What is a mental disorder? What is it like to navigate the mental healthcare system? Another major aim of the course will be to understand confinement and institutionalization. We will address questions such as: What is confinement, and what is it like to experience confinement? What are the harms that people experience in mental health institutions, prisons, and other institutional settings? The goal of the course is to both gain better understanding and empathy for different types of suffering, and imagine ways that the healthcare and criminal justice systems can be reformed to better serve those who suffer.

Learning Goals:

By the end of this course, you will be able to...

- Critically discuss and analyze narratives of psychological distress, mental illness, confinement, and institutionalization.
- Relate the issues discussed in class to your own experiences and reflect on the interaction between mental health, narrative, and society.
- Lead class activities and discussions based on course content and independent research.

Required texts:

Turtles All the Way Down by John Green ISBN: 9780525555377

Willow Weep for Me by Meri Nana-Ama Danquah ISBN: 9780393348750

The Collected Schizophrenias by Esmé Weijun Wang ISBN: 9781555978761

Grade Scale:

A 93%-100%	A- 90%-92.5%	B+ 87%-89.5%	B 83%-86.5%
B- 80%-82.5%	C+ 77%-79.5%	C 73%-76.5%	C- 70%-72.5%
D 60%-69.5%	F 0%-59.5%		

Point Distribution:

Class facilitation	40 points
Narrative analysis project	40 points
Narrative analysis presentation	20 points
Reading Journal	60 points (30 points at midterm and 30 points at the end of the semester)
Total	160 points

Class facilitation:

Early in the semester you will sign up to facilitate part of one future class session. For that class, you will closely read the assigned materials in advance and then plan a discussion and class activity. More information about facilitation will be available towards the beginning of the semester.

Narrative Analysis Project and Presentation:

By the end of the semester you will complete a project in which you analyze a narrative work of your own choice. You will need to first identify the narrative work and at least one scholarly article that relates to that work. You will then write a paper analyzing the work utilizing concepts from the scholarly article. The last three days of class are devoted to narrative analysis presentations. For the presentation, you will be expected to explain your project and the narrative work that you chose. You will also lead a class activity. More information about the project and presentation will be available later in the semester.

Reading Journal:

You will be expected to keep a reading journal throughout the semester. As you do the assigned reading, you will make notes reflecting on your thoughts and feelings about the reading. You will also use the journal to come up with questions that can then be brought to class. Once at midterm and once at the end of the semester I will check everyone's journal to make sure you are staying up to date with the material. Your journal can be a paper notebook or a digital document.

Late Work and Attendance Policy:

You are expected to turn in each assignment on time and attend each class. However, I do understand that life circumstances can make this difficult. In the cases of illness, emergency, or other extenuating circumstances, exceptions can be made. If such as extenuating circumstance arises, do your best to notify me before the due date or missed class. If you are having trouble turning things in on time or attending class, please talk with me.

Academic Misconduct:

Do not plagiarize or cheat in any way. Follow the university's policies on academic misconduct. If I discover that you have broken the university's policies on academic misconduct, I am required to report it. Punishments range from failing the assignment to expulsion from the university.

[Undergraduate Academic Code of Honor](#)

Inclusion:

It is my goal to make this class a safe space for people of all ages, races, national origins, ancestries, political affiliations, disability statuses, medical conditions, gender identities, gender expressions, sexes, sexual orientations, marital statuses, veteran statuses, and other forms of difference. No discrimination will be tolerated. Especially when participating in class discussions, everyone should be respectful. It is important to maintain a safe and supportive environment for learning to occur. Please let me know via email if there are inclusion-related considerations that I should be aware of (e.g., pronouns or if you use a name that is not listed in the system).

Accessibility and Accommodations:

Students who have questions about Sara Bea Accessibility Services or who have, or think they may have, a disability are invited to contact Sara Bea Accessibility Services for a confidential discussion by emailing at sarabeacenter@nd.edu or by phone at 574-631-7157.

I will do everything I can to ensure that accommodations will be made when needed. Any student who has a documented disability and is registered with Sara Bea Accessibility Services should speak with me regarding accommodations.

[Accessibility Support](#)

Mental Health:

Diminished mental health can interfere with optimal academic performance. The source of mental distress might be related to your course work; if so, please speak with me. However, problems with other parts of your life can also contribute to decreased academic performance. The University Counseling Center (UCC) provides cost-free and confidential mental health services to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your emotional or academic well-being.

Remember, getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do — for yourself and for those who care about you. For more resources, please see ucc.nd.edu or studenthealth.nd.edu.

The UCC is located on the third floor of Saint Liam Hall. Phone: 574-631-7336. Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30am – 5:00pm.

Crisis intervention services are available by calling the UCC at 574-631-7336. Crisis Services are available 24/7 except during the week that the University is closed over winter break.

<https://ucc.nd.edu/counseling-services/crisis/>

Title IX:

The University of Notre Dame provides services for those who have been affected by sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating or domestic violence, stalking and any conduct that creates a hostile environment. For help and further information including contact information for on and off-campus resources, please consult <https://titleix.nd.edu/support-resources>.

Other Helpful Resources:

[University Writing Center](#)

[University Health Services](#)

[LGBTQ Resources](#)

Communication:

The best way to communicate with me is email. I am usually able to respond to an email within 48 hours. Please feel free to email me with any questions or concerns you have. I will hold office hours on Tuesdays from 3:30pm-4:30pm in 219C O'Shaughnessy Hall. I am also available to schedule meetings outside of my office hours.

Technology Policy:

You are permitted to use a laptop, tablet, or other electronic device for notetaking in class. However, I do ask that when you are in class, you focus on what is being discussed and not browse the web or do anything else non-class related on your device. I understand that you may need to contact someone during class, but I ask that you please leave the room to call or text.

Difficult Content:

Since the focus of this course is mental health, some topics we discuss may be difficult or potentially triggering. There will be discussion of suicide, self-harm, sexual and domestic violence, depression, severe mental suffering, anxiety, psychosis, forced institutionalization and restraint, and potentially other sensitive topics. Please make sure to approach the course content carefully. If there is something that you think would be difficult for you to read or watch, then it is okay to skip it. Just let me know that you need to skip it and we will decide on something else you can read or watch instead. If a particular reading, video, or class discussion seems like it would be potentially triggering or upsetting, I will do my best to warn you ahead of time. If you have any thoughts or questions about any of this please feel free to reach out to me.

Please Note:

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus. If I do so, I will always give you notice ahead of time.

Schedule:

Date and Topic	Readings and Assignments
Tuesday August 27 <i>Introduction to the course</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus • John Green (2017) <i>Turtles All the Way Down</i> Chapters 1-4
Thursday August 29 <i>How does illness feel?</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Green (2017) <i>Turtles All the Way Down</i> Chapters 5-7 • Virginia Woolf (1926) “On Being Ill”
Tuesday September 3 <i>Why should we listen to patient experiences?</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Green (2017) <i>Turtles All the Way Down</i> Chapters 8-10 • Roy Dings and Şerife Tekin (2022) “A philosophical exploration of experience-based expertise in mental health care”
Thursday September 5 <i>Narratives of anxiety</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Green (2017) <i>Turtles All the Way Down</i> Chapters 11-13 Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Stupid Piece of Sh*t” Season 4, Episode 6 of <i>Bojack Horseman</i> (available on Netflix)
Tuesday September 10 <i>What is mental disorder and mental healthcare?</i>	Class was cancelled
Thursday September 12 <i>How does being labeled with a mental disorder impact how we see ourselves?</i>	Class on Zoom Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Green (2017) <i>Turtles All the Way Down</i> Chapters 14-21 • APA (2013) DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
Tuesday September 17 <i>Finishing Turtles All the Way Down</i>	Non-graded journal check today Figure out class facilitations in class Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Green (2017) <i>Turtles All the Way Down</i> Chapters 22-24

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Şerife Tekin (2011) “Self-concept Through the Diagnostic Looking Glass: Narratives and Mental Disorder”
Thursday September 19 <i>Narratives of depression</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ally Brosh (2011) <i>Adventures in Depression</i> and (2013) <i>Depression Part Two</i>
Tuesday September 24 <i>How is mental illness related to oppression?</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meri Nana-Ama Danquah (1998) <i>Willow Weep for Me</i> pages 16-48 • Micha Frazer-Carroll (2023) <i>Mad World: The Politics of Mental Health</i> Chapter 3: Mental Health in a Maddening World
Thursday September 26 <i>How does mental illness intersect with societal expectations of women?</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meri Nana-Ama Danquah (1998) <i>Willow Weep for Me</i> pages 53-77 • Tasca et al. (2012) “Women and Hysteria in the History of Mental Health” Listen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olivia Rodrigo “All-American Bitch” (song)
Tuesday October 1 <i>How does mental illness intersect with racial oppression?</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meri Nana-Ama Danquah (1998) <i>Willow Weep for Me</i> pages 77-95 • Vanessa Jackson (2002) “In Our Own Voice: African-American Stories of Oppression, Survival and Recovery in Mental Health Systems”
Thursday October 3	No class, work on the reading for next Tuesday
Tuesday October 8 <i>How should we understand disability?</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meri Nana-Ama Danquah (1998) <i>Willow Weep for Me</i> pages 101-168 • Micha Frazer-Carroll (2023) <i>Mad World: The Politics of Mental Health</i> Chapter 5 Disability/Possibility
Thursday October 10 <i>Intersections between race, gender, and disability</i>	Class visitor to talk about suicide prevention Read:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meri Nana-Ama Danquah (1998) <i>Willow Weep for Me</i> pages 173-202
Tuesday October 15 <i>Intersections between race, gender, and disability continued</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meri Nana-Ama Danquah (1998) <i>Willow Weep for Me</i> pages 202-226 Anna Mollow (2006) “‘When Black Women Start Going on Prozac’: Race, Gender, and Mental Illness in Meri Nana-Ama Danquah’s <i>Willow Weep for Me</i>”
Thursday October 17 <i>Intersections between race, gender, and disability continued</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meri Nana-Ama Danquah (1998) <i>Willow Weep for Me</i> pages 226-267 Due in class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading journal (first check)
Tuesday October 22	Mid-term break
Thursday October 24	Mid-term break
Tuesday October 29 <i>Narratives of bipolar disorder</i>	Start thinking about what your narrative analysis project will be on Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ellen Forney (2012) <i>Marbles, Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me</i> Chapters 3 & 4 -or- Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silver Linings Playbook (2012) (movie is available to rent on YouTube)
Thursday October 31 <i>Narratives of schizoaffective disorder</i>	Class cancelled, still do the readings and watch the video. Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Esmé Weijun Wang (2019) <i>The Collected Schizophrenias</i> “Diagnosis.” “Reality, On-Screen,” & “John Doe, Psychosis” Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is what schizophrenia feels like with Christopher Grant
Tuesday November 5	Choose two of three to read:

<i>How do our behaviors and appearances impact how others treat us?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Esmé Weijun Wang (2019) <i>The Collected Schizophrenias</i> “Toward a Pathology of the Possessed,” “High-Functioning,” & “Yale Will Not Save You”
Thursday November 7 <i>Treatment at a mental health institution</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Esmé Weijun Wang (2019) <i>The Collected Schizophrenias</i> “On the Ward” Donald Antrim (2021) “Finding a Way Back From Suicide”
Tuesday November 12 <i>Power and control in psychiatric treatment</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joseph Conway (2024) “Abandonment is a camera by your bed” in <i>Asylum</i> magazine Abraham Aruguete (2024) “Clinicians” in <i>Asylum</i> magazine (poem) Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coping with schizophrenia: My experience in the psych ward
Thursday November 14 <i>The experience of confinement</i>	Check in with Dr. Evans about what you plan to do your narrative analysis project on Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elyn Saks (2007) <i>The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey Through Madness</i> Chapter 12 Karen Joy Fowler (2009) “The Pelican Bar”
Tuesday November 19 <i>How is the criminal justice system involved with mental illness?</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alisa Roth (2018) <i>Insane: America’s Criminal Treatment of Mental Illness</i> Introduction, Chapter 1 Jail Is The Only Safe Place Christopher Etienne (2020) “The Link Between Our Prison System and Untreated Mental Illness”
Thursday November 21 <i>How does the American carceral system treat those with psychological distress?</i>	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alisa Roth (2018) <i>Insane: America’s Criminal Treatment of Mental Illness</i> Chapter 2 The Largest Psych Ward in America

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeffrey McKee (2022) “Mental Health Services Lacking in Washington Prisons” <p>Due in class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading journal (second check)
Tuesday November 26	No class, nothing is due
Thursday November 28	Thanksgiving holiday
Tuesday December 3 <i>Possible ways forward</i>	<p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alexandra Adame (2014) “There Needs to be a Place in Society for Madness” Micha Frazer-Carroll (2023) <i>Mad World: The Politics of Mental Health</i> Chapter 10 Other Possibilities Raul Higgins (2021) “Healing in San Quentin Leads to Helping and Hope”
Thursday December 5	Narrative analysis presentations
Tuesday December 10	Narrative analysis presentations
Thursday December 12	<p>Narrative analysis presentations</p> <p>Due by 11:59pm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative analysis project