

## **PSY 100A: CINEMATIC DEPICTIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH**

M-F 1-4:30; Hopkins 310

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**Office Hours:** MW 11-12 or by appointment

### **Course Description:**

Mental illness is a topic which has been shrouded with secrecy, stigma, and fear for much of human existence. This is changing slowly, as American culture is becoming more accepting of mental health issues and more people are willing to share their struggles openly. Hollywood has a long history of including prominent characters with mental illness, but with varying levels of accuracy. This course will explore a broad range of examples of mental illness in movies while guiding students toward critical evaluation of the portrayal of affected characters and the impact of these portrayals on those with mental illness, those who treat mental illness, and society at large. The central question we will seek to answer in this course is “Do movies promote awareness of mental health issues or propagate stereotypes?”

The format of this course is lecture/discussion. Most class sessions will include a brief lecture to provide background information for the film of the day, followed by the film, and concluding with discussion. The course is designed to help students reach the following learning objectives:

- Articulate the potential impacts of portrayals of mental illnesses in film
- Assess potential impacts from multiple stakeholders’ (e.g., those with mental illnesses, treatment providers, society at large) perspectives
- Critique the portrayal of mental illnesses in film using DSM criteria as a reference
- Compare and contrast portrayals of the same and disparate diagnoses

### **Required Materials:**

Robinson, D. J. (2003). *Reel psychiatry: Movie portrayals of psychiatric conditions*. Port Huron, MI: Rapid Psychler Publishers.

Additional readings may be posted via Moodle.

### **Assignments:**

All assignments will be turned in via Moodle. Each assignment will be graded on a scale of 0-3. A “3” represents performance which exceeds expectations. A “2” represents performance which meets expectations. A “1” represents performance which does not meet expectations. A “0” will be given if the assignment is not turned in. Assignments which earn a “1” can be resubmitted once in an attempt to earn a “2.” Resubmissions must be turned in within 24 hours of getting the assignment back.

### *Attendance Points*

Each day an attendance sheet will be passed around at the beginning of class. Your signature will serve as your attendance point for the day. Missing more than two classes puts you at risk of earning an N for the course. See the Grading and Attendance sections below for more information.

*Response Papers*

The issues surrounding the portrayal of mental health conditions in cinema are complicated and oftentimes different observers will come to different conclusions. We will have discussions in class about each film, but we may run out of time before we can discuss everything. When this happens, short response papers will be assigned. The specific length requirements will vary, but all papers must be 12-point Times New Roman font, and have one inch margins on all sides. Response papers may be eliminated for any given day if the in-class discussion is sufficiently robust and the whole class is participating, as assessed by the instructor. All response papers are due by the start of class the next day. The writing prompts for the response papers will be posted to Moodle by 7pm.

*Reflection Papers*

Each Monday after the beginning of class, you are required to turn in a reflection paper based on the films from the previous week. These papers will be your chance to organize your thoughts about these films and prepare yourself for the final paper. Each reflection paper must be 12-point Times New Roman font, have one inch margins on all sides, and be 3-5 pages double spaced. In your reflection papers you must rank the five movies from the previous week in order from best to worst portrayal of mental illness. Make sure to explain your rankings and the criteria you selected to review. Some criteria you might use include: accuracy of the mental health diagnosis; what role, if any, treatment played in the film; if the mental illness seemed like a “real” part of the character or simply a plot device; or the impact of the portrayal on people with that diagnosis, families/friends of people with that diagnosis, those with other mental health issues, treatment providers, and/or society at large.

*Final Paper*

In this paper, you will answer the central question of the course, “Do movies help promote awareness of mental health issues or propagate stereotypes?” This is a complex question and will require synthesis across the spectrum of movies we watch during this course. Undoubtedly some movies will fall more onto one side of the argument while others lean more toward the other. You must pick a side of this debate and write a persuasive paper supporting your arguments using specific characters and scenes from the films we watch together. The paper must be 12-point Times New Roman font, have one inch margins on all sides, be 6-10 pages double spaced, and include citations (APA or MLA style) for all films (and any additional sources) referenced.

*Final Presentation*

To wrap up the class, student groups will present a critique of a movie we did not have a chance to view in class. Working in groups of four, you will present a summary of the film, describe the mental illness portrayed in the film, evaluate the accuracy of the portrayal, and discuss the implications to people with mental health issues, those who treat mental health issues, and society at large. You must also show at least one illustrative clip from the movie during your presentation. I will have a list of pre-approved movies, but if your group wants to select something else you can do so as long as I approve it first. The presentations will be approximately 20 minutes per group. Further details will be given during the course.

**Grading:**

All students must take this course S/D/N. To earn a grade of “S,” students must:

- Have at least 15 attendance points
- Receive a score of at least 1 on all assignments
- Have an average score  $\geq 2$  across the four papers and the presentation
- Have an average score  $\geq 2$  across all response papers

To earn a grade of “D,” students must:

- Have at least 15 attendance points
- Receive a score of at least 1 on all assignments
- Have an average score  $\geq 1.5$  across the four papers and the presentation
- Have an average score  $\geq 1.5$  across all response papers

**Tentative Course Schedule:**

Date	Topic	Film	Reading/Assignments
<b>Week 1</b>			
1/5	M	Overview	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest</i> Chpts 1-4
1/6	T	Anxiety	<i>What About Bob?</i> pp. 93-103, 116-126
1/7	W		<i>Side Effects</i>
1/8	Th	OCD	<i>Matchstick Men</i> pp. 112-115
1/9	F		<i>As Good As It Gets</i>
<b>Week 2</b>			
1/12	M	PTSD	<i>Reign Over Me</i> pp. 104-111; <b>Reflection 1</b>
1/13	T		<i>The Fisher King</i>
1/14	W	MDD	<i>Perks of Being a Wallflower</i> pp. 57-72
1/15	Th		<i>Girl, Interrupted</i>
1/16	F	Schizophrenia	<i>Benny &amp; June</i> Chpt 5
<b>Week 3</b>			
1/19	M		<i>A Beautiful Mind</i> <b>Reflection 2</b>
1/20	T		<i>Me, Myself, &amp; Irene</i>
1/21	W	DID	<i>Fight Club</i> Chpt 10
1/22	Th		<i>Sybil</i>
1/23	F	Bipolar	<i>Silver Linings Playbook</i> pp. 74-90
<b>Week 4</b>			
1/26	M		<i>Michael Clayton</i> <b>Reflection 3</b>
1/27	T		<b>Student Presentations</b> <b>Final Paper</b>

**Comment on Course Content:**

This course covers material related to mental illness and psychotherapy, which are sensitive topics. Some people in our class will have experience with mental illness and therapy either personally or via loved ones. For this reason please remember to be sensitive to others when asking questions, making comments, etc., in class. I encourage everyone to voice their thoughts and be curious about the subject matter, but do so in a respectful manner. I would also ask those individuals who are currently dealing with mental illness to refrain from discussing your own

symptomology or treatment in class. This not only protects your privacy, but also will not pressure other students to reveal aspects of themselves beyond their comfort level and will allow for the carefully constructed examples prepared for class to be used. If you want to discuss a specific situation, please make an appointment with me. It is likely I will not be able to make any definitive statements about someone else's mental health, but I will be happy to hear your concerns and make referrals to resources. If you have serious concerns about yourself or someone else, please talk to myself or a mental health professional. Here is a list of several resources for mental health issues:

Austin College Counseling Services:

<http://www.austincollege.edu/campus-life/counseling-services/>

903-813-2247

Suicide Crisis Line

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

Applied Psychological Group of Texoma

<http://www.apgtexoma.com/>

903-893-0298

Psychology Today's Therapist Finder

[http://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms/prof\\_search.php](http://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms/prof_search.php)

### **Technology**

This course will be web-enhanced through the use of Moodle. Readings, lecture slides, some handouts, and links to other resources will be provided through this system. Unless otherwise specified, you will turn your assignments in via Moodle. You can access Moodle through the following link: <https://moodle.austincollege.edu/login/index.php>. Questions concerning content/postings should be directed to the instructor, while questions regarding access/technical issues should be directed to the Austin College IT Help Desk (903-813-2063; [helpdesk@austincollege.edu](mailto:helpdesk@austincollege.edu)). A PDF viewer is required to view the content posted to the Moodle site. Free Adobe software is available for download via <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>.

### **Policies:**

#### *Academic Integrity*

Scholastic misconduct is broadly defined as any act that violates the rights of another student in academic work or that involves misrepresentation of your own work. Scholastic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to): cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing, which means misrepresenting as you own work any part of work done by another; submitting the same paper, or substantially similar papers, to meet the requirements of more than one course without the approval and consent of all instructors concerned (including papers you have submitted in previous semesters); providing others with copies of your assignments; depriving another student of necessary course materials; or interfering with another student's work.

Plagiarism is a serious offense which will not be tolerated. Most of the time, however, plagiarism happens because students are rushing through assignments and do not leave themselves with sufficient time to properly attribute information taken from other sources. For this class you must cite your sources using either APA or MLA style. If you plan to be a psychology major or minor,

I encourage you to get used to APA style, as you will be using this throughout your coursework. Note that for either style, you need to include citations each time you use information from a source. It is incorrect to use information throughout a paragraph and only include a citation at the end. Also, if you use 5 or more consecutive words from a source, you must include quotation marks and include the page number (or paragraph number if you are using an online source) in your citation.

You will be required to submit an electronic copy of all major assignments which will be compared with the TurnItIn database. Penalties for scholastic misconduct in any portion of the academic work for a course shall be made at the discretion of the instructor and may range from point deductions on the assignment to failing the class. All academic misconduct (no matter how small) will be reported to the Academic Integrity Council, which may impose sanctions up to and including expulsion. Austin College's full academic integrity policy is available in the *Environment* (Austin College Student Handbook; the most recent edition is posted on Moodle) in the Student Conduct section. If you have any questions about whether something is plagiarism or not, please talk with me about it BEFORE you turn in an assignment.

#### *Accommodations*

Austin College seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all individuals with disabilities and will comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines. If you have a documented disability for which you would like accommodations, please inform me by the second week of class. It is your responsibility to remind me of your accommodations at least a week before I distribute each assignment or exam. To arrange for accommodations, you will need to register as soon as possible at the Academic Skills Center with Laura Márquez Ramsey, the Director of the Academic Skills Center, (903-813-2454, Suite 211 of the Wright Campus Center). For information on this process, go to <http://www.austincollege.edu/campus-life/academic-skills-center/>. This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request.

#### *Attendance*

Attendance is required and critically important to your success in this class. You are required to sign in to document your attendance. If you miss the sign in because you are late, it is your responsibility to sign it immediately after class. Consistent late arrival may be considered an absence at the discretion of the instructor. Students who miss more than two classes without documentation may be dropped from the course or receive a final grade of D or N at the instructor's discretion. If you know you are going to miss class for a medical, religious, or Austin College sanctioned academic/athletic reason, let me know in advance. Potential alternative assignments to make up absences may be given at the discretion of the instructor. PowerPoint slides will be posted to the Moodle site, but will be outlines which require additional information from lectures or activities. If you miss class it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate. Full lecture slides will not be distributed. If you must arrive late or leave early, please sit near the door and do so in the least disruptive manner possible.

#### *Changes to the Syllabus*

All aspects of this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Students will be informed in writing of any changes to the syllabus.

#### *Communication*

Outside of class, I will communicate with you most frequently via your *Austin College email address*. **It is your responsibility to monitor this address and you are responsible for the**

**information delivered to this address.** I highly recommend you check your email at least daily. I will also post messages to Moodle, so you are encouraged to check Moodle regularly. The best way to contact me is through email. I will always attempt to respond to email promptly, which means within 24 hours. **I typically do not check my email after 8pm,** so if you email me at night, do not expect a response until the next morning. I check Moodle daily and will respond to questions posted in the forum within 24 hours.

#### *Extra Credit*

Extra credit opportunities may be given at the discretion of the instructor. Possible examples of extra credit opportunities include: participation in psychological research, attendance at events, or further research into a topic of interest.

#### *Incompletes*

An “incomplete” only may be given as a grade for the course when a student has a **passing grade the course** and has an unforeseen and uncontrollable event occur that prevents him or her from earning a significant number of points in the course. Thus, incompletes are rarely given and each situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis. To have an incomplete changed to a different grade, all missing work must be completed by the end of the following term.

#### *Late Work*

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date listed in the syllabus. Assignments turned in after class but on the same day will be penalized 1 point, with an additional penalty of one point for every additional calendar day the assignment is late. Assignments may not be accepted more than 2 days after the original due date at the discretion of the instructor. Extensions may be given at the discretion of the instructor, but **no extensions will be given during the 24 hours before an assignment is due.** It is your responsibility to budget your time so you are not working on assignments at the last minute. Specific arrangements must be made with the instructor as to how late work will be turned in (e.g., email vs. hard copy) or it will not be accepted.

#### *Role of Instructor*

I will provide learning opportunities designed to provide students with information about psychology and foster critical thinking. Every effort will be made to accommodate different learning styles and students will be encouraged to provide feedback both formally and informally. I pledge to carefully consider constructive feedback about teaching methods and incorporate suggestions to the extent feasible. I am responsible for treating students in a respectful, professional manner and creating a classroom atmosphere where students treat each other as such. I will be accessible outside of class and encourages you to meet with me either during office hours or individual appointments to discuss concerns (e.g., about the class, workload, assignments, etc.), conflicts or problems that affect course performance, concepts which need further clarification, additional resources related to course material, or careers in psychology.

#### *Role of Student*

Students will come to class prepared to learn and open to new ideas. Assignments (including readings) will be completed before class begins and to the best of each student’s ability. Classroom discussions will be conducted in a respectful manner, where all opinions are valued regardless of whether you agree or disagree with the content. Students who cannot maintain respectful communication will be asked to leave the classroom. Students will take responsibility

for their own learning throughout the class. Students will consult available resources (e.g., the syllabus, Moodle, email messages) before asking administrative questions.

#### *Statement on Classroom Conduct*

All students have the right to a civil, productive, and stimulating learning environment. In turn, instructors have a responsibility to nurture and maintain such an environment. Lively, even heated, discussion is not disruptive behavior. Both instructors and students have a fundamental obligation to respect the rights of each other and an equally fundamental obligation to respect the instructional setting as a place for civil, courteous behavior.

#### *Statement on Diversity*

We will all bring unique perspectives to this course and I hope those who feel comfortable will share insights and alternative interpretations throughout the semester. Cultural perspectives will be explicitly included in many of our discussions and will likely come up in many others. I welcome feedback on ways to increase the diversity of perspectives being provided in class and methods for creating a more inclusive atmosphere through my teaching.

### **Writing Tips**

Your ability to write will greatly impact your grades in this course. I expect you to make strides in your writing in terms of mechanics, style, and ability to write concisely. Writing skills make up a substantial portion of your grade on written materials, so make sure to take this seriously.

#### **Professionalism**

- Assignments must be printed in black ink on white paper. Pages must be clean (i.e., no coffee rings, dog drool, rips, etc.).
- Your box number, the date, and the assignment title must be included on the first page.
- Pages must be numbered (if assignment is more than 1 page).
- If turning in a hard copy, all pages must be stapled together. I do not read anything that is not attached to the first page and your grade on the assignment will reflect this.
- Proof read your papers. Writing is about communicating to the reader so you need to make sure you are getting your point across. If you typically have issues with grammar and/or spelling, make sure you have your papers done early enough to have someone proof them for you. The Academic Skills Center has writing tutors available and I strongly encourage you to make use of them.

#### **Use of Quotes**

- Quotes should be included very infrequently. You should not use more than 2 quotes in any paper you write for me. Most of your papers will likely not contain any quotes. This is both an APA style issue and a pedagogical issue. I want to see that you can paraphrase and explain what happened in your own words.
- If you do use quotes, you still have to explain what the authors are saying.
- Remember, if you use 5 or more consecutive words from another source, you must use quotation marks and include the page number (or paragraph number if it is an online source) in your citation.

#### **APA Style tips**

- The *Publication Manual* has more in it than just how to cite sources!

- The goal of scientific writing is to be concise and precise. You will not get bonus points for inserting “fluff” into your papers. In fact, your grades will suffer if you are including a bunch of filler instead of substance.
- Avoid sexist language. Do not refer to people generally or groups of mixed genders as masculine. You do not have to write “his or her” every time either. You can switch between he and she as long as they are approximately balanced throughout the paper as a whole. As a side note, many people identify outside the dichotomy of male and female, so genderless pronouns such as “zhe” or “hir” are likely to be more common in the future. These pronouns are not in common usage yet, so check with other professors to see if they accept them, but in my classes these are acceptable.
- For longer papers (>3-4 pages) it is often helpful to include headings and subheadings to organize your writing.

### **Additional tips**

- Never, ever use the word “prove” in your writing. Research studies do NOT prove anything. Research can support, suggest, indicate, demonstrate, corroborate, show, etc.
- The writing assignments you do for me are considered formal writing. Therefore, there should not be any contractions (e.g., you’re, can’t, don’t) in your papers. The exception is when I ask you to write response papers. These are less formal and may include contractions.
- I am not impressed by your vocabulary. I am impressed by your ability to communicate clearly. Do not use big words if you do not know what they mean.
- Know your target audience. Avoid jargon unless you are sure the entire audience will know what it means. Unless specifically told otherwise you can assume the target audience is me.
- If you are critiquing a research article, you need to be able to articulate why the issue you are pointing out is important. Do not just say they needed a bigger sample. What would be gained by having a bigger sample? How does a small sample limit the ability to interpret the results?

### **Common Writing Mistakes**

- The word “that” is the most overused word in the English language, and is often included in sentences unnecessarily. When you come to a sentence which includes “that” while proofreading your paper, read the sentence again without “that.” You will often find it still makes sense. If so, remove the unnecessary “that.” Here is a non-exhaustive list of words commonly followed by “that” which typically do not need to be: state, say, mention, believe, feel, think, agree, found, indicate, conclude, imply, and realize.
- Do not start a sentence with the word “however.” In this context the word does not mean what you intend it to mean. At the start of a sentence, “however” means “in whatever manner,” not “nevertheless.” This is true even when there is a comma after the “however.” This can always be fixed by simply moving the “however” a few words into the sentence or using “nevertheless” to start the sentence. For example, “However, the research does not support this idea” becomes “The research, however, does not support this idea.”
- Periods and commas always belong inside quotation marks. Do not put the period after the quotation mark.

- Be aware of the verb tense you are using. Students often shift tenses back and forth throughout papers, paragraphs, and even sentences. Some tense shifts are appropriate, but many times are due to sloppy editing. Make sure you are consistent and intentional with your tenses.
- Do not use “they” when you are referring to a single person. This is usually done in an effort to avoid choosing he versus she (see above).
- The word “pique” means interesting or stimulating. The word “peak” means comes to a point or summit. The word “peek” means a brief look. Attention is “piqued” not “peaked.”
- The word “feel” should only be used if you are describing an emotion or the sensation of touch. “Feel” should NOT be used to suggest intuition, judgment, agreement, or beliefs. These are examples of thoughts or cognitions. It is incorrect to write “I feel I deserve a better grade.” This is a judgment and should be stated “I think I deserve a better grade.”
- The software used to create presentations is “PowerPoint” not “power point.”
- The word “therefor” is used to describe an exchange, such as “I traded my sandwich and received a salad therefor.” The word “therefore” refers to a statement based on the preceding information, such as “I did not like the salad, therefore I regretted the trade.”