

ANTH 3321/ANTH 5321 Topics in Anthropology

Culture, Psychiatry, and Mental illness

Instructor: Hsuan-Ying Huang



Untitled, Francesca Woodman (1977-1978)

Even then I have nothing against life.
I know well the grass blades you mention,
the furniture you have placed under the sun.

But suicides have a special language.
Like carpenters they want to know *which tools*.
They never ask *why build*.

“Wanting to Die,” Anne Sexton

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Teaching Assistant: Zuo Mengge (menggezuo@link.cuhk.edu.hk)

Time: 1:30-3:15 PM (lecture), 3:30-4:15 PM (MA tutorial), 4:30-5:15 PM (UG tutorial)

Location: Digital Scholarship Lab in Main Library, except on Jan 24 and Feb 7 (LSK 306)

Office hours: by appointment

Language: Mandarin

Course Description:

This course introduces how anthropologists from different theoretical positions study psychiatry (or more broadly modern psy-disciplines) and mental illness (or more broadly mental distress and suffering). It invites students to explore human experiences that are labelled as abnormal or pathological, to understand the expert knowledge and technologies employed to remedy these conditions, and to think about the complex relationships between them and the broader social and cultural contexts. The course begins with the bifurcated cultures of modern psychiatry, followed by an examination of classic issues revolving around insanity, the most extreme condition on the spectrum of mental illness, exemplified by schizophrenia. After exploring the variation of psychopathology in different cultures, the course moves toward the other end of the spectrum to examine depression and trauma, not only as milder forms of mental illness but also social and cultural phenomena. Overall, the course would serve as an eclectic introduction to the sub-field of psychiatric anthropology or anthropology of mental health or mental illness.

Learning Outcomes:

Through this course, students would:

1. acquire basic knowledge in psychiatric anthropology or anthropology of mental health.
2. develop a sophisticated understanding of psychiatry as a cultural domain and a social institution as well as a critical concern for mental health as a social issue.
3. gain foundational knowledge regarding the symptomatology and illness experiences of major mental illnesses.
4. become familiar with a range of ethnographic examples of how mental illness and mental health interact with local social and cultural contexts.

Expectations:

Attendance:

You should attend the lectures and tutorials regularly. What you'll learn from the course will to a large degree depends on your commitment to it.

Reading:

The readings are carefully selected by the instructor; they make up a "tasting menu" of psychiatric anthropology. The articles labelled as "recommended" are optional. MA students are encouraged to read them as well.

The following books are useful introductions if you are eager to learn more about psychiatric anthropology or anthropology of mental health/mental illness.

Kleinman, Arthur. 1988. *Rethinking Psychiatry: From Cultural Category to Personal Experience*. New York: Free Press. (e-book available)

Khan, Nichola. 2017. *Mental Disorders*. New York and Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto Press. (e-book available)

Rose, Nikolas. 2019. *Our Psychiatric Future*. Cambridge, UK; Malden, USA: Polity Press. (on 3-day reserve at NA Library)

Major academic journals in psychiatric anthropology and history of psychiatry:

Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry; Transcultural Psychiatry; Medical Anthropology Quarterly; Ethos; History of Psychiatry; History of Human Sciences; Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences.

The most influential blog in medical and psychiatric anthropology: Somatosphere (<http://somatosphere.net>).

Parallel work:

Anthropology is a branch of knowledge based on fieldwork. It's hard to learn anthropology sufficiently well without doing some ethnographic work in parallel. You should try to follow various phenomena pertaining to mental health while taking the course.

Recommended sites: Mad in America (Facebook), 台灣失序者聯盟 (Facebook), 刺鳥棲息地 (微信), 心聲公益 (微信), KnowYourself (微信), 簡單心理 (微信)

Your own mental well-being matters. You are encouraged to keep a personal journal that records your emotional experiences and reflections. I hope learning psychiatric anthropology in such difficult times could offer some solace and wisdom about how to live through this unending pandemic.

Office Hour:

You are most welcome to make an appointment with me to discuss any question related to or arising from the course. For logistical issues, please contact the TA first.

Evaluation:

Course participation (25%):

This part of the grade will be based on your preparation for and contribution to discussion in lectures and tutorials. You will need to post one question for discussion online at least 12 hours before the class and introduce the question to the class at the beginning of the tutorial. Specifics will be announced by the end of the Add/Drop period.

Illness Narrative assignment (25%):

Write a paper based on an interview with a family member or friend who has experienced some kind of mental illness or psychological distress. You could also choose to write about your own

experience. You should use one or two concepts you have learned up to this point to reflect on the experience. **Due on March 10 (5 pm).**

Length: 1200 words (English) or 2000 characters (Chinese) for UG, 1500 words (English) or 2500 characters (Chinese) for MA.

Final Paper (50%):

The final paper should focus on a topic of particular interest to you (of course, it has to be related to psychiatry, mental health, mental illness, or psychological distress. The recommended sites mentioned above offer useful clues). This is an opportunity for you to engage in independent research that utilizes the ideas and themes from this course. Although this is an anthropology course, the project doesn't need to be based on fieldwork. You are encouraged to discuss with the instructor about your proposed topic.

Oral presentations on April 11 (to be confirmed later)

The final paper is **due on May 12 (5pm).**

Length: 2400 words (English) or 4000 characters (Chinese) for UG, 3000 words (English) or 5000 characters (Chinese) for MA.

Please note that in anthropology (and most of the humanities and social sciences disciplines), the quality of writing would affect your grades substantially—it is far more important than the length. There seems to be a myth among humanities and social sciences students here that the professor would favor a longer paper rather than a shorter one. I think this is a serious mistake. Normally, you should be able to trim 10-15% of the paper through a careful round of proofreading and editing, and this would make it a much better work. (If you do think that you must write a longer paper and you are confident in its quality, please let me know in advance). I hope you could spare some time to do proofreading and editing before submitting your paper.

Assignment:

Academic Integrity:

Students need to know how to cite properly and how to avoid plagiarism— using someone else's ideas or words without attribution. Please read the University's guidelines about academic honesty (<https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>). It's worth refreshing your memory even if you have read it before. Pay particular attention to Section 1 (What is plagiarism), Section 2 (Proper use of source material), and Appendix 1 (Details guidelines on proper use of source material).

Submission of papers:

The papers should be submitted via the plagiarism-detecting website Veriguide (https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jsp). You should simultaneously send the file along with a signed declaration confirming your awareness of the University's policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures to the instructor.

Late Policy:

The assignments are due on the day and time specified in the syllabus. Extension is granted to medical or family/personal emergencies. You should contact the instructor as soon as possible if

such unfortunate events occur. Each day late without an approved extension will result in a reduction of 1/3 of a letter grade (i.e. A becomes A-; B+ becomes B).

Grade Descriptors:

Grade	Overall Course
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes
B	Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses
D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

Weekly Schedule (subject to minor revision)

Jan 10: Introduction

Film: *Through a Glass Darkly*, Ingmar Bergman, 1961.

李智良 2017[2008] 房間 香港 Kubrick (節選)

Jan 17: Cultures of Psychiatry

Luhmann, Tanya. 2001. "What's Wrong with the Patient," in *Of Two Minds: An Anthropologist Looks at American Psychiatry*. Pp. 25-83. New York: Vintage.

Rosenhan, David. 1973. "On Being Sane in Insane Places." *Science* 179: 250-258.

Recommended:

Kleinman, Arthur. 1988. "What is a Psychiatric Diagnosis?" in *Rethinking Psychiatry: From Cultural Category to Personal Experience*. Pp. 5-17. New York: Free Press.

Jan 24: Psychosis

Sechehaye, Marguerite. 1951. "Appearance of the First Feelings of Unreality" and "The Struggle against Unreality Begins" in *Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl*. Pp. 21-38. New York: Grune & Stratton Inc.

Jenkins, Janis H. 2015. "This Is How God Wants It? The Struggle of Sebastián." in *Extraordinary Conditions: Culture and Experience in Mental Illness*. Pp. 71-95. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Recommended:

Jenkins, Janis. 2004. "Schizophrenia as a Paradigm Case for Understanding Fundamental Human Processes." In *Schizophrenia, Culture, and Subjectivity: The Edge of Experience*. Edited by Janis Jenkins and Robert Barrett. Pp. 29-61. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Laing, R. D. 1961. "The Existential-Phenomenological Foundations for the Understanding of Psychosis" and "Ontological Insecurity" in *The Divided Self*. Pp. 17-61. London: Penguin.

Jan 31: No Class (Lunar New Year)

Feb 7: Psychiatric Asylum

Baum, Emily. 2018. "From Madness to Mental Health." in *The Invention of Madness: State, Society, and the Insane in Modern China*. Pp. 111-136. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Film: *An Eight Month Experiment, Beiping* (北平八閱月之實驗), Rockefeller Foundation, 1933-4

Erving, Goffman. 1961. "The Moral Career of the Mental Patient." in *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Pp. 117-56. London: Penguin Books.

Recommended:

Film: *One Flew Over Cuckoo's Nest*, directed by Milos Forman, 1975

Feb 14: Chronicity and Social Course

Luhrmann, Tanya. 2001. "Madness and Moral Responsibility," in *Of Two Minds: An Anthropologist Looks at American Psychiatry*. Pp. 266-293. New York: Vintage.

Luhrmann, Tanya. 2016. "I'm Schizophrenic!: How Diagnosis Can Change Identity in the United States." In *Our Most Troubling Madness: Case Studies in Schizophrenia Across Cultures*. Edited by T.H. Luhrmann and Jocelyn Marrow. Pp. 27-41. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Recommended:

Lin, Tsung-Yi, and Mei-Chen Lin. 1981. "Love, Denial and Rejection." in *Normal and Abnormal Behaviour in Chinese Culture*. Edited by Arthur Kleinman and Tsung-Yi Lin. Pp. 387-402. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company.

Mitchell, W. J. T. 2020. *Mental Traveler: A Father, A Son, and A Journey through Schizophrenia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Feb 21: Culture and Psychopathology: From Schizophrenia to Depression

Barrett, Robert J. 2003 "Kurt Schneider in Boreno: Do First Rank Symptom Apply to the Iban?" in *Schizophrenia, Culture, and Subjectivity: The Edge of Experience*. Edited by Janis H. Jenkins and Robert J. Barrett Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 87-109.

Kleinman, Arthur. 1986. "Social Origins of Distress and Disease: Depression, Neurasthenia, and Pain in Modern China." *Current Anthropology* 27(5): 499-509.

Recommended:

Kleinman, Arthur. 1988. "Do Psychiatric Disorders Differ in Different Cultures?" in *Rethinking Psychiatry: From Cultural Category to Personal Experience*. Pp. 18-33. New York: Free Press.

Feb 28: Depression: From Personal to Political

Cvetkovich, Ann. 2012. *Depression: A Public Feeling*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. (excerpts)

Recommended:

Kitanaka, Junko. 2012. *Depression in Japan: Psychiatric Cures for a Society in Distress*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Klein, Melanie. 1975. "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States." In *Love, Guilt and Reparation & Other Works 1921-1945*. Pp. 262-289. London: Hogarth Press.

Mar 7: Topic to be announced later

Special Speaker: 小卡 (公眾號「刺鳥棲息地」主創)

March 14: Loneliness

Winnicott, D.W. 1958. "The Capacity to be Alone," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 39: 416-420.

Ozawa-de Silva, Chikako. 2021. "Introduction: Disconnected People and the Lonely Society" and "Too Lonely to Die Alone: Internet Group Suicide" in *The Anatomy of Loneliness: Suicide, Social Connection, and the Search for Relational Meaning in Contemporary Japan*. Pp. 1-18 and 48-73. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Recommended:

Lepore, Jill "The History of Loneliness," *New Yorker*, March 30, 2020

(<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/04/06/the-history-of-loneliness>)

Mar 21: Politics of Trauma

Young, Allan. 1997. "The DSM-III Revolution" in *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*. Pp. 89-117. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Read Pp.107-117)

Antze, Paul. 1996. "Telling Stories, Making Selves: Memory and identity in Multiple Personality Disorder." In *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*. Edited by Paul Antze and Michael Lambek. Pp. 3-23. New York and London: Routledge.

Recommended:

Boehnlein, James and Devon Hinton. 2016. "From Shell Shock to PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury: A Historical Perspective on Responses to Combat Trauma." In *Culture and PTSD: Trauma in Global and Historical Perspective*. Edited by Devon Hinton and Byron Good. Pp. 154-175. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mar 28: Generational Transmission

Khan, Nichola. 2019. "Breathing as Politics and Generational Transmission: Respiratory Legacies of War, Empire, and Chinese Patriarchy." *Public Anthropology* 2(2): 201-225.

Recommended:

吳繼文 2017 天河撩亂 台北 寶瓶文化 (二十週年復刻版)

Apr 4: No Class (Ching Ming Festival)

Apr 11:

Option 1: Oral Presentations

Option 2: Play

Winnicott, Donald W. 2005[1971]. "Playing: A Theoretical Statement." in *Playing and Reality*. Pp. 51-70. Routledge: Abingdon, Oxon.

Luhrmann, Tanya. 2012. "Let's Pretend," in *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*. Pp. 72-100. Alfred A. Knoff: New York.

WANTING TO DIE

Since you ask, most days I cannot remember.
I walk in my clothing, unmarked by that voyage.
Then the almost unnameable lust returns.

Even then I have nothing against life.
I know well the grass blades you mention,
the furniture you have placed under the sun.

But suicides have a special language.
Like carpenters they want to know *which tools*.
They never ask *why build*.

Twice I have so simply declared myself,
have possessed the enemy, eaten the enemy,
have taken on his craft, his magic.

In this way, heavy and thoughtful,
warmer than oil or water,
I have rested, drooling at the mouth-hole.

I did not think of my body at needle point.
Even the cornea and the leftover urine were gone.
Suicides have already betrayed the body.

Still-born, they don't always die,
but dazzled, they can't forget a drug so sweet
that even children would look on and smile.

To thrust all that life under your tongue! —
that, all by itself, becomes a passion.
Death's a sad bone; bruised, you'd say,

and yet she waits for me, year after year,
to so delicately undo an old wound,
to empty my breath from its bad prison.

Balanced there, suicides sometimes meet,
raging at the fruit, a pumped-up moon,
leaving the bread they mistook for a kiss,

leaving the page of the book carelessly open,
something unsaid, the phone off the hook
and the love, whatever it was, an infection.

February 3, 1964