

City College of New York  
Spring 2008  
Psychopathology in Literature and Film  
Mon/Wed 9:30 – 10:45  
Lissa Weinstein, Ph.D.  
Office 8/105 Extension 5677  
E mail : [lissa\\_weinstein@hotmail.com](mailto:lissa_weinstein@hotmail.com)

**Goals :** To understand the basic concepts of abnormal psychology and the different approaches to its study. To be able to identify the basic psychopathological configurations of both Axis I and Axis II disorders. Students should also be able to compare and contrast the different sources of information about disorders (scientific research, self report, artistic depiction) of the disorders studied. Students should develop and sharpen their observation skills.

**Attendance/Lateness:**

3 lateness count as an absence

3 unexcused absences drops a letter grade

More than 3 absences may determine failure

**NO LATE PAPERS.** Unless you or someone in your family is dying and you have a doctor's note to prove it, you will drop ½ grade per day a paper is late.

**Course Ground Rules and Expectations**

We will be discussing sensitive topics, that often touch on personal issues. While every effort will be made to ensure a safe environment for sharing and exchange of ideas, students are reminded that this is a classroom and not a therapeutic or clinical situation. If students feel the material is stressful, or if you have needs that are beyond the scope of the class, please see the instructor for referrals to other services. I can be reached by phone or e mail. That said, it is expected that **ALL CLASS MEMBERS WILL PARTICIPATE IN CLASS DISCUSSION**, listen to others, respect differing opinions.

**Course format/activities**

Although the main format of this class is lecture, we will also have discussions, films and exercises that we will discuss in class. There will also be library research and, of course, written assignments.

**Course requirements and Grading**

Attendance, reading and class participation are all crucial.

Students are responsible for the readings (before class), even if they are not fully discussed in class

Evaluation of the level and quality of participation will be incorporated into the total course grade.

Attendance and classroom participation are worth 15% OF YOUR FINAL GRADE

Final exam: 15% of your grade

Additional written assignments: 30 % of your grade

Final paper: 40% of grade

**Required Text:** Hansell, J. and Damour, L. Abnormal Psychology 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Wiley. This text can be bought in an online version for much less than the hardcover. Also, the first edition can be found on ebay half.com and would be acceptable for the class. It is a basic background text, but you will be responsible for the material in the chapters assigned as part of the final exam.

Additional readings or films will be assigned weekly. I will set up a library site for the class, where the shorter readings will be available.

**Week One: Abnormal Psychology – The Core Concepts, Defining Abnormality**

**Goal:** To understand the importance of context in defining abnormality, to understand the multiple factors that go into defining abnormality, to understand the limitations and benefits of diagnosis, to understand the difference between predisposing and precipitating factors, to understand the general guidelines in defining abnormality, naps

Chapter 1 Hansell & Damour

Read: Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Yellow Wallpaper

This short story can be easily found on the Web

**Assignment:** Rewrite the story from the perspective of another character. This can be an invented character, the husband, the wallpaper. It's your choice and have fun, but you have to be true to the nature of the psychopathology in the original.

**Week Two - Three: What Causes Psychopathology? Biological, Psychodynamic, Cognitive/Behavioral and Environmental Explanations**

**Goal:** Identify theories of abnormal behavior in pre-modern times; to understand the connection between mind and body, and to apply this to psychopathology, identify the major components of psychoanalytic/psychodynamic theory, identify the main features of behavioral treatment and its scientific underpinnings in classical and operant conditioning

Read: Chapter 2 Hansell & Damour

Film: Frances

**Week Four Classifying Abnormality: Introduction to the DSM IV**

**Goal:** To understand multiaxial diagnosis, its history, strengths and limitations. To understand how we gather information in clinical and nonclinical settings. To apply multiaxial diagnosis to the case of Frances

Read Pages 70 – 106 in Hansell and Damour

**Assignment:** Do a diagnostic description (No more than one page) of Frances from the perspective of multiaxial diagnosis. You can be inventive (as not all the information you need is in the film, but you must justify your reasons at every step of the way)

**Week Five Psychosis and Schizophrenia**

**Goal:** To understand the major symptom features of Schizophrenia (psychosis, hallucinations, delusions), to identify the subtypes of schizophrenia, to understand the idea of the schizophrenia “continuum”, to understand the cognitive aspects of schizophrenia, to understand the dynamic, behavioral and family systems aspects of schizophrenia.

Chapter 12 Hansell & Damour

Conrad Aiken: Silent Snow, Secret Snow

Gogol: Diary of a Madman

Chekov: Ward 6

Susan Sheehan: Selections from Is there No Place on Earth for Me (On library website)

Pamela Wagner and Carolyn Spiro: Selection from Divided Minds: Twin Sisters and Their

Journey Through Schizophrenia

**Assignment:** Pick one of the readings and one of the perspectives on schizophrenia: Discuss your reading in terms of the perspective you have chosen. What does the perspective leave out? No more than 2 – 3 pages

**Week Six: Paranoia and Delusional Disorders**

Chapter 12 Hansell & Damour

Film: The Invasion of the Body Snatchers

**Week Seven – 8 Affective Disorders**

**Goal: Be able to differentiate between normal and pathological moods, identify the types of mood episodes required for a DSM IV TR diagnosis of mood disorder, understand the cultural components of the diagnosis, including gender issues, identify major biological abnormalities associated with mood disorders, discuss the relative efficacy of psychodynamic, cognitive and psychopharmacological treatments for depression**

**Chapter 5 Hansell & Damour**

**Depression:**

**Sigmund Freud: Mourning and Melancholia**

**William Styron: Selection from Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness**

**A. Alvarez: Selection from The Savage God**

**T. S. Elliot: The Hollow Man**

**Film excerpt: Hiroshima Mon Amour**

**Mania:**

**Selections from Robert Lowell: Selected Poems**

**Selections from Kay Jamieson: An Unquiet Mind**

**Week 9 – 12 Personality Disorders**

**Goal Define ego syntonic versus ego dystonic traits, be able to differentiate and describe the major symptomatology of the different clusters of personality disorder (odd,dramatic, anxious )**

**(Odd cluster)**

**Schizoid:**

**Willa Cather: Paul's Case**

**(Dramatic – Erratic Cluster)**

**Antisocial**

**The Sopranos: Episode One, First Season**

**Selections from Patricia Highsmith: The Talented Mr. Ripley**

**Narcissistic**

**Film: Being John Malkovich or Grizzly Man**

**Tales from Ovid: Echo and Narcissus**

**Henry James: The Beast in the Jungle**

**(Anxious – Fearful )**

**Obsessional:**

**Herman Melville: Bartleby the Scrivener**

**Film: The Aviator**

**Assignment: Observational diary. Detailed observations and diagnostic speculations of chosen strangers.**

**Week 13 Developmental Disorders**

**Goal: Understanding the symptomatology of childhood disorders in the context of development**

**Read: Hansell and Damour Chapter 8**

**Autism:**

**The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime**

**Learning Disorders**

**Eileen Simpson: Reversals**

**Bernard Schlink: The Reader**

**Week 14 Substance Abuse**

**To understand the historical aspects of drug use and dependence, the DSMIV criteria, and theoretical models of drug dependence**

**Read: Chapter 14 Hansell and Damour**

**Film: Harvard Man**