

Wesleyan University
Graduate Liberal Studies Program
Understanding Psychoses: Understanding Psychology
Course Syllabus

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Schizophrenia spectrum disorders (psychoses) are characterized by an array of diverse symptoms, including extreme oddities in perception, thinking, action, sense of self, and manner of relating to others. However, the hallmark of these disorders is a significant loss of contact with reality, referred to as psychosis. Sometimes the symptoms of the illness make it hard for people to function and interact socially. Psychotic disorders affect both men and women. It is often first seen in men in late adolescence and early adulthood. It is mostly first seen in women between ages 25 and 35. Symptoms of psychosis vary from person to person, and may include the following:

- **Hallucination** is experiencing things that are not there. Hearing voices that other people do not hear is the most common type. Hallucinations can also include feeling, tasting, or smelling things that are not present
- **Delusions** are unusual, false beliefs that are held to be true, even when someone else explains the truth
- **Disordered thinking** happens when a person has difficulty “thinking straight.” Thoughts may come and go quickly. Or it may be hard to focus on one thought for very long
- **Flat emotions** occur when a person shows little emotion or speaks in a voice that sounds flat with little or no expression. A person may lose interest in life and withdraw from family, friends, and social events

This course is designed to address early accounts of psychosis and to analyze historical views of insanity and its treatment as the origins of modern considerations in mental disorders. The course is comprised of three units:

- An understanding of “madness” through time
- Current views and approaches to treatment
- Personal accounts of survivors and families

Required Texts:

Torrey, E.F. (2006). *Surviving Schizophrenia: A Manual for Families, Consumers, and Providers (Fifth Edition)*. New York: HarperCollins.

Gottesman, Irving I. (1991). *Schizophrenia Genesis: The Origins of Madness*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company.

Snyder, K. (2007). *Me, Myself, and Them: A Firsthand Account of One Young Person’s Experience With Schizophrenia*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Deveson, A. (1991). *Tell me I’m here: One family’s experience of Schizophrenia*. New York: Penguin Books.

Schiller, L. and Bennett, A. (1994). *The Quiet Room: A Journey Out of the Torment of Madness*. New York: Warner Books.

Greenberg, Joanne (1989). *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*. New York: Signet.

Course Objectives:

- Utilize a biopsychosocial perspective to explore normal and abnormal developmental processes.
- Examine how our understanding and conceptualization of psychological disorders has evolved through time.
- Examine how psychological disorders in general, and psychotic disorders specifically, are currently conceptualized, assessed, and treated in clinical settings.
- Maintain a perspective of healthy criticism in the interpretation and utilization of existing conceptualizations, assessment procedures, research results, and methods of clinical intervention.

Assessment:

- **30% - Essays (10% each):**

You will be asked to write three concise essays in response to questions regarding: an understanding of “madness” through time; current views and approaches to treatment, and; personal accounts of survivors and families.

- **45% - Final Literature Review Paper and Short Presentation**

- Presentation/Peer Review (20%)
- Final revision (25%)

Summarize and critique recent research articles on a relatively narrow topic in psychotic psychopathology, to produce a paper of 15 typed, double-spaced pages. Each participant will present a summary of her/his Literature Review Paper during class. Presentations must last no longer than thirty minutes, with a brief question and answer period to follow.

- **25% - Participation and discussion**

This course will be conducted in a seminar style involving minimal lecture and mostly discussion. Thus, participants must attend class meetings having read all of the assigned articles for that day. In class meetings, please be prepared to contribute and submit **one issue or question for discussion**. Typed discussion items may range from one sentence to one paragraph in length, and I will assess them by the degree to which they reflect mastery of the concepts, clarity of analysis, and thoughtfulness. Your overall class participation grade will reflect your attendance record, regular contributions to discussions that demonstrate good preparation, and the quality of your discussion items.

Course Schedule:

Date	Topic	Reading(s)
Jan 16	Historical Views of Insanity: Psychoses Across Time and Space <i>Historical accounts of insanity and its treatment.</i>	<i>Gottesman</i> , Chapters 1 and 4 <i>Snyder</i> , Chapters 1-3 <i>Haley</i> , Chapters 2 and 6 (on e-reserve)
	Conceptualization, Classification and Diagnosis of Psychoses <i>What the psychoses are...and what they are not.</i>	<i>Torrey</i> , Chapters 1-3 <i>Gottesman</i> , Chapters 2 and 3 <i>Snyder</i> , Chapter 4 <i>Schiller and Bennett</i> , "The Quiet Room" Case Study: Garrett, <i>Treatment of a Transgender Client With Schizophrenia in a Public Psychiatric Milieu: A Case Study By a Student Therapist</i> (on e-reserve)
		First Essay Due
Jan 17	Assessment of Psychoses: What the Psychoses Are Not <i>A more clinical approach: onset, course, prognosis, research findings.</i>	<i>Torrey</i> , Chapters 4-5 <i>Snyder</i> , Chapters 5-6
	Treatment	<i>Torrey</i> , Chapters 8-11 Case Study: "Jim" (provided in class)
Jan 18	Causal Theories <i>Normal versus "abnormal," the brain, genetics and contagions, developmental thoughts, infectious and immune theories, diathesis-stress theories...and those that are obsolete!</i>	<i>Torrey</i> , Chapters 6 and 7 <i>Gottesman</i> , Chapters 5-9, 11-12
	Family Theories	<i>Lidz, Fleck & Cornelison</i> , Chapters 1, 5, 7, 8, 17, 20 (on e-reserve)
		Second Essay Due
Jan 30	Society, Social Policy, and Survival <i>Death and physical illness, criminality and violence, medication, attitudes, education, creativity, stigma and survival strategies for survivors and their families. How are the psychoses portrayed in the movies? In literature?</i>	<i>Torrey</i> , Chapters 12-15 <i>Gottesman</i> , Chapter 10 <i>Deveson</i> , "Tell Me I'm Here..." <i>Greenberg</i> , "I Never Promised..."
		Third Essay Due
Jan 31	Class Presentations, Summarization, Issues for Advocates	Final Paper Due