

MADNESS & POLITICS

anthropology 42

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M 2-4:30

What can be learned from the edges of life, from those forms of experience and action that seem to defy life in their very impossibility or inexpressibility? Indeed, such forms of experience (psychosis, trauma, possession, torture...) are commonly regarded as radical exceptions to the order of everyday life, inhabiting a territory that is beyond language, culture, and history. This seminar will examine the labor that such forms of “limit experience” perform in shaping everyday subjective experience and social life. Of particular interest in this seminar will be the significance of limit experience for understanding what it means to be a subject, the relationship between mental disorder and social-political orders, the position of injury and suffering in contemporary formulations of truth and freedom, and anthropological approaches to political power conceived in psychological and social terms. Rather than making a sustained argument, the course will involve open-ended discussions regarding theories of subjectivity as they appear in ethnographic studies of psychiatry, pharmaceuticals, the biosciences, political violence, security, religious experience, and institutions of confinement and care.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at Amherst Books)

- Lorna Rhodes. 2004. *Total Confinement: Madness and Reason in the Maximum Security Prison*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Didier Fassin. 2009. *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Veena Das. 2007. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Michel de Certeau. 2000. *The Possession at Loudun*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Judith Butler. 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Biehl, Jiao. 2005. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press

► Additional readings will be found on the course website:

<https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/courses/0910S/ANTH/ANTH-42-0910S>

COURSE WORK

Your evaluation in the course will be based on:

1. critical synthesis papers (80%)

You will write **eight** critical synthesis papers over the course of the semester. A critical synthesis paper, for this class, consists of a 2-3 page synthesis and reflection on a day's readings. The aim of these papers is to help you integrate and think critically about the readings for the course (see "cs guidelines"). **Papers must be submitted to me by 10am on the day of the class for which you are writing.** These papers are therefore prospective, not retrospective. For seven of the eight papers, you can write about any day's readings you like (although there are only thirteen possible classes for which you can write eight papers). There is only one week where the paper is mandatory – week three in which we discuss Lorna Rhode's *Total Confinement*. For this paper, you will be allowed to turn it in at the beginning of class on Monday, February 8th.

2. class participation (20%)

First, class attendance is mandatory. Second, once there, participation is mandatory. Both – attendance and substantive participation in discussion – will figure prominently into my evaluation of your work in the course. Attendance is particularly important in that the course will not be relying on a textbook but a number of cases, ethnographic examples, or dialogues that will be framed in my classroom discussions. Attendance is also important because, upon missing your third class session, you will fail the course.

If there are legitimate reasons for either not being able to turn in assignments on time or not being able to attend class, let me know. And, needless to say, plagiarism of any sort is not allowed. If you have any questions about what is or is not considered plagiarism, see:

<https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/deanstudents/acadhonesty/plagiarism>

COURSE OUTLINE

week 1: introduction and orientation (January 25)

week 2: madness and criminality (February 1)

Michel Foucault. 1998. "The Dangerous Individual." In *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, L.D. Kritzman, ed. New York: Routledge. Pp. 125-151.

Emily Bazelon. 2005. "Sentencing by the Numbers." *The New York Times Magazine*. January 2, pp. 18-19.

Michel Foucault. 1994. "The Punitive Society" and "Psychiatric Power." In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press. P p. 23-50.

Lorna Rhodes, *Total Confinement*, preface & introduction

week 3: confinement and care (February 8)

Lorna Rhodes. 2004. *Total Confinement: Madness and Reason in the Maximum Security Prison*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

week 4: orientations: "madness," subjectivity, and experience (February 15)

- Janis Jenkins. 2004. "Schizophrenia as Paradigm Case for Understanding Fundamental Human Processes." In *Schizophrenia, Culture, and Subjectivity*, Jenkins and Barrett, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 29-61.
- Alix Spiegel. 2005. "The Dictionary of Disorder: How One Man Revolutionized Psychiatry." *The New Yorker*, January 3, 2005.
- Thomas Szasz. 1960. "The Myth of Mental Illness." *The American Psychologist*, 15:113-118.
- Adam Haslett. 2002. "The Good Doctor." In *You are Not a Stranger Here: Stories*. New York: Anchor Books. Pp. 24-47.
- Byron Good, Subandi, and Mary-Jo Good. 2001. "The Subject of Mental Illness: Psychosis, Mad Violence and Subjectivity in Indonesia." In *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*, J. Biehl, B. Good, A. Kleinman, eds. Pp. 243-272.

week 5: terror and genealogies of trauma (February 22)

- Sigmund Freud. 1961. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. New York: W.W. Norton. Chapters 1-2.
- Walter Benjamin. 1968. "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire." In *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books. Pp. 155-165 (first four sections)
- Michael Taussig. 1991. "Terror as Usual." In *The Nervous System*. NY: Routledge. Pp. 11-36.
- Didier Fassin, *The Empire of Trauma*, pp.13-39, 77-97.

week 6: colonial madness & postcolonial disorders (March 1)

- Franz Fanon. 1965. "Medicine and Colonialism." In *A Dying Colonialism*. New York: Grove Press. Pp. 121-146.
- Franz Fanon. 1965. "Colonial Wars and Mental Disorders." In *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press. Pp. 280-310.
- Stefania Pandolfo. 2000. "The Thin Line of Modernity: Some Moroccan Debates on Subjectivity." In *Questions of Modernity*, T. Mitchell, ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Pp. 115-147.
- Stefania Pandolfo. 2008. "The Knot of the Soul: Postcolonial Conundrums, Madness, and the Imagination." In *Postcolonial Disorders*, Good, Hyde, Pinto, and Good, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 329-358.
- [recommended: Saadat Hasan Manto. 1989. "Toba Tek Singh." In *The Best of Manto: A Collection of His Short Stories*, J. Ratan, ed. New York: Facet Books, pp. 52-58.]

week 7: violence and the ordinary (March 8)

Veena Das, *Life and Words*, selections.

week 8: NO CLASS – SPRING RECESS – March 15**week 9: possession and the subject of truth (March 22)**

Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun*.

[recommended: Aihwa Ong. 1987. "The Production of Possession: Spirits and the Multinational Corporation in Malaysia." *American Ethnologist* 15: 28-42.]

film: *Capturing the Friedmans* (2003)

week 10: trauma and the subject of truth (March 29)

- Didier Fassin, *The Empire of Trauma*, pp.148-188.
 Joshua Breslau. 2000. "Globalizing Disaster Trauma: Psychiatry, Science, and Culture after the Kobe Earthquake." *Ethos* 28(2):174-197.
 Christopher Dole, "Disaster Psychiatry and Experimental Life in Turkey"
 Didier Fassin, *The Empire of Trauma*, chapter 8, "Palestine," pp.189-216.

week 11: passionate attachments (April 5)

- Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, selections.

week 12: symptoms, fantasies, and politics (April 12)

- Jacques Lacan. 2002 [1966]. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function, as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experiences." In *Ecrits: A Selection*, Bruce Fink, trans. W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 3-9.
 Slavoj Žižek. 1999. "The Spectre of Ideology." In *The Žižek Reader*, Wright and Wright, eds. Blackwell Publishing, pp. 53-86.
 Slavoj Žižek. 1995. "How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?" In *Mapping Ideology*, Žižek, ed. London: Verso, pp. 296-331.
 Slavoj Žižek. 1994. "The Seven Veils of Fantasy." In *Plague of Fantasies*. London: Verso, pp. 3-44.

week 13: maddening states & the politics of life (April 19)

- Michael Taussig. 1992. "Maleficium: State Fetishism." In *The Nervous System*. New York: Routledge. Pp.111-140.
 Begona Aretxaga. 2001. "The Sexual Games of the Body Politic: Fantasy and State Violence in Northern Ireland." *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 25:1-27.
 Begona Aretxaga. 2008. "Madness and the Political Real: Reflections on Violence in Postdictatorial Spain." In *Postcolonial Disorders*, Good, Hyde, Pinto, and Good, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 43-61.
 João Biehl, *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*, introduction & part i

week 14: madness, life, and abandonment (April 26)

- João Biehl, *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*.

week 15: injury & freedom (May 3)

- Wendy Brown. 1995. *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.3-76.
 Adriana Petryna. 2002. "Illness as Work." In *Life Exposed: Biological Citizenship after Chernobyl*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton, pp 82-114.
 Miriam Ticktin. 2006. "Where Ethics and Politics Meet: The Violence of Humanitarianism." *American Ethnologist* 33(1):33-49.