

PHIL 3037: Philosophy of Mental Health and Disorder

Spring 2021

Distance Learning (Online)

Synchronous Meetings: Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:15am-12:10pm

Instructor: Andrew Evans, evans3ah@mail.uc.edu

Office Hours: By appointment, video chat and phone calls are an option

Course Description:

What exactly is a mental disorder? We often use this term, but very rarely stop to think about what it means. It seems like our answers to this question will vary depending on our personal opinions and the society we grew up in. So, who gets to decide what is a real mental disorder and what is not? Is it a matter of scientific discovery, value judgments, or even cultural preference? Relatedly, what is mental health? What does it mean to have a healthy mind? These and other questions will be discussed in this course. Other topics include the diagnosis of mental disorder, the science of psychopathology, ethics and mental health, the concepts of function and dysfunction, well-being and happiness, and critiques of the mental health field. Please note: this is a philosophy course and not a clinical course, no clinical skills or diagnostic methods will be covered.

Learning Goals:

By the end of this course, you will be able to...

- Critically discuss the major theories of the concept of mental disorder, the major systems of categorization of mental disorder, how the mental health community is influenced by and influences culture and society, how ethics and mental health relate to each other, and theories of function, dysfunction, and well-being.
- Relate the theories and issues discussed in class to your own experiences and reflect on the impact that mental health has on society.
- Present an original project that incorporates class content as well as independently researched material.
- Write an effective philosophical argument.

Required Book:

Please obtain a copy of Derek Bolton's (2008) *What is mental disorder? An essay in philosophy, science, and values* ISBN 0-19-8565925 ISBN-13: 978-0-19-856592-5

Grade Scale:

A 93%-100%	B 83%-86.5%	C 73%-76.5%	D 63%-66.5%
A- 90%-92.5%	B- 80%-82.5%	C- 70%-72.5%	D- 60-62.5%
B+ 87%-89.5%	C+ 77%-79.5%	D+ 67%-69.5%	F 0%-59.5%

Point Distribution:

Midterm Exam	40 points
Final Exam	40 points
Project Proposal	15 points
Project Presentation	10 points
Project and Summary	50 points
Discussion Board Posts	45 points (1 point per post—3 posts per discussion board)
Total	200 points

Midterm Exam:

The midterm exam will be composed of a number of essay questions. You will get the chance to choose a certain among a list of questions to answer. The exam will be timed and will be taken through Canvas. The exam is open book and open note. The material from the exam will be everything we have covered up until the exam. I will regularly post study questions throughout the semester—and will base the exam questions on these study questions.

Final Exam:

The final exam will also be composed of essay questions—and you will get to choose a certain number to answer from a list. The exam will also be timed, taken through Canvas, and be open book and open note. It will not be cumulative. So, it will only cover material from the midterm exam to the end of the semester. As with the midterm exam, I will provide study questions for you to go over to study for the exam.

Project Proposal:

In this class you will be required to complete a final project. You have a fair amount of freedom as to what to choose to do your project on—and what form your project will take. You could, for example, write an essay, create a piece of art, make a video, etc. However, not all ideas will be accepted. So, that is the purpose of the project proposal. You will turn in a one-page (double-spaced sized twelve font) proposal of what you plan to do for your project. In it you will have to explain in detail what you plan to do, how it connects to course material what independent research you plan to do, and how it will help you learn more about the course material. I will take a look at your proposal and be in contact with you about whether or not what your proposal makes sense for a final project. You may be asked to resubmit a proposal.

Project Presentation:

During the last few weeks of class, I have set aside some time for you to present your final projects. Everyone is required to present—but you can choose from two options. 1) You can present live to the class in a five-minute explanation of your project. 2) You can type out an explanation of your

project on a discussion board. In your project proposal, make sure to indicate which way you would prefer to present.

Project and Summary:

As I note above, for this class you have to do a final project. You can write an essay, create a piece of art, make a video, etc. Through the project proposal, I will discuss with you what would be an acceptable project. Towards the end of the semester, you will turn in your final project. At that point you will need to turn in two things. 1) The project product itself—this could be the essay, the piece of art, etc. 2) A summary of your project. The summary will be a short explanation of how the project relates to the course material and how it impacted your learning of the course material.

Discussion Board Posts:

You will be assigned to a discussion group early in the semester. Each week you will talk with your discussion group members on that week's discussion board on Canvas. Each week you are required to post at least three times in the discussion board. Those three posts are a minimum—and I hope that the discussion board becomes a place for active class conversation. At minimum though, each week you should post one question you had about the reading and respond to two of your peer's posts. Discussion boards will always be due Fridays.

Late Work Policy:

The project proposal, the project presentation, and the project and summary can be turned in up to one week past the due date and will be docked 20%. After one week of being late, please discuss with me to see if it will be possible to still turn in the late work. The midterm exam, the final exam, and the discussion board posts cannot be turned in late due to the nature of these assignments. However, in regard to any late work, if you are having trouble turning things in on time please talk with me. Exceptions can always be made for illness, an emergency, or some other extenuating circumstance. Talk with me about it and we will come to a solution.

Academic Misconduct:

Do not plagiarize or cheat in any way. Follow the university's policies on academic misconduct, which are linked below. If I discover that you have broken the university's policies on academic misconduct, I am required to report it. Punishments range from failing the assignment to expulsion from the university.

[Academic Misconduct](#)

Inclusion:

It is my goal to make this class a safe space for people of all ages, races, national origins, ancestries, political affiliations, disability statuses, medical conditions, gender identities, gender expressions, sexes, sexual orientations, marital statuses, veteran statuses, and other forms of difference. No discrimination will be tolerated. Especially when participating in the discussion boards, everyone should make sure to be respectful. Please let me know via email if there are any inclusion-related

considerations that I should be aware of (e.g. pronouns or if you use a name that is not listed in Canvas).

Accessibility Resources:

Regarding accessibility, I will do everything I can to ensure that accommodations will be made when needed.

The University of Cincinnati is committed to providing all students with equal access to learning opportunities. Accessibility Resources (formerly Disability Services) is the official campus office that works to arrange for reasonable accommodations for students with an identified physical, psychological or cognitive disability (learning, ADD/ADHD, psychological, visual, hearing, physical, cognitive, medical condition, etc.) Students are encouraged to contact Accessibility Resources to arrange for a confidential meeting to discuss services and accommodations. Contact should be initiated as soon as possible to allow adequate time for accommodations to be arranged.

[Accessibility Network](#)
[Accessibility Resources](#)

Other Helpful Resources:

[Campus Life and Academic Support](#)
[Academic Writing Center](#)
[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)
[University Health Services](#)
[University COVID-19 Information](#)
[Gender Equity and Inclusion \(Title IX\) website](#)
[Women Helping Women](#)
[LGBTQ Center](#)
[UC Public Safety](#)

Technology, Canvas, Microsoft Teams:

This class is totally online so you will need access to the internet. If you have trouble getting connected to the internet, please let me know. We will be using Canvas for this class. Please regularly check the Canvas page. Also, make sure you change your settings so that you get Canvas notifications and emails. For our synchronous meetings we will be using Microsoft Teams. Make sure to have Teams set up on your computer or other device. I will create a group in Teams and invite everyone in the class to join.

Communication:

The best way to communicate with me is email. My email address is: evans3ah@mail.uc.edu. I am usually able to respond to an email within 48 hours. Please feel free to email me with any questions or concerns you have. I am also available to meet via video chat or by telephone. If you email me, we can arrange an appointment.

Difficult Content:

Since the focus of this course is mental health and disorder, the topics we discuss will often be potentially triggering. There will be discussion of severe mental suffering, suicide, depression, anxiety, and potentially other sensitive topics. Please make sure to be careful with the course content and always take care of yourself. If there is something that you think would be difficult for you to read or view, then it is okay to skip it. Just let me know that you need to skip it and we can come to some other arrangement. If a particular reading, video, or other piece of course material seems like it would be potentially triggering or upsetting, I will do my best to warn you ahead of time. If you have any thoughts or questions about any of this, please feel free to reach out to me.

Schedule:

Day	Required Readings, Videos, and Assignments
Introducing mental illness I	
<u>Mon Jan 11</u>	<u>Read the syllabus!</u> <u>Introductions</u>
<u>Wed Jan 13</u>	<u>Elyn Saks <i>The Center Cannot Hold</i> Prologue and Chapter 1</u> <u>Kay Jamison <i>An Unquiet Mind</i> Prologue and excerpt from Chapter 1</u>
<u>Fri Jan 15</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 1 Discussion Board Posts</u>
Introducing mental illness II	
<u>Mon Jan 18</u>	<u>No meeting: MLK Day</u>
<u>Wed Jan 20</u>	<u>DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria for Major Depressive Disorder and Persistent Depressive Disorder</u> <u>Brosh “Adventures in Depression” Part 1 and Part 2</u> <u>DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria for Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Alcohol Use Disorder</u> <u><i>Bojack Horseman</i> anxiety and alcohol clip 1 and clip 2</u> <u><i>Big Mouth</i> anxiety clip</u>
<u>Fri Jan 22</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 2 Discussion Board Posts</u>
What exactly is a mental disorder? I	
<u>Mon Jan 25</u>	<u>Bolton <i>What is mental disorder?</i> Introduction and Chapter 1</u>
<u>Wed Jan 27</u>	<u>In-class activity on the concept of mental disorder</u>
<u>Fri Jan 29</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 3 Discussion Board Posts</u>
What exactly is a mental disorder? II	
<u>Mon Feb 1</u>	<u>Bolton <i>What is mental disorder?</i> Chapter 2 and Chapter 3</u>
<u>Wed Feb 3</u>	<u>In-class activity on the concept of mental disorder</u>
<u>Fri Feb 5</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 4 Discussion Board Posts</u>
What exactly is a mental disorder? III	
<u>Mon Feb 8</u>	<u>Szasz “The Myth of Mental Illness”</u> <u>Kendell “The Concept of Disease and its Implications for Psychiatry”</u>
<u>Wed Feb 10</u>	<u>Listen to the <i>This American Life</i> podcast “81 Words”</u> <u>DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria for Gender Dysphoria</u> <u>Grinker in <i>New York Times</i> “Being Trans Is Not a Mental Disorder”</u>

<u>Fri Feb 12</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 5 Discussion Board Posts</u>
<u>What exactly is a mental disorder? IV</u>	
<u>Mon Feb 15</u>	<u>Wakefield "The Concept of Mental Disorder"</u> <u>Bolton <i>What is mental disorder?</i> Chapter 4</u>
<u>Wed Feb 17</u>	<u>DSM-5 Definition of mental disorder</u>
<u>Fri Feb 19</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 6 Discussion Board Posts</u>
<u>Midterm Review</u>	
<u>Mon Feb 22</u>	<u>Finish talking about Bolton Chapter 4</u>
<u>Wed Feb 24</u>	<u>Midterm Review</u>
<u>Fri Feb 26</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 7 Discussion Board Posts</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Project Proposal</u>
<u>The brain and mental disorder</u>	
<u>Mon March 1</u>	<u>Cuthbert and Insel "Toward the future of psychiatric diagnosis: the seven pillars of RDoC"</u> <u>Insel "Transforming Diagnosis"</u> <u>Kirmayer and Crafa "What kind of science for psychiatry?"</u>
<u>Wed March 3</u>	<u>In-class activity on the brain and mental disorder</u>
<u>Fri March 5</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 8 Discussion Board Posts</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Midterm Exam</u>
<u>Ethics and mental health I</u>	
<u>Mon March 8</u>	<u>Bolton <i>What is mental disorder?</i> Chapter 5 and Chapter 6</u>
<u>Wed March 10</u>	<u>Elyn Saks <i>The Center Cannot Hold</i> Chapter 11 and Chapter 12</u>
<u>Fri March 12</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 9 Discussion Board Posts</u>
<u>Ethics and mental health II</u>	
<u>Mon March 15</u>	<u>Pouncey and Merz "Informed Consent in Psychiatry: Philosophical and Legal Issues"</u>
<u>Wed March 17</u>	<u>In-class activity on ethics and mental health</u>
<u>Fri March 19</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 10 Discussion Board Posts</u>
<u>Ethics and mental health III</u>	
<u>Mon March 22</u>	<u>Nyquist Potter "Voice, silencing, and listening well: Socially located patients, oppressive structures, and an invitation to shift the epistemic terrain"</u>
<u>Wed March 24</u>	<u>No meeting: Reading Day</u>
<u>Fri March 26</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 11 Discussion Board Posts</u>
<u>Ethics and mental health IV</u>	
<u>Mon March 29</u>	<u>Ciurria "Mental illness, agency, and responsibility"</u>
<u>Wed March 31</u>	<u>Tekin "Self-concept through the diagnostic looking glass: Narratives and mental disorder"</u>
<u>Fri April 2</u>	<u>No meeting</u>

	<u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 12 Discussion Board Posts</u>
<u>Well-being and happiness I</u>	
<u>Mon April 5</u>	<u>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy article “Happiness”</u> <u>Project Presentations</u>
<u>Wed April 7</u>	<u>Project Presentations</u>
<u>Fri April 9</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 13 Discussion Board Posts</u>
<u>Well-being and happiness II</u>	
<u>Mon April 12</u>	<u>Aristotle <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book 1</u> <u>Project Presentations</u>
<u>Wed April 14</u>	<u>Project Presentations</u>
<u>Fri April 16</u>	<u>No meeting</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 14 Discussion Board Posts</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Project and Summary</u>
<u>Well-being and happiness III</u>	
<u>Mon April 19</u>	<u>Keller “What does mental health have to do with well-being?”</u>
<u>Wed April 21</u>	<u>Course wrap-up activities</u>
<u>Fri April 23</u> <u>(Finals Week)</u>	<u>Due by 11:59pm: Week 15 Discussion Board Posts</u> <u>Due by 11:59pm: Final Exam</u>

Sample Assignment

Philosophy of Mental Health and Disorder

Project Assignments

In this class, you will be expected to complete a project. You get to decide (with my guidance) what topic your project will be on (e.g. depression, the concept of mental disorder, mental health and the legal system, etc.) and what your project will look like (e.g. essay, artwork, video, game, etc.) Think of the project as you are zeroing in on what you are most interested in about this class and then doing a deep dive on that topic. 37.5% of your grade for the class will be determined by your project. The project is split up into three parts: project proposal (7.5% of final grade), project presentation (5% of final grade), and project and summary (25% of final grade). In this document I explain each of these three components, what is expected, and how I will grade them.

Project Proposal

The purpose of the project proposal is to run your ideas by me so that I can let you know if I think that they will be sufficient for a good project. With that in mind, the project proposal should:

- Be at least one double spaced page in length.
- Explain what topic your project will be on.
- Explain how you plan to do more research on that topic.
- Explain what your project will look like when it is done. Will it be an argument essay, a research essay, an artwork, or what? Make sure to explain what your project will be like in detail. For example, if it is an essay, what will you say in the essay, if it is a work of art, what will it look like and how will it relate to course content?

- Explain how long your project will be (this only applies to essays, other written works, and videos).
- Let me know how you would like to present your project to the class. Your two options are either to give a five-minute presentation during class, or explain your project to the class on a discussion board. More on this below.

After you turn in your project proposal, I will get in touch with you to let you know whether I think the project is feasible or not. You may need to alter some details based on my comments.

Grading Criteria

The project proposal is worth 15 points. In order to get 15 points, you need to meet all the criteria listed in the bullet points above. Points will be reduced for each element that is missing. If you have met all the criteria, but I think you need to alter your plan, I will not take off points.

Project Presentation

Everyone will be expected to present their project to the class in some form. There are two options for this:

- One, you could schedule five-minutes of class time towards the end of the semester and explain your project to the class live.
- Or two, you could explain your project to the class via a discussion board that I will create.

As noted above, please let me know which you prefer in the project proposal. And then I will schedule people. I have left some time at the end of the semester for in-class presentations. Whether you do your presentation live or on the discussion board, consider it to be low stakes. Use this as an opportunity to explain what you are doing for your project and what you have learned. Optionally, if you created something like a piece of art you can show this to the class. The class will also have the opportunity to ask you questions about your project either right after you present to the class or on the discussion board.

Grading Criteria

The project presentation is worth 10 points. If you present your project live to the class: spend five minutes talking about your project and what you have learned. If you do that, you will get all 10 points. If you choose the discussion board option: explain your project and what you have learned in at least ten sentences. If you do that, you will get all 10 points.

Project and Summary

This part of the project is you actually turning in what your produced and also providing a summary of your project in writing. No matter what you decide to do for your project, you must provide a summary (even if your project is already an essay).

The project itself can be a variety of things. Some examples would be:

- A research essay in which you research a particular mental disorder, historical aspect of psychiatric research or treatment, etc.

- An argument essay in which you take a position on some issue. For example, you could argue that mental disorders are always harmful, or you could argue that mental disorders are not always harmful, or you could argue that evolutionary design is relevant to mental disorder, you could argue that a particular philosophical idea can be applied to mental health, etc.
- A work of art that explores an issue from class further. For example, you could create a painting that represents anxiety, a creative work of fiction about a character with OCD, etc.
- A video explaining something or arguing for something relating to the course content.
- A board game that you create that explores course content.
- These are just some of many options.

No matter what type of project you do, you need to also write a summary of the project. The summary should:

- Be at least two double-spaced pages long.
- Explain the topic that the project focuses on.
- Explain the new things you learned about topic.
- Discuss how the project relates to that topic.
- Connect the topic to content from the course.
- Discuss how you created your project.

Please note: Everyone should do additional research about their topic. And everyone must cite their sources using the Chicago style. If you are writing an essay, cite sources in both the essay and summary. If your project is not written, just cite sources in the summary.

Grading Criteria

The project and summary are worth 50 points altogether. I will use the following grading criteria when grading your project and summary:

45-50 points: The project follows what was agreed upon during the project proposal process. It is clear that significant time, thought, effort was put into the creation of the project. This is evidenced by attention to detail and thoroughness. The project clearly relates to course content. It also is clear that the student did significant additional research on their topic. Information that is presented in the project is mostly accurate and properly cites sources. The student makes clear what they have learned from doing the project. The summary is at least two double-spaced pages long and meets all the other criteria given in the bullet points above.

40-44 points: The project meets almost all of the criteria given for a 45-50 points project but is missing a few. For example, the project might be not as clearly related to course content, it may not be clear that the student did much additional research on the topic, the student does not fully explain what they learned, some information may be inaccurate or not be cited properly, or the summary is too short or leaves out important information. Overall though, it is still clear that student put significant effort into the project as evidenced by attention to detail and thoroughness.

35-39 points: The project has some of the features of the 45-50 points project but is missing others. For example, it may not be clear how the project is relevant to course content, there may be little

evidence of extra research done by the student, the student did not explain what they learned, information was either not cited or cited improperly, or the summary, while present, is not complete. Overall, there is evidence that the student attempted to meet some of the required criteria.

30-34 points: The project meets almost none of the features of the 45-50 points project. There is little evidence that the student did additional research, connected the project to course content, or put significant effort into the project. The summary is either not present or is very brief.

0-29 points: The project meets almost none of the criteria given in this document. It is likely that the project is somewhat confusing and not connected to course content. There is likely no summary provided.