

American Mental Health

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MW 3:40-5pm

FloMo 317

What does it mean to be psychologically healthy? How have notions of normal consciousness and aberrant mental states changed over the past century? How do these distinctions intersect with constructions of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity across the same time period? This seminar will consider evolving concepts of cognition, wellness, and pathology in twentieth- and twenty-first-century America. These years have seen tremendous change in the science as well as popular understandings of mental health. We will think about each of these conceptual fields, and about the frequent discord that exists both within and across different frameworks of normality and disorder.

To think about these cross-disciplinary dynamics, we will pair works of American literature and popular media from the late nineteenth through twenty-first century with academic scholarship. We will dwell especially on the resonance and divergence between the models of health and illness developed by these texts. We will think about the historical and cultural contexts of each of these texts and consider their social and political implications. Throughout, we will consider the promises and perils of psychological diagnosis and of interpreting human minds—others' and our own.

As the final course in the English series at Menlo College, this class is designed to encourage students to engage in original research and writing. Course assignments will support students in producing a final thesis that features original research in its engagement with one or more course concerns.

Prerequisites: Students must have earned a C- or better in English 102.

Required course texts

- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892)
- Chester Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945)
- Joan Didion, *Play It As It Lays* (1970)
- Kay Redfield Jamison, *An Unquiet Mind* (1997)
- David O. Russell, *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012) *on reserve at Bowman Library
- Scholarly excerpts to be circulated in class

Assignments and grading

- Participation 15%
- Coursework (reading responses, homework, reading quizzes) 15%
- Annotated bibliography 5%
- Literature review 10%
- Thesis draft 15%

- Thesis 40% (includes presentation)

Grade calculus

- A (✓+) = 95
- A/A- = 92.5
- A- = 90
- A-/B+ (✓/✓+) = 89
- B+ = 88
- B+/B = 86.5
- B (✓) = 85
- B/B- = 82.5
- B- = 80
- B-/C+ (✓/✓-) = 79
- C+ = 78
- C (✓-) = 75
- C- = 70
- D+ = 68
- D = 65
- D- = 60
- F = 50

Participation

The success of our seminar depends on the active participation of every student. Accordingly, participation constitutes a large portion (15%) of the final grade for the course. I will calculate it as follows: I will not keep track of the number of times you contribute to discussion; I will attend to the evidence that you actively, regularly engage with the material, share your insights and questions with the class, participate in constructive peer editing during workshops, and incorporate all of these thoughts as well as my feedback into the course assignments.

I have a no-screens policy in class. If I see you on your phone during our meetings, it will drastically affect your participation grade. The same rubric applies to your physical classroom presence: arrive on time; stay for the entire session; do not take bathroom breaks on your own terms (I will pause class after roughly 40 minutes to allow for a collective break, during which time you can use the restroom and catch up on all missed social media).

The chance to attend to one subject for eighty minutes, with a community of other people, is a rare opportunity; take advantage of it.

For those who prefer a more quantitative rubric, I offer the following guidelines.

Absences

- 3 unexcused absences will lower your participation grade by 1/2 of a letter.
- 5 unexcused absences will lower your participation grade by 1 letter.
- **6 unexcused absences will result in your failing the course.**

- Note that absences are *only* excused with medical documentation or prior approval from me (athletic absences are approved provided you contact me 48 hours beforehand.)

Late arrivals

- **Each tardy arrival will lower your participation grade by 1%.**
- If you arrive without a hard copy of an assignment due that day, that counts as a tardy arrival for the day (owing to the missed time it takes you to go print).

How to positively influence your participation grade:

- Arrive on time.
- Stay for the entire session.
- Electronic devices must remain unseen and unheard for the duration of class (yes, all 80 minutes, class breaks excepted).
- Actively engage with class material:
 - Take notes on the framework I offer for our reading each day and the discussions that ensue.
 - Review and cite class material—both when prompted and unprompted by me.
 - Ask questions.
 - Volunteer to read material out loud.
 - Contribute to discussion.
- If you struggle with the latter, I encourage you to come to class each day with a question or observation from the reading.

How to negatively influence your participation grade:

- Miss class.
- Arrive late.
- Use an electronic device.
- Fail to bring class materials (books, course reader, notebooks, writing implements).
- Have items other than class materials and food or drink on the seminar tables (e.g., bags, headphones).
- Zone out in class.
- Ignore instructions to review (look at) the reading.
- Make no effort to answer questions or participate in discussion.

Reading responses

You will be responsible for one “first reading” response and three “subsequent reading” responses over the course of the semester. All of these responses will occur on MOLE, as an online class discussion. When you are on tap as a first responder, you will author a 250- to 300-word response to the assigned reading. These responses should begin with a well-formulated, argumentative, focused thesis (a.k.a. debatable claim), followed by pertinent textual support (a.k.a. close reading). **First responses are due no later than 24 hours before the assigned day.**

When you are on tap as subsequent responder, you should first read through all prior responses (both first responders and the extant subsequent responses). You should then author a cogent, compelling 100-word response to one of these threads. You can approach this assignment any number of ways: choose a given argument and respond with further evidence in support of this claim, or offer a counterargument. Choose a specific close reading and respond with an alternate reading of the same evidence, or offer evidence that refutes this reading. **Subsequent responses are due no later than 8am on the assigned day.**

These responses are meant to help you formulate your thoughts about the reading and also to identify points of interest and potential evidence for your own research. As with all intellectual property you generate in this class, you should feel free to re-engage your thoughts and claims in subsequent assignments. Like all course assignments, reading responses must also be MLA- or APA-formatted. If you have questions or concerns about these expectations (or about anything else), I'm happy to talk any time.

Also note: I will give infrequent reading quizzes. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class and will feature three to four straightforward questions about key elements of the content (e.g., how does the protagonist get to and from work?). So long as you do the reading, you will pass with flying colors. If you miss a quiz on a day when you have an excused absence, your grade will be calculated without it. There will be no make-up quizzes.

Major course assignments

The guidelines for the major course assignments—annotated bibliography, literature review, and final thesis—are already up on MOLE. We will discuss their details as the due dates approach. I will not answer content-related emails in the 24 hours preceding major assignment deadlines (trust me, this policy benefits everyone involved). **Each major assignment is due in hard copy at the beginning of seminar and must be uploaded to MOLE *before* you arrive that day.**

Over the course of the term, there are six “individual research conference” days on which class will not meet for a regular session. On those days, I will hold 15-minute sessions to discuss your work with you. You are **required to meet with me two times** in this capacity. You are also **required to meet twice, for at least 15 minutes, with a Bowman librarian** to discuss your research. These sessions can occur any time **before Week 14**. At the end of each meeting, the librarian will email me to confirm your completion of this requirement.

Major assignments cannot be submitted via email. Late assignments will be penalized one third of a letter grade for every day past the deadline, including weekend days. After five days, you will receive a zero for the assignment (note, however, that you must complete all assignments to pass the class). **The thesis must be submitted on Monday December 3; no late papers will be accepted.**

Calendar

Week 1: What is mental health?

- M 8/20: Course introduction
- W 8/22: Foster Wallace, “This is Water” (read and listen to the live version on YouTube); Winnicott, “The Concept of a Healthy Individual”

Weeks 2-4: Neurasthenia

- M 8/27: Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*; read thesis and annotated bibliography guidelines; brainstorm research questions
- W 8/29: Lutz, *American Nervousness, 1903* (excerpt); reading response due
- W 9/5: No meeting; read literature review guidelines and associated materials; tentative research question due to me via email (one paragraph maximum)
- M 9/10: Research workshop @ Bowman: annotated bibliographies
- W 9/12: Individual research conferences; revised research question due

Weeks 5-6: Schizophrenia

- M 9/17: Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* to end of Chapter XI (page 99); Eligon, "Past Debates Echo..."
- W 9/19: Individual research conferences
- M 9/24: Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* to end
- W 9/26: Metzger, *The Protest Psychosis* (excerpt); reading response due

Week 7: Writing intensive

- M 10/1: Research workshop: Literature reviews; annotated bibliography due
- W 10/3: Literature review workshop (draft due in class); discuss Menlo College "critical thinking rubric"

Weeks 8-9: Depression

- M 10/8: Didion, *Play It As It Lays* to end of Chapter 36 (page 104)
- W 10/10: Individual research conferences; literature review due to my mailbox by 5pm
- M 10/15: Didion, *Play It As It Lays* to end
- W 10/17: Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (excerpt); reading response due

Weeks 10-11: Bipolar Disorder

- M 10/22: Jamison, *An Unquiet Mind* to end of "Missing Saturn" (page 109)
- W 10/24: Individual research conferences
- M 10/29: Jamison, *An Unquiet Mind* to end
- W 10/31: Russell, *Silver Linings Playbook*; reading response due

Weeks 12-15: Writing intensive

- M 11/5: Individual research conferences
- W 11/7: Thesis outline due
- M 11/12: Oral presentation workshop
- W 11/14: Thesis draft due
- M 11/19: Individual research conferences
- M 11/26: Thesis presentations, Day 1
- W 11/28: Thesis presentations, Day 2
- M 12/3: Thesis due to MOLE and my mailbox by 5pm

Academic Integrity Policy

“Menlo College expects that students will do their own work and that their quizzes, tests, examinations, lab work, research papers, essays, projects, internships, and all other assignments honestly reflect their own learning and knowledge in the course. [V]iolations of this policy [include]: copying from another student during an exam; having another person write a paper [on a student’s behalf]; any form of plagiarism or cheating; etc. Students found in violation [of the policy] are given a failing grade on the assignment. Students found in violation during a final examination, final project, or related final evaluation [or] assignment will receive a failing grade for the course” (*Menlo College Academic Procedures Manual*, 17).

Also note that a student who fails a course as a result of violating this policy will not be allowed to withdraw from the course, and that all violations of the Academic Integrity Policy will be recorded through the Office of Academic Affairs. Repeat offenders will be subject to disciplinary action as determined by the Academic Dean. Such disciplinary action will normally result in the expulsion of the offending student from Menlo College.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unacceptable. I define plagiarism as presenting someone’s words, ideas, or any other work that can be considered intellectual property as if it was your own. If you use someone else’s work without quoting or citing completely, you have committed plagiarism. Do not copy and paste text from any source without quotation; do not paraphrase without citation or adapt information from Cliff’s Notes or Wikipedia; do not submit versions of the same paper more than once—all of these are considered plagiarism.

If you have questions about whether you may be inadvertently committing plagiarism, there are many resources available to help you. You may visit any of the centers listed below. I am also always happy to talk about these or any concerns.

Resources

On campus:

- The Writing and Oral Communication Center:
 - All students are **required to visit the Writing Center once to workshop each graded component of your thesis** (annotated bibliography, literature review, and thesis draft). Written confirmation of each appointment must be attached to your submitted assignments.
 - Students who make additional appointments at the Writing Center over the course of the term and who document these sessions with written confirmation from the Center will receive a 24-hour extension on the assignment due date.
- Bowman Library:
 - The librarians are wonderful, helpful people. We will visit the Library throughout in the term for research workshops. You are also **required to meet twice, for at least 15 minutes, with a Bowman librarian** to discuss your research. These sessions can occur any time **before Week 14**. At the end of your meeting, the librarian will email me to confirm your

completion of this requirement. I encourage you to make use of this excellent resource throughout the term.

- Academic Success Center (ASC):
 - The ASC is open Monday through Friday from 9am to 6pm. Students may drop in for assistance at any time, but appointments are recommended.
 - The ASC also runs a drop-in Peer Tutor Lab from 2:30 to 5pm, Monday through Wednesday and 7pm to 9pm Sunday through Wednesday.

Online:

Be wary of online sources, especially Wikipedia. Always consult more than one source and look for consistency. Here are a few reputable sites for cross-checking purposes:

- CCTC's Grammar Site: cctc.commnet.edu/grammar/index
- Purdue University's Online Writing Lab: owl.english.purdue.edu
 - Includes MLA and APA formatting and style guides
- Google Scholar: scholar.google.com
 - Features a variety of critical commentary (books, journal articles)

DO NOT DUPLICATE