

Madness and the Disciplinary State: House Course

Course Description: We live in an age of unprecedented state control over populations. While current events are defined by terrifying overreaches of state power directly impacting the lives of ordinary people, such as the repeated efforts to implement a travel ban on several Middle Eastern countries, the recent revelations about extensive CIA spying, and the terrifying increase in ICE deportations of undocumented immigrants across the country. However, this growth of state power is not limited to the abuses of the Trump Administration or even the United States. The “panopticon”, a theoretical prison set up so that occupants constantly fear observation, has become real through mass surveillance programs around the world, including PRISM in the United States, attempted state control of the entire internet in China, and the nationwide system of CCTV cameras in the UK. Of course, the prison itself has also become a tool for the state. The skyrocketing incarceration rate for African American males represents a concerted effort on the part of the state to forcibly remove and confine nonconformists and perceived threats. Far more sinister is the use of torture and other dehumanizing practices against those branded as terrorists in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. While all of these issues seem disparate and somewhat unrelated, the framework of the treatment and perception of the mad opens a window into the underlying trends that form these critical issues.

The transition in perception of the mad from unique and somewhat valuable contributors to the community to threats to social cohesion deserving of confinement paralleled a growing trend of social homogenization and the growth of the disciplinary state. The mad were some of the first people to suffer confinement and punishment under the disciplinary state and society’s efforts to shut them away, or forcibly impose homogeneity and conformity upon them is truly part of a widespread expansion of enforced normality Foucault called “the Great Confinement”. The subjection of the mad to the so called “medical gaze”, born out of the imbalance in power and perceived knowledge between patients and mental health specialists and extensive use of medication to subdue and control patients very closely parallels the use of state disciplinary structures in the prison system. Foucault’s critiques of the system of asylums and the treatment of the mad presaged the anti-psychiatry and mad pride movements, who were able to alter the perception and treatment of the mad through an extensive campaign of both activism and efforts to alter the discourse around madness.

While the fundamental basis of the oppression Foucault describes in *Madness and Civilization*, the desire to separate and remove difference and the use of state power to punish and control nonconformists, still exist in the present, the experience of the anti-psychiatrist struggle for reform can teach us many lessons about activism in the present day. The anti-psychiatrists used academic literature to alter the discourse on madness. Through similar movements to change the dialogue, many of the stigmas surrounding poverty, race, and socioeconomic class that plague society today can be challenged. Anti-psychiatrists challenged laws and policies regarding asylums and psychiatric drug use, and were somewhat successful in increasing the patients' freedom to choose their medication and reduced the ability of asylums to keep patients without consent or subject their patients to barbaric forms of "treatment". The anti-psychiatry movement thus provides a valuable model for other activist movements, and by learning its history, we can also glean lessons for the present day. While times may seem dark, the anti-psychiatry movement also provides us with a beacon of hope for future reform.

Required Text:

Madness and Civilization, by Michel Foucault

Other readings will be available online

Grading:

- Attendance and Participation: 10%
- Reading Responses: 30%
- Midterm Paper: 20%
- Final Group Project: 40%

Assignments:

- **Outline of Readings:** Part of the participation grade will come from weekly presentations of reading outlines by partners. Groups will be expected to compose a summary of the main points of the reading and give a short (10 min) presentation about the work(s).
- **Reading Responses:** Three total, so each is 10% of the overall grade. They will be up to one double-sided page and be written in response to a prompt about a certain work that

we are reading or a topic. Discuss the author's potential biases, and draw connections to other work. A coherent thesis is expected as a structure for the work. These are meant to be simple exercises to allow students to interact with the reading. Grading will be 50% completion and 50% based on quality of argumentation.

- **Midterm essay:** 6-8 Pages, use Foucault's framework of state power or institutionalization of the different to analyze one of the following modern issues: immigration, mass incarceration, or perceptions of poverty. Compare the perceptions of these issues to Foucault's portrayal of the perception of madness/asylums. Comment on the similarities between modern activist movements tackling your chosen subject and the efforts of the Anti-Psychiatrists. Projects will be graded based on clarity of argument, use of sources, and creativity.
- **Group project:** choose an anti-psychiatrist writer and collaborate to make a presentation about their work. Be sure to address these points: brief summaries of their major works, how their works influenced other writers and the canon of mental health literature, if they were directly involved in activism, summarize their participation. Will be graded based on content, succinctness, and creativity.

Schedule:

- **Week 1: Introduction to the Course**
 - Reading due: none
 - Writing due: none
 - Class summary: discussion of syllabus: assignment structure, goals of course; class discussion on examples of state power.
- **Week 2: Intro to Foucault**
 - Reading due: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBJTeNTZtGU> (The School of Life Video on Foucault)
 - <http://search.proquest.com/docview/194854405?pq-origsite=gscholar> (Foucault and the Iranian Revolution)
 - Writing due: none
 - Class summary: Lecture: Short summary of the main works of Foucault, presentation on background of Madness and Civilization.

Discussion: the theories of Foucault: critiques, his arguments that you agree with, and his relevance to the modern day.

Activity: Mock “debate” on Foucault: split class in half with one side presenting the positive aspects of Foucault’s viewpoint (things that his framework allows us to analyze more effectively) and the other side presenting negative aspects (issues with oversimplification and erasure of certain viewpoints).

- **Week 3: What is Madness?**

- Reading due: Half of chapter 1 of *Madness and Civilization* (15 pages)
- Writing due: none
- Class summary: presentation of outline;

Discussion on how the mad were perceived pre-Renaissance. Compare and contrast to how participants think the mad are perceived today. What does Foucault argue about the confinement of lepers vis-à-vis the confinement of the mad in asylums?

Lecture on the background and context of *Madness and Civilization* and how it was received at the time of publication.

- **Week 4: Madness through History**

- Reading due: second half of Chapter 1 and half of Chapter 2 of *Madness and Civilization* (~30 pages)
- Writing due: Reading Response on Chapter 1; Prompt: Discuss *Madness and Civilization* in relation to a later Foucault work of your choice. What themes and arguments remain constant and what has changed?
- Class summary: Presentation of outline;

Randomly select/volunteer one reading response for peer review and discussion. Discussion: what are the goals of the asylum? What does Foucault argue about the treatment of the mad in his time? Is Foucault a reactionary (does he reject the modern)? What does Foucault argue about labor, and how is labor related to madness? Was it possible to be perceived as sane while being idle?

Lecture: The state of asylums, primary source reports on abuses of power and conditions in asylums.

- **Week 5: The Asylum and the Police State**

- Reading due:

http://www.elsevierscitech.com/pdfs/JPGQ/1996_The_geopolitics_of_the_police_Foucault_disciplinary_power_and_the_tactics_of_the_Los_Angeles_Police_Department.pdf (13 pages)

Madness and Civilization chapter 3 (The Insane)

- Writing due: outline/thesis of Midterm paper
- Class summary: Presentation of outline; Present and discuss thesis, peer review of thesis clarity and focus.

Discussion: how are reports of modern prison conditions similar to the primary sources discussed last week? Do modern prisons serve the same purpose as asylums did in the early modern era? Discuss Foucault's argument that the mad were viewed as animalistic and exhibited as curiosities. How does that compare to right wing rhetoric seeking to justify police brutality and killings? Does the overwhelming focus placed on reporting of crimes by the media reflect an example of an "exhibition of curiosities"?

Lecture: Presentation on statistics and some examples of police brutality.

Comparison of first hand accounts of prison life and asylum life.

- **Week 6: The Insane and the Immigrants**

- <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/etext/lilas/ilassa/2010/griesbach.pdf> (Immigration

Detention, State Power, and Resistance; read to page 17)

Madness and Civilization chapter 8 (The New Division)

- Writing due: Reading Response 2 due: Using chapters 2 and 3 of *Madness and Civilization*, and the Herbert reading, formulate an argument on the role of the police in Foucault's discussion of asylums and the expansion of the state.
- Class summary: presentation of outline

Randomly select/volunteer one reading response for peer review and discussion.

Activity: split class into two teams. One team analyzes the comparison between the early modern asylum system and mass incarceration, and the other does the same with the treatment of the mad and immigrants. Focus on flaws in the comparison and point out points where the analogy is imperfect.

Discussion: do calls for deportation and immigrant detention reflect a desire to “denounce and isolate” those who are different? Does the separation of normal criminals and the mad because of their “tainting influence” described by Foucault reflect in some ways the rhetoric used against undocumented immigrants and refugees: that they will somehow contaminate host cultures? Has religion and ethnic background replaced mental health and a marker for targets of exclusionary practices?

- **Week 7: Peer Review of Midterm Essays**

- Reading due: none
- Writing due: rough drafts of the midterm essays
- Class summary: peer review session, swap papers with a partner and provide feedback. A worksheet of things to consider in terms of editing will be provided

- **Week 8: Mental Difference and Poverty**

- <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/S1062798705000797> (Foucault and the Welfare State 6 pages)
Madness and Civilization second half of chapter 2
- Writing due: Midterm essay
- Class summary: presentation of outline;

Discussion: is the rhetoric about poverty today (calls for increased personal responsibility, placing blame for poverty upon the poor themselves) similar to the view that Foucault describes where idleness was viewed as a chief sin intimately connected to madness and deserving of confinement? Is the system where idleness is looked down upon a fundamental aspect of capitalism? Are the poor still treated with fear and separated in the present day?

Lecture: examples of anti-poor rhetoric from present day and from the early modern era that Foucault discusses.

- **Week 9: Anti-Psychiatrist Activism**

- Reading due: http://www.priory.com/history_of_medicine/Anti-Psychiatry.htm
(The Rise of Anti-Psychiatry)
- Writing due: none
- Class summary: presentation of outline:

Discussion: What is your opinion on psychiatry as compared to other forms of treatment? What are the main goals of the anti-psychiatry movement? What issues do mad pride activists and anti-psychiatrists still have to deal with in the present day? What aspects of Foucault's influence do you see in the anti-psychiatry movement?

Activity: groups assigned for final project, time to plan and divide responsibilities.

- **Week 10: Anti-Psychiatrist Activism cont'd**

- Reading due:

http://www.enhancingpeople.com/paginas/master/Bibliografia/biblio_V1/Sesion01/THE%20MYTH%20OF%20MENTAL%20ILLNESS.pdf (Thomas Szasz: The Myth of Mental Illness)

https://sakai.duke.edu/access/content/group/09c7d970-1b7b-4fa9-adbf-42fd2e454c07/Readings/Lewis_A%20Mad%20Fight.pdf (A Mad Fight)

- Writing due: Reading response 3: discuss Foucault's influence on the anti-psychiatrist movement. Consider the arguments made against psychiatry and draw parallels with Foucault's arguments in *Madness and Civilization*.
 - Class summary: presentation of outline;

Discussion: What worked and didn't work for the anti-psychiatrists, and what does that teach us about present day activism? Could the movement have succeeded as a purely academic movement or vice versa? How did the movement work to include people who have actively experienced psychiatric treatment and confinement?

Activity: Time to work on group project.

- **Week 11: Group work time**
- **Week 12: Group presentations**