7AAN2003 The Concept of Mental Disorder

Syllabus – Academic year 2018/19 (semester 2)

Basic information

Credits
20

Module Convenor
Alexander Bird (Email: Alexander.Bird@kcl.ac.uk; Office: Philosophy Building 610)

Module Teachers
Derek Bolton, Norman Poole, Mohammed Abouelleil Rashed, Alexander Bird

Lecture and seminar time and venue
Tuesdays 16.00–18.00, PHILOSOPHY BLDG 405

| Module description | This module will critically appraise several main approaches to the concept of mental disorder. First, the critiques of mainstream psychiatry, beginning in the 1960s and still current, mainly to the effect that normal distress or social deviance is being inappropriately pathologized; second, conceptualisations of mental disorder in the standard psychiatry diagnostic manuals of the World Health Organisation and the American Psychiatric Association; and third, ‘naturalist’ approaches to the definition of mental disorder that invoke population statistical or evolutionary theory based norms. Distinctive features include coverage of various approaches to this multi-faceted problem. |
| Learning outcomes | By the end of the module, students will be able to demonstrate intellectual, transferable and practicable skills appropriate to a level-7 module. In particular they will be able to demonstrate: 1. Understanding of contemporary controversies about the nature and extent of mental disorder, conceptualisations used in mainstream psychiatry, and theoretical definitions in terms of human nature. 2. Knowledge of the main positions in the philosophy of psychiatry relevant to the definition of mental disorder. 3. Ability to assess and develop these positions 4. Ability to exercise their powers of intellectual criticism by critically commenting upon the views discussed 5. Ability to relate material from the philosophy of psychiatry to other branches of philosophy, such as philosophy of psychology or philosophy of medicine 6. Ability to form philosophical views of their own which they are prepared to defend or amend in light of criticism. 7. Ability to read closely and gain understanding of relevant texts. |
Assessment

Formative Assessment 1 x 3000 max word essay
Essay due by Friday 22 March 2018, by 16.00. Please send your essay in the first instance to Alexander Bird who will direct it to the appropriate module teacher for feedback.

Summative Assessment 1 x 4000 word essay
Essay due by Wednesday 1 May 2018, by 16.00.

Consultation times

Thursday 17.00–18.00
Friday 08.30–09.30

Books and Resources

The readings for the course are separated into the following two categories:
Core Reading reading that everyone who wants proper coverage of the subject must read.
Further Reading additional readings to help further develop your views on a particular subject.
Many of the readings for the course can be found online and some in the following collection of essays:
The following are helpful texts – book length – with broad coverage of the issues, the first covering the ’60s developments and the second updated:

Other Resources
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <https://plato.stanford.edu>. Please ensure you respect the Encyclopedia’s citation policy. See articles on:
• Philosophy of Psychiatry
• Mental Illness
• Delusion
• Decision-Making Capacity
• Concepts of Disease and Health
• Michel Foucault
• Jacques Lacan
• Philosophy of Medicine
Topics and reading

**Week 1: Naturalist Definitions Of Mental Disorder (1): Biostatistical Theory**
Alexander Bird

*Core Reading*

*Further reading*

**Week 2: Naturalist Definitions Of Mental Disorder (2): Evolutionary Theoretic Dysfunction**
Alexander Bird

*Core reading*

*Further reading*

**Week 3: Psychiatric Kinds and Looping Effects**
Alexander Bird

*Core reading*

*Further reading*

**Week 4: Mental Health Activism and Challenges to the Mental Disorder Label**
Mohammed Rashed

Core reading

Further reading

**Week 5: Is Mental Disorder Being Over-Diagnosed? 1960s Critiques to the Present.**
Norman Poole

Core Reading

Further reading
• Hacking, I. (1999) *The social construction of what...?* Harvard. Chapter 4 Madness: biological or constructed?

**Week 6: Reading week**
Week 7: Are Mental Disorders Brain Disorders?
Derek Bolton

Core reading

Further reading

Week 8: Mental Disorder and the Limits of Social Recognition
Mohammed Rashed

Reading

Week 9: Mental Disorder & Culture
Mohammed Rashed

Core reading

Further reading
Week 10: Folk Psychiatry: The Case of Capgras Delusion
Norman Poole

Core Reading
• Boyer P. (2011) Intuitive expectations and the detection of mental disorder: A cognitive background to folk-psychiatries, Philosophical Psychology, 24, 95-118, DOI: 10.1080/09515089.2010.529049

Further reading

Week 11: Mainstream Conceptualisations of Mental Disorder In the DSM And the ICD
Derek Bolton

Core reading

Further reading