

Syllabus for Philosophy 7650 – Moral Responsibility in Mental Illness

Fall 2021	Instructor: Katie Harster Office: Stokes 253N and by Zoom Office Hours: Mondays 11am-12:30pm and by appointment Email: katie.harster@bc.edu (24 hours to reply) Phone: (617) 804-6487 Classroom: Stokes 103S Class Hours: M 3-5:45PM
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Course Websites:

Canvas: <https://bostoncollege.instructure.com/courses/1623598>

Zoom: <https://bccte.zoom.us/my/harster>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwvXDaoFsd5aXJCU0gc65A/>

Instagram: follow @ProfessorHarster (optional)

Course Description:

This seminar focuses on current debates in ethics and psychiatry. We will examine contemporary accounts of moral responsibility and interdisciplinary texts on particular mental illnesses to explore discussions in virtue ethics, free will/agency, and specific, condition-based philosophical problems. Students will learn strategies for interpreting and synthesizing psychological research for philosophical argument.

Learning Objectives:

(1) To understand contemporary discussions of moral responsibility and mental illness in analytic philosophy, 2) to practice oral presentation and accessible explanation of diverse philosophical perspectives, and (3) to produce a clear and concise argumentative essay on course topics to hone more general philosophical research and writing skills.

Required Materials:

- Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins* (ISBN: 9780198801184)
- Selections from books and articles will be uploaded to Canvas as PDFs. You are expected to print or bring an electronic copy of the readings to class.

Optional Materials:

- APA, *DSM-5 Desk Reference* (ISBN: 9780890425565) *provides basic diagnostic info, easier to navigate than online version. **You will need a physical copy or access to the online version during each class.***
- Access to DSM Online Library, available online through the Boston College Library Catalog (<https://library.bc.edu>) for DSM Clinical Cases
- Optional Historical Texts (strongly recommended if you are not familiar with these philosophers):
 - Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Irwin, ed., 2nd Edition) [ISBN: 9780872204645]
 - Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Gregor and Timmerman (Eds.), [ISBN: 9781107401068]

Required Technology:

- 6-8 Hours of High-Speed Internet Per Week
- Canvas Access
- Microsoft Word (free for BC students, <https://www.bc.edu/software/applications/office.html>)
- Zoom (zoom.us)
- YouTube
- Google Slides (available via BC Email) or other presentation software

Technology (laptops, iPads, etc.) is permitted in the classroom for note-taking, referencing articles or the DSM-5, and looking up questions. Technology should not be used to check email, shop, text, or any other activity that does not further class discussion.

Assessment

Participation: The value of a graduate seminar comes from quality of the discussion. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the weekly readings, lectures, and any other materials (videos, websites, etc.) listed in the syllabus. This may entail taking notes on the readings, preparing discussion questions, and researching unfamiliar material but also getting a good night's sleep, minding the progression and distribution of the conversation, and respecting the lived experience of those with mental illness (inside the classroom and beyond).

Participation will be graded on attendance, contribution to class discussion, and occasional small assignments. There are 14 sessions this term. If you miss 4-5 classes for any reason you will lose 10% of your grade, 6 sessions 15%, 7 sessions and you will fail the course. In October you will receive a short evaluation of your contributions to class discussion.

Presentation: Each student will choose part of the course material to present and lead discussion during the first or second half of class. Students will select the material by **Monday, September 13th** and presentations will start Monday, September 27th. Students should meet with the instructor at least one week before the presentation to discuss their plans and the course material. Presentations will be graded on the knowledge of the material, quality of explanations and examples, clarity, and the student's ability to lead and maintain an engaging discussion.

Midterm Essay: 5-6 page, double-spaced essay that argues for a thesis and is supported by material from the course. Students may use material from any part of the course – reading ahead is encouraged. We will discuss examples in class. This essay may be revised into the final essay. **Due October 18th**

Final Essay: Students will write an 4,000-7,000-word, double-spaced philosophical essay on moral responsibility and mental illness. Students should meet with the instructor by **Monday, November 1st** (in-person or via Zoom) to discuss their topic and will bring three copies of an outline to class on **Monday, November 15th**. Final essays are due **Wednesday, December 15th by 11:59pm via Canvas**.

Grade Calculation:

Participation: 15%
Presentation: 20%
Midterm Essay: 15%
Final Essay: 50%

Attendance and Lateness Policy

You may miss up to 3 class sessions without any grade penalty. Late work will not be accepted.

Academic Integrity

“Presentation of others’ work as one’s own is not only intellectual dishonesty, but it also undermines the educational process.” (quoted from Boston College’s Policies and Procedures Website).

All violations of this policy will be reported to the academic integrity officer. Particularly relevant to this course, the final essay and reflection essays will be monitored for plagiarism. Students should not collaborate on assignments or essays. We will review the policy in class and students are encouraged to refer to the policy on the University’s website:

https://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/univcat/undergrad_catalog/policies_procedures.html#integrity

All essays and assignments should be in your own words. You should cite (formally or informally, depending on the assignment) any course materials or outside sources you use to complete assignments or essays. If you are concerned about using citations, paraphrasing, etc., please contact the instructor. If a student is suspected of an academic integrity violation, the instructor will contact the appropriate authorities within the student's degree program.

Accommodations

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities can request different kinds of accommodations. To learn more, please visit: https://www.bc.edu/offices/dos/subsidiary_offices/disabilityservices.html. If you need accommodations for learning disabilities and ADHD, please contact Kathy Duggan at dugganka@bc.edu (617-552-8093) at the Connors Family Learning. If you need accommodations for any other kind of disability (including temporary disabilities) please contact Rory Stein at rory.stein@bc.edu (617-552-3470) in the Disability Service Office. Make sure you contact these offices early in the semester to make sure you get the help you need. Please let the instructor know if you are having trouble accessing accommodations in a timely manner.

Accommodations Based Upon Sexual Assault: Boston College is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are survivors of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to the Title IX Office (<https://www.bc.edu/offices/diversity/compliance/TitleIX.html>). The Title IX Office is a confidential resource; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate administration and faculty.

The Women's Center is also committed to providing support for survivors of sexual assault. Their office can offer counseling as well as confidential guidance. Please see their website: <https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/offices/student-affairs/sites/womens-center.html>

Finally, the Sexual Assault Network (SANet) provides support and a confidential hotline (617-552-8099) for the campus community for those who have been impacted by sexual violence. They have walk-in support hours. Please see their website: <https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/offices/student-affairs/sites/womens-center/programs/sexual-assault-network.html>

Other Resources:

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center:
800-841-8371

Newton-Wellesley Hospital's Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Program:
617-243-6521

Victim Rights Law Center:
617-399-6720

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): 800-656-HOPE (4673)

Bias Reporting: The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff, and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University's Bias Response Team. See:

https://www.bc.edu/offices/dos/bias_response.html

Mental Health: University Counseling Services work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression. The Office of Health Promotion (OHP) offers individual and Group Health Coaching appointments with a trained Health Coach. Please reach out by going to: <https://www.bc.edu/offices/counseling> or visiting Gasson 025. Be advised that wait times for appointments can vary and that some students seek help through community resources.

Please contact the instructor as soon as possible if you need further accommodations for mental illness. This course discusses serious matters that may feel personal and upsetting to some students. If you need to step out of a discussion, please do so. Accommodations will not affect your grade. The instructor must report any dangers to yourself or others but will otherwise respect your confidentiality.

External Mental Health Resources:

Sanvello (phone app)

NAMI Massachusetts (namimass.org)

Crisis Text Line (HOME to 741741)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255)

Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQ Youth (1-866-488-7386)

Schedule

All assignments are subject to change. Please check the course website regularly. Assigned readings are available on Canvas and should be read before class. Times are in eastern.

*All cases can be found in *DSM-5 Clinical Cases* located in the DSM Library Online

Monday, August 30th:

Introduction

Reading: Syllabus, Selections from Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*

Case Study: Sample Midterm Essay

Assignments: Please take the following brief survey **before the first day of class:**

<https://forms.gle/Fc7qqNWLMejyrMGZA>

NO CLASS MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6TH (Labor Day)

Monday, September 13th:

Crash Course on Mental Illness

Reading: Bolton, "What is Mental Illness?" Choose ONE: Shorter, "The History of the DSM;" OR Paris, "The Ideology Behind DSM-5"

Case Study: Rapier "Dimensional versus Categorical"

YouTube: Classifying Mental Illness (<https://youtu.be/gRGmxTAXG-w>)

And Finding Natural Kinds (<https://youtu.be/4QZauB63srA>) [both OPTIONAL]

Assignment: Choose Presentation Date (see link on Canvas)

Monday, September 20th:

Virtue Theory

Readings: Clifton and Stevens, "Happiness and Mental Illness: Virtue Ethics in Dialogue with Psychology,"

YouTube: Accessing the DSM-5 Online (<https://youtu.be/9fYwOusrXbc>)

Case Study: DSM-5, "Major Depressive Disorder," (Symptoms and Diagnostic Features only)

Historical Text (OPTIONAL): Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Books I-III)

Monday, September 27th:

Virtue Theory

Reading: selections from Kurth, *Moral Anxiety*

Guest Speaker: Dr. Charlie Kurth (Western Michigan University)

Case Study: DSM-5 "Generalized Anxiety Disorder" (Symptoms and Diagnostic Features only), Case 5.3 "Adolescent Shyness" (see DSM Clinical Cases online)

Assignment: Practicing DBT Skills (start 9/27, discuss 10/4)

Monday, October 4th:

Virtue Theory

Readings: Foot, "Virtues and Vices," Harster, "Borderline Personality Disorder and the Boundaries of Virtue"

Case Study: DSM-5 "Borderline Personality Disorder" (Symptoms and Diagnostic Features only), Case 18.5 "Fragile and Angry" (see DSM Clinical Cases online);

selections from Linehan, *DBT Skills Training Manual*

YouTube (OPTIONAL): Marsha Marsha Marsha (<https://youtu.be/3BsUuWgiGaM>)

NO CLASS MONDAY, OCTOBER 11TH – Fall Break

Tuesday, October 12th:

Activity: Burns Library

Guest Speaker: Dr. Patrick Cruitt (Minneapolis Department of Veteran's Affairs)

Monday, October 18th:

Deontology

Readings: selections from Johnson, *Self-Improvement: An Essay in Kantian Ethics*; Thomason, “The Philosopher’s Medicine of the Mind: Kant’s Account of Mental Illness and the Normativity of Thinking”

Case Study: Scholten, “Schizophrenia and Moral Responsibility: A Kantian Essay,”; DSM-5 “Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders” (“Key Features That Define the Psychotic Disorders”) and “Schizophrenia” (Symptoms and Diagnostic Features only)

Historical Text (OPTIONAL): Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (First and Second Sections)

Monday, October 25th:

Free Will and Agency

Readings: selections from Vargas, *Building Better Beings: A Theory of Moral Responsibility*, McGeer, “Building a Better Theory of Responsibility”; Vargas, “Desert, responsibility, and justification: a reply to Doris, McGeer, and Robinson”

Assignment: Midterm Essay due via Canvas by 11:59pm

Monday, November 1st:

Free Will and Agency

Readings: Kennett, “Autism, Empathy, and Moral Agency,” Shoemaker, “Attributability, Answerability, and Accountability: Toward a Wider Theory of Moral Responsibility”

Case Study: DSM-5 “Autism Spectrum Disorders” (Symptoms and Diagnostic Features only), Case 1.1 “A Second Opinion on Autism” and Case 1.2 “Temper Tantrums” (see DSM Clinical Cases online)

Monday, November 8th:

Free Will and Agency

Readings: Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins* (pgs. 119-145, 191-214); Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins* (pgs. 1-118) [OPTIONAL]

Case Study: DSM-5 “Major or Mild Neurocognitive Disorder Due to Alzheimer’s Disease” (Symptoms and Diagnostic Features only)

Monday, November 15th:

Outline Workshop

Readings: Pryor, “Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper”

YouTube: How to Give Good Feedback (<https://youtu.be/dq9PP7z3CpI>); Philosophy Paper Tips (optional) (<https://youtu.be/c5DSflwNvJg>)

Assignment: Bring three copies of outline to class

Monday, November 22nd:

Free Will and Agency

Readings: Shoemaker, *Responsibility from the Margins* (pgs. 146-190, 215-232)

Case Study: DSM-5, “Antisocial Personality Disorder” and “Intellectual Disability” (Symptoms and Diagnostic Features only), Case 15.1 Doesn’t Know the Rules (see DSM Clinical Cases online)

Monday, November 29th:

Problem Solving - Psychopathy

Readings: Schaich Borg and Sinnott-Armstrong, “Do Psychopaths Make Moral Judgments?”

Case Study: Reidy et al., “Why psychopathy matters: Implications for public health and violence prevention,”; Marshall, Watts, & Lilienfeld, “Do Psychopathic Individuals Possess a Misaligned Moral Compass?”

Monday, December 6th:

Problem Solving - Addiction

Reading: Sinnott-Armstrong, “Are Addicts Responsible?”, Flanagan, “What It’s Like to Be an Addict”

Case Study: DSM-5, “Substance Use Disorders” (Features and skim specific conditions), Case 16.5 A Downward Spiral (see DSM Clinical Cases online)

YouTube: “Controlling” Addiction (<https://youtu.be/kTYhYwTVTjo>) [OPTIONAL]

Wednesday, December 15th by 11:59pm:

Final Essay due **via Canvas**