



Mind Matters: Mental Illness in U.S. History

HIST 4370 / HONR 3300 – Spring 2025

Course Basics

Meets Tuesdays & Thursdays
2:00 - 3:15pm
Classroom Hall, Room 203

Instructor:

Dr. Bill Bush
Office: STEC 311R
210.784.2200
wbush@tamusa.edu

Office hours:

By appointment

Course website:

<http://tamusa.blackboard.com/>

Assigned Texts

Gerald Grob, *The Mad Among Us: A History of the Care of America's Mentally Ill* (Free Press, 2011)

Selected short readings and multimedia materials on Blackboard



Course Description and Objectives

One in five Americans experiences mental illness in their lifetime. And yet, after 150 years of study and treatment, mental health and illness remain poorly understood and mental health services remain underfunded. Our own state, Texas, [ranks last in the nation](#) for access to mental health services for both children and adults. This interdisciplinary, hands-on course explores the history of mental health and mental illness with a focus on the United States and particularly Texas.

Students who take this course will:

- **Learn** about the history of institutions for people with mental illness, from 19th-century asylums to 21st-century hospitals, clinics, and carceral treatment centers
- **Engage** with social movements such as the mental hygiene movement, the community mental health movement, campaigns for equity and equality in mental health services, and “person-first” activism in mental health
- **Participate** in a research project on the history of the San Antonio State Hospital, the third state hospital to be opened in Texas in 1892 and the first to offer treatment to people with mental illness in South Texas
- **Discover** previously unseen historical records to reconstruct the experiences of staff, patients, and families who passed through the state hospital from its earliest days

Course Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Describe and analyze the history of mental health and mental illness in the U.S.
2. Analyze and interpret primary and secondary sources.
3. Apply historical information to analysis of contemporary matters of policy around mental health and mental illness.

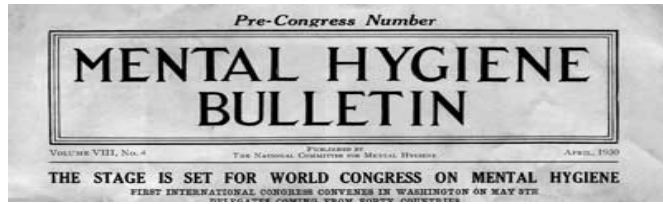


Graded Work

Class Participation & Attendance:	15%
Class Presentation:	25%
Group Project:	35%
Final Essay:	25%

Grade Scale

A:	90%-up
B:	80-89%
C:	70-79%
D:	60-69%
F:	0-59%



Course Requirements

Class Participation & Attendance – 15%

Attendance and tardiness will be recorded. Be on time and ready to participate each day. Several of our classes will be devoted to group activities and discussions. I expect class discussion will be lively, respectful, substantive, and that you will have put in the necessary time to read and understand the assigned reading ahead of time. Your P&A grade will include any in-class writing or group work.

Class Presentation – 25%

Students will work in assigned groups to give a presentation of their group research project (see below) and will develop open-ended questions based on their research intended to provoke thoughtful and interesting discussion.

Group Project – 35%

Students will be assigned to working groups at the start of the semester and will work in these groups periodically in class where indicated on the syllabus, as well as outside of class. Students will work in their groups on a research project focusing on the San Antonio State Hospital (SASH), opened in 1892 and located near our campus. Students will choose their project source material from three options: 1) Hospital ledgers; 2) U.S. Census hospital records; or 3) News articles about the hospital. Option #1 requires in-person research at SASH; options #2 and #3 require online research with digital materials. Groups will give a mid-semester progress report and a final presentation toward the end of the semester. A more detailed assignment prompt will be provided separately.

Final Essay – 25%

The final essay will serve as our final exam. Students will respond to a prompt asking them to synthesize the historical information they have studied during the semester, in support of a thesis or argument about the trajectory of policies, services, and supports for mental health and mental illness. Date is TBD.

Schedule

#	Date	Topic / Reading	Due in Class
1	Tues 1/21	Course Intro & Overview Defining Mental Illness, Between Confinement & Community READ: Prologue, <i>The Mad Among Us</i>	
2	Thur 1/23	Research Orientation: Introductory MEET in Library Room 202 (BLH bldg.) Guest Speaker: Leslie Stapleton, Archives & Special Collections	
3	Tues 1/28	Inventing the Asylum READ: CH 1-2, <i>The Mad Among Us</i>	
4	Thur 1/30	Research Projects Workshop & Discussion READ: "San Antonio State Hospital" (BB)	
5	Tues 2/4	American Psychiatry & the Asylum READ: CH 3, <i>The Mad Among Us</i> CH 2, "Origins," from Sitton, <i>Life at the Texas State Lunatic Asylum</i> (BB)	
6	Thur 2/6	Research Workshop (in class and at SASH) SASH: Meet at hospital (details provided) In-Class: Library Room 202 (BLH bldg.)	
7	Tues 2/11	Daily Life in the Asylum, pt 1 READ: CH 4, <i>The Mad Among Us</i>	
8	Thur 2/13	Daily Life in the Asylum, pt 2 Daily Life Readings, from Sitton, <i>Life at the Texas State Lunatic Asylum</i> (BB)	
9	Tues 2/18	The Mental Hygiene Movement READ: CH 6, <i>The Mad Among Us</i>	
10	Thur 2/20	Shock Treatments READ: CH 7, <i>The Mad Among Us</i>	
11	Tues 2/25	World War II: Mobilizing for Mental Health READ: CH 8, <i>The Mad Among Us</i>	
12	Thur 2/27	"The Shame of America" WATCH: "In a Strange Land" (1956) (BB)	
13	Tues 3/4	Progress Reports: Group Projects	Progress Reports
14	Thur 3/6	Progress Reports: Group Projects	Progress Reports
	3/10-3/14	<i>NO CLASS – Spring Break</i>	
15	Tues 3/18	From Asylum to Community READ: CH 9, <i>The Mad Among Us</i>	

16	Thur 3/20	Mental Health Revolution in Texas READ: CH 3, Bush, <i>Circuit Riders for Mental Health</i> (BB)	
17	Tues 3/25	Community Mental Health in the 1960s READ: CH 10, <i>The Mad Among Us</i>	
18	Thur 3/27	The UT Tower Shooting and the Birth of Campus Mental Health Services	
19	Tues 4/1	Race, Equity, and Mental Health, pt 1 READ: Smith, "No Medical Justification: Segregation and Civil Rights in Alabama's Psychiatric Hospitals, 1952–1972," <i>Journal of Southern History</i> (2021) (BB)	
20	Thur 4/3	NO CLASS: Work on research projects	
21	Tues 4/8	Race, Equity, and Mental Health, pt 2 READ: Raz, "Psychiatry Under the Shadow of White Supremacy," <i>Nature</i> (2020); The Central State Hospital Exhibit ; and Rusk State Hospital Storymap (BB)	
22	Thur 4/10	"Is There No Place on Earth for Me?": The Mixed Blessing of Deinstitutionalization READ: Grob, "Public Policy and Mental Illnesses: Jimmy Carter's Presidential Commission on Mental Health," <i>Milbank Quarterly</i> (2005) (BB)	
23	Tues 4/15	Better But Not Well: Progress and Pitfalls in 21st Century America WATCH: "The New Asylums," Frontline (2005) READ: Bush & Martinez, "The Shame of Texas," <i>Austin American Statesman</i> (2016); Oshinsky, "It's Time to Bring Back Asylums," <i>Wall Street Journal</i> (2023) (BB)	
24	Thur 4/17	NO CLASS: Consultations with Dr. Bush	
25	Tues 4/22	Guided Tour of San Antonio State Hospital MEET Off-Site at SASH	
26	Thur 4/24	Final Group Presentations	Final Presentations
27	Tues 4/29	Final Group Presentations	Final Presentations
28	Thurs 5/1	Final Group Presentations	Final Presentations

**FINAL PAPER DUE
Date & Time TBA**

Class Policies & Resources

Civility Code: This course explores a topic fraught with controversy and thus it is inevitable that we will discuss issues about which there is disagreement, maybe even strong disagreement. That's great! Voice those disagreements openly and thoughtfully. But be sure to do so in a respectful way, in the tone and content of your comments. Per the A&M-SA Student Code of Conduct, students should never engage in name-calling, personal insults (open or veiled), bullying, hate speech, or inappropriate profanity.

Technology Policy: You are responsible for ensuring access to course content, including browser compatibility and Internet connectivity. Any issues with these can't be used as an excuse for late or incomplete work. Please contact the university's ITS for any tech support needs.

Academic Dishonesty: Students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Academic Dishonesty for which a student is subject to penalty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, multiple submission, misrepresentation of academic records, facilitating academic dishonesty, unfair advantage, violating known safety requirements and ethical misconduct. All students are responsible for being familiar with the Academic Dishonesty Policy which may be found in the A&M-San Antonio Student Handbook: (<http://www.tamusa.edu/studentengagementsuccess>).

Artificial Intelligence Policy: As new technologies like Chat GPT, Grammarly, and other AI tools improve and become more available, it will be important for you to understand the different policies and grading methods each of your professors use. In this class, *you are permitted to use AI* in any way you choose, but you are not required to use it. I will not consider AI-generated text to be plagiarism, and I will not penalize it as academic dishonesty, *so long as you cite it and provide a clear explanation for how you used AI tools*. I will grade the work you submit on its own merits using the grading rubrics I will provide. However, *AI alone without your own intellectual effort will not be very good at completing our class assignments*. It is likely that you will not get a very good grade even if you manage to complete an assignment using AI assistance, unless you make substantial improvements of your own. Guidance for how to cite AI-generators, like ChatGPT, can be found [here](#).

Late Work / Make-Up Policy: Extensions on graded work, or make-up exams, will be given for only the most serious, truly unavoidable medical or family emergencies, and may require official documentation explaining your request. Unexcused late work will be assigned a one-letter grade penalty per day and will not be accepted after the third day.