



**Disability Studies 2218G (570)
Madness And Mad Studies
Fall/Winter 2025-2026**

Instructor: Dr. Melanie Byron
Email: mbyron@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

This course draws on diverse research and first person narratives to identify and challenge mainstream ways of thinking about mental illness, psychiatry, labelling and processes of containment. Additionally, this course explores the themes of de/institutionalization, intersectionality, political economy, criminalization, housing and employment as they impact(ed) Mad people.

Prerequisite(s): [Disability Studies 1010A/B](#).

Antirequisite(s): [Disability Studies 2290A/B](#) if taken in 2016-17.

Extra Information: 3 hours

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category A

Subject Code: DISABST

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Madness and Mad Studies

DS 2218G (570) Winter 2026
King's University College, Western University

Course Information:

Course Instructor: Dr. Melanie Byron (mbyron@uwo.ca)

Office Hours: Virtual by appointment

Course duration: January 5th – April 4th, 2024

Mode of Instruction: In-person

Course Description

In this course, we will critically examine traditional perspectives on mental health, challenge stigma, and consider alternative frameworks for understanding human experiences labelled as “madness.” Our work begins by asking interrogative questions: What *is* madness? Who designates madness? And, what happens to those declared mad? As we explore the discourse of madness, we will draw upon first-person narratives of persons entangled in the histories of psychiatric institutions, documenting the socio-political effects of pathologizing frameworks.

This course draws on diverse research and first-person narratives to identify and challenge mainstream ways of thinking about mental illness, psychiatry, labelling, and processes of containment. Additionally, this course explores the themes of de/institutionalization, intersectionality, political economy, criminalization, housing and employment as they impact(ed) Mad people.

Anti-Requisite: Disability Studies 2290A/B if taken in 2016-2017

Pre-requisite: Disability Studies 1010A/B

Duration: 3 hours lecture

Course Weight: 0.5

Academic Dean's Office Note: Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Policies:

As we embark on this journey, I encourage you to take ownership of your learning process while also contributing to the growth of our classroom community. Your active participation in course activities and assessments will not only enhance your own understanding but also enrich the learning experience for your peers. I invite you to approach this course with an open mind and a willingness to engage meaningfully with the material and with each other. Our

discussions may sometimes touch on sensitive or challenging topics, and I ask that you remain present, professional, and respectful throughout.

Community of Learning and Intellectual Property Statement:

- All students are expected to engage with one another in a professional and respectful manner. This includes all interactions with peers, as well as communication between TAs or your Professor. Failure to do so will result in academic discipline.
- Recording of lectures or tutorials without the explicit consent of the Professor or TA is grounds for academic discipline. In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) persons with disabilities will be accommodated. Some students may wish to record the audio from lectures as a personal study aid or strategy associated with a disability. Please talk with the instructor if you think recording lectures would be helpful for your learning.
- Course content created by a faculty member is considered the faculty member's intellectual property; it should not be distributed, shared in any public domain, or sold by a student or other third party without prior written consent of the faculty member.
- **AI Usage and plagiarism:** Students who choose to use AI generative software *must cite both generator and given prompt in the Works Cited. Failure to credit sources (AI included) will constitute academic plagiarism, a grade of zero, and/or an official academic misconduct citation on your transcript.* All submitted work must ultimately be your own original thinking and writing.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Critically analyze the historical development of psychiatric institutions in Canada, demonstrating an understanding of their role in social control, oppression, and injustice.
- Examine the emergence of Mad Studies as a response to traditional psychiatric practices, exploring its foundations and key principles.
- Compare and evaluate medical and social models of mental health, articulating the key principles of Mad Studies approaches to care, community, well-being, and personal empowerment.
- Interpret and assess various forms of mad testimony and creative expression, reflecting on how these narratives may challenge societal attitudes toward mental health.
- Apply an intersectional framework to analyze how experiences of madness intersect with other aspects of identity in the Canadian context, such as gender, disability, race, class, sexuality, and cultural background.
- Synthesize key concepts from Mad Studies to critically analyze and evaluate current mental health practices and policies in Canada, proposing alternative approaches informed by Mad Studies principles and applying these concepts to real-world scenarios.

Evaluation:

The assignments in this course have been designed to support your learning and give you ample opportunities to demonstrate your received knowledge. Below is a brief outline of the evaluations for the course.

Assignment	Brief Assignment Description	Due Date	% of Final Grade
Participation: Directed Readings (15) Attendance (10) Discussion (10)	At the beginning of the semester, students will sign up to select one of the assigned readings throughout the semester. Each week, student(s) will lead their classmates in a discussion of that assigned reading. Students will self-evaluate their own participation and turn in results at the end of class, following discussion.	Cumulative Weeks 2 - 10	35%
Media Analysis: Proposal	Students will propose a topic of their choice, drawing from contemporary media (news article, blog post, film, television series, podcast, etc.). Students will be asked to critically evaluate their selected media using the knowledge we have garnered throughout the semester: How is madness represented? What issues does your topic speak to? What changes are required?	Week 6	15%
Media Analysis: Final Project	Students will conduct their research project, applying feedback from their initial proposal. Students will be evaluated based on both the quality of the final project as well as their ability to implement feedback.	Week 12 (no later than)	30%
Final Exam	Cumulative Exam	Mid-April (to be determined by King's)	20%
Bonus Creative Assignment	At any point throughout the semester (up to and no later than Week 10) students may submit ONE (1) creative work for 5 bonus marks. Works may be artistic, literary, musical,	Up to/no later than Week 10	Optional 5%

	<p>theatrical, or of an alternative composition of the student's choosing. The creative assignment is designed to allow for decolonized approaches to student response and evaluation. You are <i>not</i> graded on the quality of the work—only its completion. Use this as an opportunity to think creatively about our readings.</p>		
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Weekly Course Schedule

Students are expected to come to class having already completed the assigned materials and be prepared to discuss them in class.

(Note that readings may be subject to minor changes prior to the first week of classes. Consult the course website for finalized syllabus.)

Required Texts (Purchase Online or through Campus Bookstore):

Mad Pride: A Celebration of Mad Culture

[\(https://chipmunkpublishing.com/product/mad-pride/\)](https://chipmunkpublishing.com/product/mad-pride/)

A Mad People's History of Madness

[\(https://upittpress.org/books/9780822953319/\)](https://upittpress.org/books/9780822953319/)

Week 1: Introduction to Mad Studies

- "Introduction" in *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies*, edited by Brenda A. LeFrançois, Robert Menzies, and Geoffrey Reaume
- Beresford, Peter. "What have madness and psychiatric system survivors got to do with disability and disability studies?" *Disability and Society*, 15 (1), 2000, p.167-172
- LeFrançois, B.A. "[Voluntary commitment](#)." In *Cultural Sociology of Mental Illness: An A-to-Z Guide*, edited by A. Scull, Sage Publications, 2014, p.947-950

Week 2: Pre-Institution

- Porter, Roy. *Madness: A Brief History*. Chapters 2 ("Gods and Demons"), 3 ("Madness Rationalized")

- Trosse, George. "The Life of the Reverend Mr. George Trosse: Written by Himself, and Published Posthumously According to His Order in 1714." In *A Mad People's History of Madness*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982, p. 26-38
- "The Book of Margery Kempe." In *A Mad People's History of Madness*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982, p. 3-18

Week 3: The Asylum

- Porter, Roy. *Madness: A Brief History*. Chapter 5 ("Locking Up the Mad").
- Metcalfe, Urbane. "The Interior of Bethlehem Hospital." In *A Mad People's History of Madness*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982, p. 74-91
- Perceval, John. "A Narrative of the Treatment Experienced by a Gentleman." In *A Mad People's History of Madness*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982, p. 92-107
- Anonymous. "Five Months in the New-York State Lunatic Asylum." In *A Mad People's History of Madness*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982, p. 108-121

Week 4: Psychiatry

- Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." Excerpt posted to course website.
- Szasz, Thomas. "The Myth of Mental Illness: 50 Years Later." *The Psychiatrist*, 35 (5), 2011, p. 179-182 (Available online, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1192/pb.bp.110.031310>)
- Beers, Clifford. "A Mind that Found Itself." In *A Mad People's History of Madness*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982, p. 161-175.

Week 5: Psychiatric Medicine – Psychosurgery

- Scull, Andrew. "(Chapter 9) Brain Surgery." *Desperate Remedies: Psychiatry's Turbulent Quest to Cure Mental Illness*.
- Dully, Howard. *My Lobotomy*. Excerpt posted to course website.

Week 6: Psychiatric Medicine - Psychopharmacology

- Burstow, B. "Introduction to the Study: Unveiling the Problematic." Chapter 1 in *Psychiatry and the Business of Madness: An Ethical and Epistemological Accounting*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 1-23
- Donaldson, Kenneth. "Insanity Inside Out." In *A Mad People's History of Madness*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982, p. 327 – 335.

Week 7: Reading Week

No Class

Week 8: Deinstitutionalization and Transinstitutionalization

- Ware, Syrus, et al. "It Can't be Fixed Because It's Not Broken: Racism and Disability in the Prison Industrial Complex." In *Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada* edited by Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman, and Allison C. Carey, Chapter 9.
- Erevelles, Nirmala. "Crippin' Jim Crow: Disability, Dis-Location, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline." In *Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada* edited by Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman, and Allison C. Carey. Chapter 5.
- Patel, Shaista. "Racing Madness: The Terrorizing Madness of the Post-9/11 Terrorist Body." In *Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada* edited by Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman, and Allison C. Carey. Chapter 11.

Week 9: Mad Activism and Mad Studies

- In Class Screening: *Toronto Activists Project* - Madness Canada
- Irwin, Eric, et al. "The Need for a Mental Patients Union: Some Proposals." In *Mad Pride: A Celebration of Mad Culture*, Lightning Source UK Ltd., 2000, p. 23-28
- "Advice: An A to Z." In *Mad Pride: A Celebration of Mad Culture*, Lightning Source UK Ltd., 2000, p. 63-66
- Watson, Ben. "Towards a Critical Madness." In *Mad Pride: A Celebration of Mad Culture*, Lightning Source UK Ltd., 2000, 105-123

Week 10: Alternative Approaches to Mental Health Care

- "Mad Nation? Thinking through Race, Class, and Mad Identity Politics." In *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies*, Ed. Bren A. LeFrancois et al., Canadian Scholars' Press, 2013, Chapter 19
- "Wither Indigenizing the Mad Movement? Theorizing the Social Relations of Race and Madness through Conviviality." In *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies*, Ed. Bren A. LeFrancois et al., Canadian Scholars' Press, 2013, Chapter 20
- Vonnegut, Mark. "The Eden Express." In *A Mad People's History of Madness*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982, p. 312-236.

Week 11: Madness in Media In-class screenings: TBD

- In-class screenings: TBD
- Voronka, J. "Making Bipolar Britney: Proliferating psychiatric diagnoses through tabloid media." *Radical Psychology* n. 7, 2007, p.2.

Week 12: Madness in Media cont.

- In-class screenings: TBD

Week 13: Future Directions in Mad Studies and Course Wrap-Up

- No readings

KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-services/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find

information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with your instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.