
Medicalization: History and Theory

HSSC 532 /HIST 534/SOCI 513

Professor Beth Linker
Logan Hall, Rm. 365
Office Hours: M 11:00-1:00
Email: linker@sas.upenn.edu

Course Description:

Many books written today on the history and sociology of twentieth-century medicine invoke the term “medicalization.” We are told that everything from childbirth and allergies to hyperactivity and hospitals have become dominated by the medical profession and its explanation of health and illness. This course traces the history of the medicalization thesis, from its beginnings with Michel Foucault and Ivan Illich to its latest articulation put forth by sociologist Peter Conrad. Once we are accustomed to the multiple meanings of medicalization, we will put them each under scrutiny, borrowing from literature in the history of religion (a subfield that has grappled with the predominance of the secularization thesis, a theory very much akin to medicalization), as well as from the history of the body. In short, the goal of this course is to read current works in the history of medicine in order to problematize the theory of medicalization.

Course Objectives:

- To understand the multiple meanings of medicalization.
- To trace the historical beginnings of the medicalization thesis.
- To appreciate the shared assumptions between medicalization and secularization, and how these assumptions shape the writing of history of medicine today.
- To understand the role that power, politics, race, gender, and class play in the construction and popularity of the medicalization thesis.

Course Assignments and Grading:

All papers should be in 12-point font, double-spaced, 1 inch margins.

1. *Book Review and In-Class Presentation* (see pg. 4—individual due dates will be assigned in class).

2. *Final Paper*: A 5000-6000 word essay that surveys the literature and addresses the following question: “Does the Medicalization Thesis (or the theory of medicalization) have a future in your field of study?”

Due Date: Monday, May 5th. Please place a hard copy of the paper in my office mailbox.

Schedule of Readings:

Jan. 16 **Medicalization before “The Thesis”**

Jules Romains, *Knock*, trans. James Gidney (Great Neck, NY: Barron’s Educational Series, 1962): i-vii, 1-69.

Michel Foucault, “The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century” in *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow, ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984): 273-289.

[Review Michel Foucault’s, *Birth of the Clinic* on your own.]

Jan. 23 **The Making of a Thesis, Part I**

Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis* (London : Marion Boyars, 1976). [either the original or the more recent 1999 reprint]

- Bryan S. Turner, "From Governmentality to Risk: Some reflections on Foucault's contribution to medical sociology" in *Foucault: Health and Medicine*, Alan Petersen and Robin Bunton, eds. (London: Routledge, 1997): ix-xxi.
- Deborah Lupton, "Foucault and the medicalisation critique" in *Foucault: Health and Medicine*, Alan Petersen and Robin Bunton, eds. (London: Routledge, 1997): 94-110.

Jan. 30 **The Making of a Thesis, Part II**

- Irving K. Zola, "Medicine as an Institution of Social Control" *The Sociological Review* 20.4 (1972): 487-504.
- Peter Conrad and Joseph Schneider, *Deviance and Medicalization: From Badness to Sickness*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), focus on chapters 1-3, 6, and 9-10.
- David Armstrong, "The Rise of Surveillance Medicine" *Sociology of Health and Illness* 17.3 (1995): 393-404.

Feb. 6 **Early Discontents and Alternatives**

- Renée Fox, "The Medicalization and Demedicalization of American Society" *Daedalus* (Winter 1977): 9-22.
- P.M. Strong, "Sociological Imperialism and the Profession of Medicine: A Critical Examination of the Thesis of Medical Imperialism" *Social Science and Medicine* 13A (1979): 199-215.
- Peter Conrad and Joseph Schneider, "Looking at Levels of Medicalization: A comment on Strong's Critique of the Thesis of Medical Imperialism" *Social Science and Medicine* 14A (1980): 75-79.
- June Lowenberg and Fred Davis, "Beyond medicalisation-demedicalisation: the case of holistic health" *Sociology of Health and Illness* 16.5 (1994): 579-599.
- Simon Williams and Michael Calnan, "The Limits of Medicalization?" *Social Science and Medicine* 42.12 (1996): 1609-1620.
- Karen Ballard and Mary Ann Elston, "Medicalisation: A Multi-dimensional Concept" *Social Theory and Health* 3 (2005): 228-241.

Feb. 13 **Medicalization and Religion, Part I**

- Roy Wallis and Steve Bruce, "Secularization: The Orthodox Model" in *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis*, Steve Bruce, ed. (Clarendon Press, 1992): 8-30.
- Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000).
- Thomas Schlich, "Medicalization and Secularization: The Jewish Ritual Bath as a Problem of Hygiene (Germany 1820s-1840s)" *Social History of Medicine* 7.3 (1995): 423-442.

Feb. 20 **Medicalization and Religion, Part II**

- Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)
- Robert Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

Feb. 27 **Medicalization and "the Natural", Part I**

- Catherine Kohler Riessman, "Women and Medicalization: A New Perspective" *Social Policy* (Summer 1983): 3-18.
- Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750-1950* (Cambridge:

Oxford University Press, 1986).

March 5 **Medicalization and “the Natural”, Part II**

Rachel Maines, *Technology of Orgasm: Hysteria, the Vibrator and Women's Sexual Satisfaction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Susan E. Bell, “Changing Ideas: The Medicalization of Menopause” in *The Meanings of Menopause: Historical, Medical, and Clinical Perspective*, Ruth Formanek, ed. (Hillsdale, N.J.: The Analytic Press, 1990): 43-63.

Elizabeth Siegel Watkins, “The Medicalisation of male Menopause in America,” *Social History of Medicine* 20.2 (2007): 369-388.

March 12 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

March 19 **Pregnancy and Mothering: Medicalized or Demedicalized?**

Janet Golden, *Message in a Bottle: The Making of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Rima Apple, “The Medicalization of Infant Feeding in the United States and New Zealand: Two Countries, One Experience,” *Journal of Human Lactation* 10.1 (1994): 31-37.

March 26 **Medicalization and Psychiatry**

Elizabeth Lunbeck, *The Psychiatric Persuasion: Knowledge, Gender, and Power in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Michael MacDonald, “The Medicalization of Suicide in England: Laymen, Physicians, and Cultural Change, 1500-1870” in *Framing Disease: Studies in Cultural History*, Charles Rosenberg and Janet Golden, eds. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997): 85-103.

April 2 **Medicalization, Behavior, and Big Pharma**

Christopher Lane, *Shyness: How Normal Behavior Became a Sickness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

Jeremy A. Green, “Releasing the Flood Waters: Diuril and the Reshaping of Hypertension,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 79.4 (2005): 749-794.

April 9 **Medicalization, Sex, and Behavior**

Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Bert Hansen, “American Physicians’ ‘Discovery’ of Homosexuals, 1880-1900: A New Diagnosis in a Changing Society,” in *Framing Disease: Studies in Cultural History*, Charles Rosenberg and Janet Golden, eds. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997): 104-133.

Conrad and Schneider, *Deviance and Medicalization*, chapter 7

April 16 **Medicalization and Sleep**

Kenton Kroger, *The Sleep of Others and the Transformation of Sleep Research* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

April 23 **Looking Backward, Looking Forward**

Robert Nye, “The Evolution of the Concept of Medicalization in the Late Twentieth Century,” *Journal of History of the Behavioral Sciences* 39.2 (Spring 2003): 115-129.

Peter Conrad, *Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

Schedule of Book Reviews and In-Class Presentations:

Feb. 13

Thomas Szasz, *The Manufacture of Madness* (Harper Row, 1970)

Feb. 20

T.J.Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace* (Chicago, 1994).

Feb. 27

Richard and Dorothy Wertz, *Lying In* (Yale, 1989).

March 5

Emily S. Abelson, *When Ladies Go A-Theiving* (Oxford, 1989).

March 19

Ann Oakley, *The Captured Womb* (Blackwell, 1984).

March 26

Allan V. Horowitz, *Creating Mental Illness* (University of Chicago, 2002).

April 2

Jeremy Greene, *Prescribing by Numbers* (Johns Hopkins, 2007)

April 9

Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry* (Basic Books, 1981).

April 16

Elizabeth Haiken, *Venus Envy* (Johns Hopkins, 1999).

April 23

Mieka Loe, *The Rise of Viagra* (NYU Press, 2004).