Advanced Topics: Philosophy of Psychology
16:730:676 Philosophy Department
Fall 2012
Cross listed with:
Advanced Topics in Clinical Psychology. 18:821:611. Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology.
Philosophy of Psychology. 16:185:603. Rutgers Cognitive Science Center.

The Varieties of Delusional Experience

Time: Tuesday 4:30pm to 7:30pm.
Location: Philosophy Seminar Room, 3 Seminary Place, CAC.

Instructors:
Brian P. McLaughlin, Professor II, Philosophy
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Louis Sass, Professor II, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology
lsass@rci.rutgers.edu

Requirements:
1. Term paper. Minimum 7,500 words. Maximum 10,000 words. (A 1 page topic proposal with bibliography is due on Nov. 6.)
2. Presentation at 3 day end of term class conference. 30 minute presentation followed by 30 minute discussion. The presentation should be on the topic of the term paper.

All of the course readings (with the exception of the free online encyclopedia pieces for Sept.4th) can be found at http://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal under the heading “Delusions.”

Course Description:
Delusion, long considered the key symptom of severe mental illness, has been the subject of intense study and debate in recent years—in the mental health professions as well as in cognitive science and the philosophy of mind. The course will discuss the nature and (in some cases) the neurological causes of a variety of delusional phenomena across a number of mental disorders, including schizophrenia, Capgras, Cotard, and Fregoli. Among the topics to be discussed are the nature of states of delusion, the solipsistic perspective, verbal incomprehensibility, motivations for delusion, neurological disorders and delusions, faulty reasoning and poor reality testing, the clinical treatment of delusional symptoms, the variety of monothematic delusions, similarities and differences between clinical delusions and more common delusions such as those involved in self-deception and wishful thinking, and the role of certain feelings (existential feelings) in the fixation of beliefs. Several theoretical perspectives will be discussed and compared. These include attempts to account for delusion within a cognitive scientific framework, phenomenological approaches that seek to grasp the patient’s subjective point of view,
and philosophical discussions of what kind of psychological state delusions are. The class will have several guest lecturers.

Learning Objectives:

- To familiarize students with the phenomenological approach to understanding mental illness.
- To explore what monothematic delusions can teach us about the structure of human cognitive architecture.
- To examine the nature of delusional states.
- To compare and contrast clinical delusions with more common delusions such as those involved in self-deception and wishful thinking.

SESSIONS:

Sept 4  INTRODUCTION (Sass and McLaughlin)

Required reading:


11 PHENOMENOLOGICAL PSYCHOPATHOLOGY (Sass)

Required reading:


18 SCHIZOPHRENIA (Sass)

Required reading:


Excerpts (brief) from autobiographical accounts by Antonin Artaud, Elyn Saks, “Renee.”

Recommended reading:


Minkowski, “The essential disorder underlying schizophrenia …” in Cutting and Shepherd (Eds.), *Clinical Roots of the Schizophrenia Concept*, 1987, pp. 188-212.


25 SELF-DECEPTION, WISHTFUL THINKING, AND MONOTHEMATIC DELUSIONS (McLaughlin)

Required reading:


Scott; Kakure, D. “Out of touch: delusion, self-deception, cognitive dissonance” (unpublished manuscript)


Oct. 2 SCHIZOPHRENIA AND DELUSION (Sass)

Required reading:


Recommended reading:


9 PARADOXES OF DELUSION (Sass)

Required reading:


16 SCHIZOPHRENIA (with possible guest lecturer) (Sass)

Required reading:


23 BIMAGINATION, Andy Egan guest lecturer (McLaughlin)

Required reading:


**30  DELUSION AND ACCEPTANCES, Richard Dub guest lecturer (McLaughlin)**

**Required reading:**


**Nov. 6  WHAT WE LEARN ABOUT BELIEF FROM DELUSIONS AND OTHER BELIEF-LIKE PENUMBRA, Robert Matthews guest lecturer (McLaughlin)**

* [1 page topic proposal with bibliography due.]

**Required reading:**


**13 TWO-FACTOR THEORY OF MONOTHEMATIC DELUSIONS (McLaughlin)**

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**30 EXISTENTIAL FEELINGS AND THE FIXATION OF BELIEFS (McLaughlin)**

**Required reading:**


Recommended reading:


Dec. 4 FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE VARIETIES OF DELUSIONAL EXPERIENCE (Sass)

Readings to be announced.

11 CLASS CONFERENCE BEGINS.

CLASS CONFERENCE: Dec.11, and Dec. 13-14. Students will do presentations 30 minute presentations and there will be 30 minutes of discussion. Also, the conference will include guest speakers:
Professor George Graham, Department of Philosophy and Neuoscience Institute, Georgia State University, title of talk, “Within Delusions Without Schizophrenia,”
Professor Achim Stephan, Department of Cognitive Science, University of Osnabrueck, Germany, (title of talk to be announced),
and a possible third guest speaker to be announced.

SOME BOOKS OF INTEREST, PERHAPS IN CONNECTION WITH YOUR TERM PAPER

Classical works on psychopathology or schizophrenia:


Relatively recent works in phenomenological psychopathology:


Recent works on delusion from a cognitive science perspective:


A list of papers and books on self-deception can be found at: [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/self-deception/](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/self-deception/)

Some other relevant books:


