**ENGL 489**

**Rhetorics of/and Mental Health**

**Term 2**

**Monday 2:00-4:00**

**Judy Segal**

Mental health has become a major focus of clinical, institutional, professional, academic, public, interpersonal, and individual attention—increasingly now, when so many people are experiencing emotional and psychological distress. Because so much of the understanding and experience of mental health and illness has a discursive element, often a very strong one, it is not surprising that rhetoricians are among the scholars who have weighed in on their complexities and meanings.

Studies of mental health/illness discourses are multi- and inter-disciplinary, and the theories and methods of interest to our seminar come not only from Rhetorical Studies itself (e.g., Emmons, Yergeau, Price), but also from Philosophy (e.g., Hacking), History (e.g., Harrington), Anthropology (e.g., Martin), and Psychiatry (e.g., Frances) among other disciplines. Our course will cover a range of theories, methods, and perspectives on mental health/illness, attending especially to what, in a field of complex problem(atic)s, is most saliently discursive/rhetorical—and why it matters that it is.

This course is adapted from a 2020 graduate seminar by the same name. The reading list for the current course will be an updated—and reduced—version of the reading list for the graduate course. Students do not need a background in rhetorical theory. Our readings will exemplify a range of rhetorical-analytic approaches, and we will fill in theoretical terms and concepts as needed. A partial (and tentative) list of readings follows.

*Note: If we are not able to hold classes on campus, this course will proceed using a combination of asynchronous (recorded/text/online) materials and synchronous meetings held in our designated timeslot.*

Emmons, Kimberly. Excerpt. *Black Dogs and Blue Words: Depression and Gender in the Age of Self-Care* (2010).

Frances, Allen. Excerpt. *Saving Normal: An Insider’s Revolt against Out-of-Control Psychiatric Diagnosis, DSM-5, Big Pharma, and the Medicalization of Ordinary Life* (2013).

Hacking, Ian. “Making up People.” In *Historical Ontology* (2002).

Harrington, Anne. Excerpt. *Mind Fixers: Psychiatry’s Troubled Search for the Biology of Mental Illness*. (2019).

Jamison, Kay Redfield. Excerpt. *An Unquiet Mind* (1996).

Martin, Emily. Excerpt. *Bipolar Expeditions: Mania and Depression in American Culture* (2007).

Price, Margaret. Excerpt. *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* (2011).

Wurtzel, Elizabeth. Excerpt. *Prozac Nation: Young and Depressed in America. A Memoir* (1993).

Yergeau, Melanie. Excerpt. *Authoring Autism / On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness* (2018).