The Talking Cure: Podcasts as Exploration of Disordered Experiences

Justin Dainer-Best

Spring 2021

Course Number	Time	Location	Online Office Hours
PSY 375	W, 14:00-16:20	RKC 102	F, 12:00-13:45

Make an appointment to come to my office hours.

Pre-requisites: Introduction to Psychology, and a course in either Adult or Child Abnormal Psychology (PSY 210 or PSY 211). **Cross-listed**: Experimental humanities.

Overview

Despite the history of the term "talking cure," we often focus almost entirely on the written word in courses that introduce the basics of psychological disorders. In the rise of podcasts, however, we have an increased ability to learn about mental illness and treatment directly from people who are willing to share their experiences. In this seminar, each class meeting will revolve around a podcast episode that provides insight into some aspect of mental illness, accompanied by reading primary source research articles and theory. Topics will include cognitive processing therapy, gender identity, major depression, couples therapy, and opiate addiction.

This course will discuss topics that are sensitive or personal for many students. If something discussed in class leaves you feeling upset, please speak to a trusted person about your experience. Further, if you find that you are struggling to cope with some of the topics discussed in class, you may contact Bard Counseling Services, and make an appointment; you may also email counselingservice@bard.edu or call 845-758-7433.

You will be graded through your active participation, contributing to class discussion, and on a semester-long project focused on integrating research with a podcast.

Objectives

By the end of the semester you should. . .

- have a better understanding of personal experiences of mental illness,
- feel comfortable reading academic research articles and applying them to better understand mental health,
- be able to design a research study and a podcast episode, and
- have experience discussing empirical articles and treatment manuals with your peers.

Instructor

The instructor for this course is Assistant Professor of Psychology Justin Dainer-Best (he/him/his).

Materials

Readings

There is no primary text for this course. Each week's discussion will be centered on one or two podcast episodes, and associated articles/readings, detailed below. You should come to class prepared to discuss both the podcast and the readings. If you are unable or uninterested in listening to one (or occasionally two) podcast[s] each week, you should not take this course.

Although it is not required, you may choose to purchase a copy of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th Ed.; ISBN-13: 978-0890425558). It is, however, available for free through the Bard library. The *DSM-5* is the primary manual for diagnosis, and you will likely want to refer to it throughout the course. Besides looking great on your bookshelf, you'll find the DSM to be a useful reference throughout the semester.

Readings will be posted on Brightspace and Perusall, and are arranged on Brightspace in sequential order. Readings described below are referred to by the author's surname(s).

You are expected to come to each class prepared to discuss the assigned reading. Laptops are discouraged. A pad of paper or a notebook are preferred. (Digital copies of readings may be appropriate.)

Class Policies

Attendance

We will move at a rapid pace; material that is missed due to absence will not be repeated in class or office hours. Our classes are discussion-based, and your absence will impact both your own understanding and remove your contributions for others. Missing multiple days of group work may impact your grade.

Further, late arrivals can be disruptive to the class. Consistent patterns of lateness are unfair to other students. Please be on time.

If you are not feeling well, please do not come to class. Because of the need to remain home if you are ill, you may at **any point** choose to attend class remotely. Please let me know if you intend to do this (although I do not need to know why!), and I will make sure that you are able to attend. I have been encouraged to keep records of attendance in the interest of public health, but these will not be used for any other purpose.

If you are attending class online, please log in by the beginning of class. (I will begin promptly.)

Masks

Each of us shares responsibility for the health and safety of all in the classroom. I expect you to maintain six feet of distance from one another, to cover your nose and mouth with a functioning mask throughout class, and to stay home when you feel at all ill. These directives are consistent with Bard's policies and with the CDC guidelines. In the classroom, if you are not following these provisions (e.g., you remove your mask, or intrude on others' space), you will be reminded of these directives and then asked to leave.

Accommodations & Accessibility

Bard College is committed to providing equal access to all students. If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please contact me so that we can arrange to discuss. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. Together we can plan how best to support your learning and coordinate your accommodations. Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations through disability services should share their accommodation letter with me and make arrangements to meet as soon as possible.

If you have a learning difference or disability that may relate to your ability to fully participate in this class, but have not yet met with the Disability Support Coordinator at Bard, you can contact their office through

https://www.bard.edu/accessibility/students/; the Coordinator will confidentially discuss the process to establish reasonable accommodations. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and thus you should begin this process as soon as possible if you believe you will need them.

Additionally, as my office in Preston Hall may be physically difficult to access, you may always request to meet with me in another location. This semester, however, I anticipate all office hours and meetings to occur online.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

It is important to me that this course provides an open and supportive learning environment for all students. I invite you to speak with me if you have concerns or questions regarding issues of belonging, safety, or equity in the classroom. I want our discussions to be respectful of all students. If I am not helping the classroom to feel like an inclusive environment, I invite you to provide me with [anonymous] feedback. All forms of knowledge relating to clinical experience are valuable. While we will primarily engage with the topics of this course from an empirical perspective, respect for all viewpoints is necessary. I have attempted to choose readings that cover diverse viewpoints, demographics, and populations; you may not agree with every perspective you read or hear in this class, but I hope that they can be approached with kindness and curiosity.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

I expect you to be familiar with what plagiarism is and is not. You may not present someone else's work as your own without proper citation. You may not copy someone else's work. You may not simply reword text from another source without giving credit. Please cite others' work where relevant, and use your own writing. If you are not sure about the definition of plagiarism, or whether something constitutes plagiarism, please consult with me or with someone at Bard's Learning Commons. Students caught plagiarizing will be reported to the Academic Judiciary Board, will get no credit for the assignment, and may fail the course.

I operate from the standpoint that you are interested in learning this material, and are doing your best to operate with integrity.

Cell phones and laptops

Before class, you should silence your cell phone, and you should not be on your phone during class. I do not recommend taking notes on your phone as a rule. I recommend taking notes on paper wherever possible. If you text or access materials unrelated to class during our class time, you are mentally absent from class.

When using a laptop, I encourage you to turn off notifications / turn on Do Not Disturb whenever possible. Browsing unrelated materials is distracting to you and also to your classmates. If attending class remotely, I recommend turning on Do Not Disturb and putting the (Zoom) class window in full-screen.

Late Assignments

Some assignments (the podcast components and the midterm essay) can be turned in **within two days** of their due dates without penalty. For example, if an assignment is due before class, it may be turned in by Friday at midnight without penalty. However, please note that many assignments are intended to develop into conversations; even if you have not turned in a final document to me, you should be prepared to discuss your work in class. Perusall comments *may not be turned in after class begins*; the point of these comments is to stimulate discussion. (Obviously, leading a class exercise cannot be done late!)

Assignments may still be turned in after their late date. However, such assignments are considered "missing" (see section on grading below). If your work is consistently turned in late, this also may impact your grade unless you discuss this lateness with me. All assignments are due by the last day of the semester.

Assignments

Perusall comments

During **ten** or more of the semester's weeks, you should publish multiple comments on the course's Perusall website. You should have made your comments **by noon** on the day of class.

Perusall is a collaborative annotation system—you will annotate selections from the course readings *with your classmates* before class begins. You should not focus on only one reading, but should comment on any/all articles assigned for the week. Each week's assignment is graded from 0 to 7 (averaged across articles), and your top 10 scores will contribute to your final grade. You cannot earn more points after the beginning of class. Perusall makes recommendations of scores based on your comments; I will read your comments closely myself and may adapt your grades.

The questions and comments you post will be used during class to shape the discussion. You will receive full credit for your Perusall annotations if they are novel and add something beyond the questions raised by that week's readings directly—e.g., by interacting with one another's questions. Questions are intended to provoke class discussion, and to give everyone a sense of how the class approaches the material before we begin. Your questions shouldn't be too specific or too general—they should help stimulate your own thinking. Questions should engage in a thoughtful way with (ideally) multiple readings and the podcast, and bring them into conversation with one another. Each Perusall thread is a conversation with the other members of the class. Your goal should be to stimulate discussion which we can carry over into our class time by posting good questions or comments and to help others by answering their questions.

Occasionally, you may spend the first fifteen minutes of class writing a response to one of the questions posed by you or your classmates.

Effective annotations deeply engage points in the readings (through interpretation, synthesis, analysis, and use of evidence), offer informative questions or comments, and help others by addressing their questions or confusions. You can "mention" a classmate in a comment or question to have them notified by email (they'll also see a notification immediately if they're currently on the site), and you'll also be notified when your classmates respond to your questions.

How many? More than 2 or 3 comments—even substantive ones—would be appropriate. On the other hand, 30 in-depth comments is likely too many. I also recommend not only making comments on abstracts or in the first few paragraphs of the article!

Can I read the articles elsewhere than on the Perusall site? Of course! You may read print versions, or use your favorite electronic reading app—you'll just want to make your own comments (and add your own voice to discussions) on the Perusall website.

Leading class exercise

Each week, two students will develop an exercise to help stimulate discussion, approach the material from a different angle, and help the rest of the class to fully understand the week's topic. When you lead the class exercise, you should plan to discuss in advance with your partner, and have material that can take approximately 20 minutes of the class. You may also choose to bring in outside research as you see fit.

You will lead discussion twice over the course of the semester based on the auction:

Auction

On the first day of class, you will be given 100 "points" to bid on the topics for which you would like to lead an exercise. You may choose to spend those points however you choose—e.g., giving ten points each to ten topics, or using all 100 on a single topic. The two students who bid the highest for any topic will lead an exercise that day. If you cannot lead on a given day (e.g., because of a religious observance or another college-approved absence), you may let me know that explicitly. Ties will result in random assignment to topics.

Course project

The primary output of this course is a project that will be developed over the course of the semester. You will choose a topic related to mental health, design and develop a research study in your mid-semester paper, and then work in a small group to create a podcast fleshing out the idea of one or more different research papers.

Midterm essay

The midterm essay is a 6–8 page (strict cut-off at 8) paper designed to elicit critical thought about the bases of mental illness and treatment. This should be written as a research proposal following the APA style guide (double-spaced, with APA citations, etc.). You will ask a question about either *why* or *how* a treatment works ("Is Behavioral Activation an essential part of CBT for depression?"), on what populations are best served by a treatment ("Does CPT work efficiently for neurodivergent patients?"), or on some other aspect of research on mental health and illness that you discuss with me.

You should include the following: an abstract (350 words maximum, on 1 page); an introduction (literature review—2–3 pages, terminating with a hypothesis); the methods (2 pages, including sub-sections of participants, measures, and procedure); a predicted results section (1–2 pages, including one table or figure, describing what would you hope to see based on the measures), and a discussion (1 paragraph discussing what this study would help you to learn). A references section must follow but is not included in the page count. You should cite peer-reviewed, empirical research, which has been published in reputable journals. Citing a minimum of five empirical articles would be appropriate, although more may be relevant. You may also cite peer-reviewed meta-analyses, theory, or review articles. A title page is fine but not required. No outline should be included.

The final document should begin with a one-page cover letter summarizing your thesis, describing your response to peer review (see below), and highlighting what you believe to be the strengths of the paper.

This research proposal should be an **experiment**—you must manipulate an independent variable.

There are three due dates for this essay:

1. The topic should be submitted by February 24th via email, including 3–5 sentences describing the research question and proposed study—you will receive 20 points for submitting this.

2. Electronic copies of a rough draft (including a minimum of three empirical sources) should be shareable by class on March 10th for peer review; I will read one of these copies. Participating in peer review and turning in the rough draft are worth 30 points. This will also be an opportunity to begin discussing ideas for the group project, described in section podcast below.

3. The final essay is due March 23rd (i.e., the day before our respite day), and is worth 80 points.

The paper will be scored based primarily on the following criteria: clarity of argument and writing, use of evidence from past research, coherence of argument, clarity and relevance of hypothesis/hypotheses, relevance of methods, utility of methods, plausibility of results, inclusion of relevant figure, and coherence of brief discussion. A rubric will be provided for peer review of the rough draft, which I will also use to score your essay.

Podcast

As you explore your research topics, you will identify commonalities with other students in the class. In groups of two or three students, you will design and create an audio recording that highlights a different perspective on some aspect of your research project. This recording may be based around interviews, scripted dialogue, narrative story-telling, or any other idea that creatively explores a component of mental health. (You may view how students approached this assignment in the spring of 2020.)

There are four due dates for this project:

- A project proposal is due in class on April 7th. This will explicitly present your plan for the project, including what you will be creating, how you aim to connect it to research, and the roles of each group member. You will receive 20 points for submitting this, and I will give you feedback.

- A project status update will be due in class on April 21st. Your group should plan to present a summary of your project to the class, and submit a 2-page co-written report to me that links the podcast to research articles, with citations. The in-class presentation and written report are worth 40 points.

- On May 5th, you should plan to schedule a time for all members to meet with me for 30 minutes in lieu of class.

- The final recording—as an MP3 or other playable audio file—is due on May 19th. It should be 15–30 minutes long. Resources, including equipment, will be available through the Center for Experimental Humanities to help you record and edit a podcast.

The final recording is worth 80 points. It will be scored in part on the following criteria: connection to research, clarity of argument, coherence of the presented work, effective execution of the project proposal, creativity, sound quality, and narrative structure.

Grades

Assignment	Points
Perusall annotations	70
Class exercises	60
Midterm essay	130
Podcast project	140
Total	400

Your grades in this course will come from the assignments described above: Perusall annotations, leading class exercises, the midterm essay, and the final podcast project. Please note that while I will use Brightspace to distribute readings and collect assignments, you should not rely on the Brightspace gradebook to determine your grade. Instead, rely on these grading tables and your scores to determine your grade.

Grade	Range
A-range	360-400
B-range	320-359
C-range	280-319
D-range	240-219
F	below 240

As discussed above, both the midterm essay and the components of the podcast project may be turned in late. Assignments turned in after the late deadline will receive points off, usually at a rate of 10% off per day late.

Schedule

The schedule may change over the course of the semester. Changes to assignment dates will be announced via email and also changed on the course website. You are responsible for keeping up with the readings, showing up to class prepared, and turning in assignments on-time.

Readings are listed by author last name; PDFs can be found on Brightspace.

February 3

Why podcasts?

Planning the semester and discussing syllabus and intentions.

February 10

Cognitive Processing Therapy

Podcast

- *This American Life*: Ten Sessions (Lowe & Glass, 2019)

Readings

- Selection from the CPT manual (Resick et al., 2017)
- Example of research on CPT (Resick et al., 2008)

February 17

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Podcast

- *Invisibilia*: The Secret History of Thoughts (Rosin & Spiegel, 2015)

Readings

- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for OCD (Twohig et al., 2015)
- Intolerance of uncertainty in OCD (Grayson, 2010)

February 24

Mental health in Black America

Podcast

- *The 730*: Race, Trauma and Psychedelic Therapy with Monnica Williams (White, 2020)

Reading

- Perception of mental health services (Gaston et al., 2016)
- Example of using a novel approach to target racial trauma experiences (Williams et al., 2020)

Due

- Paper topic

March 3

Intimate Partner Violence (with Laine Kaplan-Levenson)

Podcast

- *Throughline*: Everybody Knows Somebody (Kaplan-Levenson et al., 2020)

Readings

- Review of intimate partner violence research (Miller & McCaw, 2019)

March 10

Dissociative Identity Disorder

Podcasts

- *Here Be Monsters* (Emtman & Denton, 2016)
- *Reply All*: Making friends (Klivans et al., 2016)

Readings

- Arguments against DID as a diagnosis (Piper & Merskey, 2004a, 2004b)
- Arguments for the diagnosis (Brand et al., 2016)

Due

- Draft of paper

March 17

Couples Therapy

Podcast

- *This American Life*: Esther Perel (Glass & Perel, 2017)—and you may also listen to a Fresh Air interview (Gross, 2017)

Readings

- Introduction to the Gottman method of couples therapy (Gottman & Gottman, 2008)
- Dealing with infidelity (Gordon et al., 2008, – n.b., this follows the first reading in the same PDF)

March 24

No class—respite day; however, due note the paper due the day before:

Due 3/23

- Midterm essay

March 31

Resistance in therapy

Podcast

- *In Therapy*: Jo (Orbach, 2016)

Readings

- Ambivalence and resistance (Urmanche et al., 2019)
- Therapeutic alliance (Falkenström et al., 2013)

April 7

Gender identity

Podcasts

- *Queersplaining*: The retransitioners (Wright, 2020)
- Optional (but brief): *Here Be Monsters*: Deep Stealth Mode (Mack et al., 2015)

Readings

- Introduction to gender diversity in children (with terminology!) (Perzanowski et al., 2020)
- Trends in gender dysphoria treatment and presentation (Wiepjes et al., 2018)
- Treatment plans before puberty (Ehrensaft, 2020)
- Treatment plans during adolescence (Chung et al., 2020)

Due

- Podcast groups & planned topic

April 14

Removing homosexuality from the *DSM*

Podcast

- *This American Life*: 81 words (Spiegel & Glass, 2002)

Readings

- Twenty years after the decision to remove (Rubinstein, 1995)
- Differences in healthcare access for LGBTQ populations (Macapagal et al., 2016)

April 21

Addiction

Podcasts

- *This American Life*: Two Dope Kings (segments Prologue and "Two Dope Kings" from episode "Wartime Radio"—using clips from Dopey) (Chivvis & Glass, 2019)
- Optional: *Finding Fixes*: Medicine that melts under your tongue (Boiko-Weyrauch & Norris, 2018)
- Optional: *Throughline*: America's opioid epidemic (Abdelfatah & Arablouei, 2019)

Readings

- Neurobiology of opioid addiction (Koob, 2019)
- Ten steps to reverse the epidemic (Kolodny & Frieden, 2017)

Due

- Podcast status update

April 28

Young adults and major depressive disorder

Podcasts

- *Reply All*: What it looks like (Vogt & Goldman, 2015)

Readings

- How to screen youth for MDD (Siu et al., 2016)
- Instagram use and depression (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2018)

May 5

Podcast group meetings

Due   Project reports (due in meetings)

May 12

Depression and anxiety

Podcasts

- *Radiotopia Showcase*: The Great God of Depression (Chapters 1–3, although you can listen to all 5; Brown and Kennedy, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c)

Readings

- Rumination and stress (Ruscio et al., 2015)
- Personalized treatment for MDD and anxiety (Fisher et al., 2019)

Due 5/19

- Final podcast

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