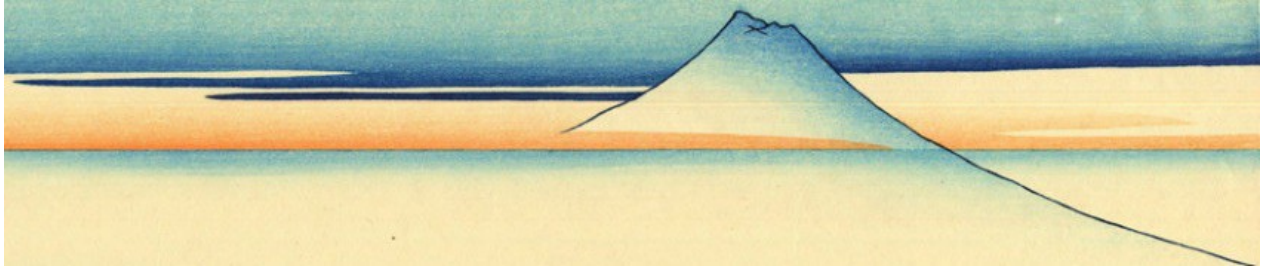


**Mind, Brain and Psychopathology  
ANTH 423**

**Fall Semester 2019**



**HONOUR'S UNDERGRADUATE SEMINAR**

**Professor:**

Dr. Samuel Veissière  
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Co-Director, Culture, Mind, and Brain Program  
McGill University  
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2:35 PM - 5:25 PM | Education Building 431 | Sep 03, 2019 - Dec 02, 2019

**Office:**

Ludmer Research & Training in Psychiatry -- Room 136  
1033 Pine Avenue West  
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Prof office hours: by appointment, or as announced during paper-writing periods

**Keywords:**

Cultural evolution; cognition and culture; evolutionary psychiatry; social and cultural psychiatry; anthropology and philosophy of psychiatry; critical psychiatry; adaptationist approaches to psychopathology; youth mental health; looping effects; cultural phenomenology; “placebo” effects; resilience; antifragility ; social pathology

## ***Course description***

As the global burden of disease has shifted from infectious diseases to chronic conditions, the [World Health Organization](#) has now identified depression as the leading cause of disability worldwide, with an estimated 300 million people suffering from the condition (an 18 per cent increase between 2005 and 2015), and another 260 million affected by anxiety disorders. In Canada, [an estimated 1 in 5 people](#) experience a mental health problem or illness each year, while 1.2 million children and youth are thought to be affected by mental illness. According to these models, approximately [20 per cent](#) of Canadian youth will have developed a mental illness by age 25.

What is going on? Making sense of this ‘epidemic’ raises difficult questions about an interacting set of biological, psychological, ecological, economic, historical, social, and cultural factors. This seminar will follow a cultural-evolutionary approach to explore these complex topics.

Can we identify, for example, a set of changing modes of economic relations, social interactions, and belief systems that may contribute to rises in mental illness and specific patterns of distress? Or again: is ‘mental illness’ a ‘disease of progress’, or is it universal? Is the very notion of ‘mental health’ culture-bound and historically specific? Are biomedical psychiatric nosologies applicable to all humans? Does mental illness manifest in different ways across cultures? Are there gendered and sexually dimorphic patterns in the distribution of disorders? Do most psychopathologies harness normal human traits that evolved to support specific adaptive functions, but become maladaptive under certain ecological conditions?

To answer these questions, we must begin by interrogating the notion of ‘mind’ itself, and review current debates on the evolution and cross-cultural variations of human cognitive functions. After investigating the validity of current biomedical models (and folk biomedical models!) to the human experience at large through various controversies in critical psychiatry, medical anthropology, and social psychology, we will return to evolutionary questions to explore the ‘maladaptive hypothesis’ as it pertains to specific disorders.

This broad, multidisciplinary exploration of the human experience of wellness and distress may then assist us in identifying ‘healthy’ and ‘pathological’ ecological conditions that solicit the most fragile and anti-fragile elements of our evolving dispositions.

## ***Required reading***

In addition to articles linked in the course schedule below, the professor will assign additional readings to each group assigned to a specific presentation topic (see *assignments* below). Articles linked in the course schedule are required reading for all students.

## *Evaluation*

<b>Intro questionnaire</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Group presentation</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Paper proposal</b>	<b>10 %</b>
<b>Final paper</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>Self-evaluation and participation</b>	<b>10%</b>

## *Assignments*

### **Intro questionnaire**

The professor will email a link to a short online introductory questionnaire. Data from the questionnaire will be used to sort students into 6 groups. Due online **Friday September 6**. Students are encouraged to get to know each other and guess the 'trait' criterion used for generating their group based on a fundamental commonality.

Link to questionnaire here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/C7L6B23>

### **Group presentation**

5 groups of 4 to 6 students will be determined by the professor and announced on **September 10**. Each group will be assigned one topic by the professor. The topic will consist of one specific disorder or key dimension in psychopathology (e.g., *depression, OCD, PTSD, substance abuse, internet use disorders, gender and mental health*, etc.).

The students will need to draw on class material, additional references given to their group by the professor, and references of their own to explore the *maladaptive hypothesis* as it pertains to the disorder in focus. The disorder must be discussed in terms of evolved traits that might confer, or have conferred a specific fitness advantage in human environments, and may become maladaptive (harm everyday functioning) when over-excited under certain conditions.

The presentation should last 90min (half a class), with at least 15-20min dedicated to structured class discussion or another interactive exercise designed and led by the group.

Students are free to delegate tasks as they please and present their findings in a format of their choice.

### Final paper

Min 3000 words; Max 6000 words. Any referencing style, as long as consistent throughout. Short papers encouraged. Paper should be of publishable quality, free of unexplained jargon and cover a topic of the students' choice related to **cultural-evolutionary approaches to psychopathology**. The topic must be different from the one explored in the students' group presentation. Students are expected to identify relevant references on their own, and use at least six references from the class material. Due **December 10** on MyCourse

### Paper proposal

10

2 pager minimum with tentative title, topic, research question, and tentative paper outline. Min. 6 references from outside the syllabus and 3 from the syllabus. Due **November 1st** on MyCourses

### Self-evaluation and participation

One-page (min) first-person essay reflecting on commitment, interest and learning curve. Due **December 10**

(The Institution™ demands that the below be included in all course outlines)

***McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see***

***[www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).*** (approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)

*L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)).*"

***"In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded."*** (approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 --- see also the section in this document on Assignments and evaluation.)

The FRENCH TRANSLATION about this right may also be used on your course outlines: "Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue)."

[http://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/files/secretariat/university\\_student\\_assessment\\_policy\\_4.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/files/secretariat/university_student_assessment_policy_4.pdf)

### *Class schedule and links to readings*

#### **September 3— Meet & Greet**

Introductions of class topics and approaches.

No required readings.

#### **September 10 — The Cultural-Evolutionary Approach**

Worthman, C. M., & Trang, K. (2018). [Dynamics of body time, social time and life history at adolescence](#). *Nature*, 554(7693), 451.

Konner, M. (2007). [Trauma, adaptation and resilience: a cross-cultural and evolutionary perspective](#). In. Kirmayer, L. J., Lemelson, R., & Barad, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Understanding trauma: Integrating biological, clinical, and cultural perspectives* (pp 300-338). New York: Cambridge University Press.

*Initial group brainstorming exercise*

*Expectations and pedagogy explained and discussed*

#### **September 17 — Cognitive evolution I**

Byrne, R. W. (1996). [Machiavellian intelligence](#). *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews: Issues, News, and Reviews*, 5(5), 172-180.

Von Hippel, W., & Trivers, R. (2011). [The evolution and psychology of self-deception](#). *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 34(1), 1.

Hrdy, Sarah. '[Development plus Social Selection in the Emergence of Emotionally Modern Humans](#)' In. Meehan, Courtney L., in Alyssa N. Crittenden. 2016. *Childhood: origins, evolution, and implications*. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research. pp12-44

## September 24 — Cognitive evolution 2

Veissière, S. P., Constant, A., Ramstead, M. J., Friston, K. J., & Kirmayer, L. J. (2019). [Thinking Through Other Minds: A Variational Approach to Cognition and Culture](#). *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1-97.

Bloom, P. [Natural-Born Dualists](#). *Edge.org*

Chudek, M., McNamara, R. A., Birch, S., Bloom, P., & Henrich, J. (2018). [Do minds switch bodies? Dualist interpretations across ages and societies](#). *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 8(4), 354-368.

## October 1 — Sociocultural Neurophenomenology: the case of sleep

*Guest lecture by Dr. Elizaveta Solomonova*

Hirshkowitz, M., Whiton, K., Albert, S. M., Alessi, C., Bruni, O., DonCarlos, L., ... & Neubauer, D. N. (2015). [National Sleep Foundation's sleep time duration recommendations: methodology and results summary](#). *Sleep health*, 1(1), 40-43.

Worthman, Carol M. "[Developmental cultural ecology of sleep](#)." *Sleep and development: Familial and socio-cultural considerations* (2011): 167-194.

Solomonova, E., & Sha, X.W. (2016). [Exploring the depth of dream experience: an enactive framework and methods for neurophenomenological research](#). Target article. *Constructivist Foundations*, 11, 2, 702-711

## October 8 — The nosology debates 1

Boyer, P. (2011). [Intuitive expectations and the detection of mental disorder: A cognitive background to folk-psychiatry](#). *Philosophical Psychology*, 24(1), 95-118.

Carhart-Harris, R. L., Leech, R., Hellyer, P. J., Shanahan, M., Feilding, A., Tagliazucchi, E., ... & Nutt, D. (2014). [The entropic brain: a theory of conscious states informed by neuroimaging research with psychedelic drugs](#). *Frontiers in human neuroscience*, 8, 20.

Kirmayer, L. J. (1989). [Cultural variations in the response to psychiatric disorders and emotional distress](#). *Social Science & Medicine*, 29(3), 327-339.

## October 15 — The nosology debates 2

Andrews, P. W., & Thomson Jr, J. A. (2009). [The bright side of being blue: depression as an adaptation for analyzing complex problems](#). *Psychological review*, 116(3), 620.

Allen, N. B., & Badcock, P. B. (2003). [The social risk hypothesis of depressed mood: evolutionary, psychosocial, and neurobiological perspectives](#). *Psychological bulletin*, 129(6), 887.

Kirmayer, L. J., Gomez-Carrillo, A., & Veissiere, S. (2017). [Culture and depression in global mental health: An ecosocial approach to the phenomenology of psychiatric disorders](#). *Social Science & Medicine*, 100(183), 163-168.

### **October 22— The pharmacology debates 1**

Rose, N. (2003). [Neurochemical selves](#). *Society*, 41(1), 46-59.

Hacking, I. (2007, April). [Kinds of people: Moving targets](#). In *Proceedings-British Academy* (Vol. 151, p. 285).

Kirmayer, L. J. (2002). [Psychopharmacology in a globalizing world: The use of antidepressants in Japan](#). *Transcultural psychiatry*, 39(3), 295-322.

### **October 29 — The pharmacology debates 2**

Moncrieff, J., & Kirsch, I. (2005). [Efficacy of antidepressants in adults](#). *Bmj*, 331(7509), 155-157.

Moncrieff, J. (2014). [The medicalisation of “ups and downs”: The marketing of the new bipolar disorder](#). *Transcultural psychiatry*, 51(4), 581-598.

Andrews, P. W., Thomson Jr, J. A., Amstadter, A., & Neale, M. C. (2012). [Primum non nocere: an evolutionary analysis of whether antidepressants do more harm than good](#). *Frontiers in psychology*, 3, 117.

### **November 5 — The phenomenology debates 1**

Nichter, M. (2010). [Idioms of distress revisited](#). *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, 34(2), 401-416.

Kirmayer, L. J. (1993). [Healing and the invention of metaphor: the effectiveness of symbols revisited](#). *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 17(2), 161-195.

Gold, I. (2015). [18 Reflections The Virtues of Cultural Sameness](#). *Re-Visioning Psychiatry: Cultural Phenomenology, Critical Neuroscience, and Global Mental Health*, 469.

*Optional:*

Gold, J., & Gold, I. (2015). *Suspicious minds: How culture shapes madness*. Simon and Schuster. [Chapter 2: One Hundred Years of Delusion](#)

## November 12 — The phenomenology debates 2

Luhrmann, T. M., Padmavati, R., Tharoor, H., & Osei, A. (2015). [Differences in voice-hearing experiences of people with psychosis in the USA, India and Ghana: interview-based study](#). *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 206(1), 41-44.

Larøi, F., Luhrmann, T. M., Bell, V., Christian Jr, W. A., Deshpande, S., Fernyhough, C., ... & Woods, A. (2014). [Culture and hallucinations: overview and future directions](#). *Schizophrenia bulletin*, 40(Suppl\_4), S213-S220.

## November 19 — The “placebo” debates

Raz, A., Raikhel, E., & Anbar, R. D. (2008). [Placebos in medicine: Knowledge, beliefs, and patterns of use](#). *McGill Journal of Medicine: MJM*, 11(2), 206.

Faria, V., Gingnell, M., Hoppe, J. M., Hjorth, O., Alaie, I., Frick, A., ... & Carlbring, P. (2017). [Do you believe it? Verbal suggestions influence the clinical and neural effects of escitalopram in social anxiety disorder: a randomized trial](#). *EBioMedicine*, 24, 179-188.

Thibault, R. T., Veissière, S., Olson, J. A., & Raz, A. (2018). [Treating ADHD With Suggestion: Neurofeedback and Placebo Therapeutics](#). *Journal of attention disorders*, 22(8), 707.

Veissière, S., & Gibbs-Bravo, L. (2016). [Language, Ritual, and Placebo Sociality in a Community of Extreme Eaters](#). *Food Cults: How Fads, Dogma, and Doctrine Influence Diet*, 63.

## November 26 The madness of crowds revisited

McGuire, G. R. (1987). [Pathological subconscious and irrational determinism in the social psychology of the crowd: the legacy of Gustave LeBon](#). In *Advances in psychology* (Vol. 40, pp. 201-217). North-Holland.

Wen, N. J., Clegg, J. M., & Legare, C. H. (2019). [Smart conformists: Children and adolescents associate conformity with intelligence across cultures](#). *Child development*, 90(3), 746-758.

Stendel, M., & Ramstead, M., & Veissière, S. (in press) Internet sociality. In: Kirmayer, L. J., Worthman, C., Kitayama, S., Cummings, C. & Lemelson, R. (Eds.) *Culture, Mind, Brain: Emerging Concepts, Models and Applications*. Cambridge University Press.



## December 3 — Fragile / Antifragile

Ellis, B. J., Bianchi, J., Griskevicius, V., & Frankenhuis, W. E. (2017). [Beyond risk and protective factors: An adaptation-based approach to resilience](#). *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 12(4), 561-587.

Haidt, J. (2017). [The unwise idea on campus: Commentary on Lilienfeld \(2017\)](#). *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 12(1), 176-177.

Taleb, N. N. (2012). [Antifragile: how to live in a world we don't understand](#) (Vol. 3). London: Allen Lane