



Psychology Video Project

~Portrayals of Mental Illness in Film~



This assignment involves viewing a movie of your choice from the list below. In each of these movies the protagonist (hero or lead character) suffers from a mental illness. You will watch the movie in full, write a brief paper answering the questions below, and then present your findings to the rest of the class. You will need to pay attention to the symptoms reported or displayed by the film character in order to determine whether the person meets or has met the criteria for a mental health diagnosis according to the DSM-V classification system.

Project Format:

Typewritten, 2-page minimum, double-spaced.

1. Give a brief description of the character's context (i.e. the movie) not to exceed 4 sentences.

Provide specific and relevant symptoms and biographical information that indicates how the person meets or has met criteria for the particular mental disorder. List at least 3 examples of specific symptoms displayed by the person. Clearly link these to the diagnostic criteria, and demonstrate that they meet full criteria for the disorder.

(40%) 1 page

2. Describe how the film taught you EMPATHY for this mental illness. In other words, describe what the film taught you about what it is like to suffer from mental illness. You should discuss:

- The character's experience of psychiatric treatment
- how people act toward the person's suffering from mental illness
- the person's intrapsychic (within their own mind) experience
- ways the person's functioning was affected
- ways they may have actually benefited from the mental illness

(40%) 1 page

3. Reflection: You will present what you have learned from your selected film and paper. Be sure to include:

- Movie title & year released
- Brief synopsis of the film – no more than 4 sentences (as above)
- 2 paragraphs describing what you learned – one paragraph should explain the mental illness itself (symptoms, characteristics, etc.) and the other should be what you learned in terms of empathy for this mental illness

(20%) 2 paragraphs

*This assignment is intended to give you a feel for what psychologists look for when determining an appropriate mental health diagnosis. You should be able to provide a clear description of how the specific diagnosis criteria are met. It is also intended to help you get inside the perspective of a person with a mental illness. Select a movie that intrigues you and have fun!

Video selections:

- A Beautiful Mind (The story of John Nash),
- The Three Faces of Eve (The story of Chris Sizemore),
- Shine (The story of David Helfgott),
- I am Sam