

International Graduate Conference in Philosophy 2016: Madness, Disorder, and Society

We are pleased to announce that the theme for this year's Essex International Graduate Conference in Philosophy will be 'Madness, Disorder and Society'. The conference seeks to bring together different philosophical perspectives on madness and disorder, especially when considered in their social contexts. It will be held on 7 May 2016, and keynote addresses will be given by Derek Bolton (Kings College London) and Lorna Finlayson (University of Essex).

- **Location:** University of Essex, Colchester
- **Date:** 7 May 2016

Keynote speakers

- Professor Derek Bolton (Kings College London)
- Dr Lorna Finlayson (University of Essex)

Call for papers

The mad have always challenged society. Beginning in the 1960s, however, the anti-psychiatry movement began to systematically confront psychiatric institutions and their wider social contexts by raising what were essentially philosophical questions. This movement challenged the validity of psychiatric diagnosis, the purported boundaries between the sane and the insane, and the very idea of mental illness.

In turn, psychiatry hit back, adopting a biomedical, evidence-based approach and an ever-increasing standardisation of psychiatric classifications. This has given rise to a new paradigm regarding how we understand the mad and the disordered, and today there are now more psychiatric classifications than ever before.

Nonetheless, in more recent years the neurodiversity movement has called for a full affirmation of a wide array of natural variance in human functioning. This more radical move challenges deeper assumptions regarding both what it means to be human, and in turn to function or flourish as such, in a way that may undermine even the biomedical approach designed to avoid these very issues.

From a more top-down perspective, further questions arise. Most notably, if we are mistaken in some way, about the pathological status of the mad and disordered, this further calls into question the status of those considered normal. From Nietzsche to critical theory, thinkers have suggested that it may in fact be that society is sick, and that at least some of those who fall outside its norms may have good reason to do so.

Lastly, on the ground level, an ever-increasing number of dangerous designer drugs and bizarre therapies are now produced and sold in order to restore those on the outskirts back to the realm of normalcy. This raises yet further ethical questions regarding both the treatment of those considered mad or disordered, and in turn the institutions that profit from them.

We seek high quality abstracts (200-500 words) which speak to the conference themes. Topics could include, but are not limited to:

- Topics in the analytic philosophy of psychiatry

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- Foucaultian perspectives on madness
- Neurological difference in Classical and non-Western philosophy
- Psychiatric models for understanding society and/or social critique
- Social Pathologies
- The rise of neurodiversity
- Phenomenological approaches to madness and disorder
- Relevant topics in medical ethics (e.g. regarding anti-depressants, etc.)
- Autonomy, responsibility, and mental disorder
- Feminist perspectives on mental disorder
- Freud and Nietzsche on civilisation and its discontents

We will accept papers from current or recently completed graduate students working in philosophy. Interdisciplinary work is encouraged, although theses must, ultimately, be of a philosophical nature. Abstracts and questions should be sent to pygradc@essex.ac.uk by **12:00pm on 10 February 2016**.

Location and accessibility

The conference takes place at our University's Colchester Campus. Colchester is an hour away from London by train.

- **Deadline for applications:** 12.00pm, 10 February 2016
- **Contact:** pygradc@essex.ac.uk