

**SOCI 2305 | Deviance | Spring 2026**  
**Interrogating the medicalization of deviance**

1. The rise of science and modern medicine transformed how modern society dealt with deviance. Deviance became an illness that that medicine could diagnose, explain, treat, and possibly cure. And every thing that fell outside the boundaries of respectable society became an object for medicine. What's gained in thinking this way?
2. Is there any form of deviance that can't or shouldn't be seen as an illness?
3. The American Psychiatric Association defines a mental disorder as a psychological syndrome or pattern or behavior in an individual that is associated with **psychological distress** (pain) and **impaired functioning** (disability). How does this way of defining mental illness differ from how you have or now see mental illness?
4. Unlike medical fields dealing with physical illness and disease, mental health professionals can only identify illness according to symptoms, not any underlying physical pathology asserted to be the cause of an illness. Does mental illness have underlying physical pathologies to cause illness?
5. How can we be sure we are not confusing psychological distress with social-cultural-psychological diversity? Or with discontent over how society is unjustly organized? Then again, can diversity in how people think or act or discontent over how things are be viewed as deviance?
6. Can we or medical science understand mental disorders free of societal or cultural bias?
7. How can we treat people with depression, anxiety, ptsd, aggression, or any other condition if these are either caused by social forces and a society unresponsive to the problems it causes for people? Is helping people cope with unrelenting social harm helpful?
8. Can a society be sick? That is, can a society – in its norms, expectations, values, rewards or punishments – be sick rather than just the individuals in it? Can a society be treated?
9. Why do we permit health insurance companies and the large pharmaceutical companies to exercise influence over psychiatric (medical) categories and treatments? What positive role do they play? What negative role do they play?
10. There are more people with mental illness incarcerated in prison than housed in mental asylums. How is this possible?