

Book Review: Movies and mental illness: Using films to understand psychopathology

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Book: [Movies and Mental Illness: Using Films to Understand Psychopathology](#)

Book by: Danny Wedding, PhD, MPH; Mary Ann Boyd, PhD, DNS, PMHCNS-BC; and Ryan M. Niemiec, PsyD

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

The popular and critically acclaimed teaching tool - movies as an aid to learning about mental illness - has just got even better! Now with even more practical features and expanded contents: full film index, 'Authors' Picks', sample syllabus, and more international films. Films are a powerful medium for teaching students of psychology, social work, medicine, nursing, counseling, and even literature or media studies about mental illness and psychopathology. "Movies and Mental Illness", now available in an updated edition, has established a great reputation as an enjoyable and highly memorable supplementary teaching tool for abnormal psychology classes. Written by experienced clinicians and teachers, who are themselves movie aficionados, this book is superb not just for psychology or media studies classes, but also for anyone interested in the portrayal of mental health issues in movies. The core clinical chapters of "Movies and Mental Illness" each use a fabricated case history and Mini-Mental State Examination along with synopses and scenes from one or two specific, often well-known films to explain, teach, and encourage discussion about the most important disorders encountered in clinical practice. Each chapter also includes: Critical Thinking Questions (to consider when viewing the core movie/s); "Authors' Picks" (Top 10 Films); 'What To Read if You Only Have Time to Read One Book/Paper'; and, suggested topics for class discussions. Other features of

the new, expanded edition include: Full index of films; Sample course syllabus; Ratings of more than 1,250 films (expanded by 25 per cent!); and, other fascinating appendices, such as 'Top 50 Heroes and Villains', psychotherapists in movies, misconceptions about mental illness in movies, and recommended websites.

FROM THE CPNP MEMBER

[Movies and Mental Illness](#) is a good read, regardless if you are a mental health professional or a movie buff. Every year or two, someone asks the CPNP listserv for movies illustrating various psychiatric disorders; this book provides the answers. For those who are not film aficionados, the introductory chapter provides a quick review on the important elements of film, and then gradually brings in the role of psychopathology in cinema. Most chapters focus on specific disorders, with a primary film example. For each film the authors provide a list of questions to consider while watching. Then the authors provide a patient evaluation of the character involved, including history, mental status exam, diagnosis, and treatment plan. The rest of the chapter is then devoted to further discussing the disorder, using other movies as illustrations. The book contains many tables to illustrate major points, listing both classic and recent films as examples. It also contains many helpful appendices, including a list films with ratings for relevance to mental health as well as entertainment value and artistry. While it does not discuss pharmacology, the text does provide excellent examples of axis I and II disorders.

In addition to being a fun read, the book is a very useful tool to engage students and first year residents in learning more about psychiatric disorders. For more advanced residents, it provides a starting point for more in-depth discussions on disease states. The authors include a sample syllabus, which could easily be adapted fit a residency year. Alternatively, it could be used to generate a film club, with a film viewing once a month and discussion afterwards. In my opinion, ***Movies and Mental Illness*** is a good addition to a mental health educator's library.

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