

“THE TRUMAN SHOW DELUSION: HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE.”



Joel Gold

New York University School of Medicine

April 26, 2017, 5:30-7:00

Building 50, Room 51A

Delusions can be wildly irrational, and wildly interesting. Little is known about delusions, and much research focuses on how these thoughts arise and why they are so hard to abolish. But there are lots of interesting questions about delusions that get almost no attention. One of these is: Do delusions change over time and do they differ from culture to culture? Using case material, I describe a new delusional variant known as the Truman show delusion (TSD) which highlights the question of culture in a particularly striking way. I sketch a theory according to which an evolutionary system used to assess social threat, the suspicion system, can give rise to TSD and other delusions. This theory posits that the social environment is powerful in the shaping of and perhaps even to the development of psychotic illness.

Joel Gold, M.D. is Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine. He worked at New York City's famed Bellevue Hospital for 14 years, where he became the head of its psychiatric ER and then of its outpatient clinic. He has a private practice in Manhattan. He is a regular contributor to Edge.org and his work has been profiled in The New Yorker and The New York Times, on This American Life, and elsewhere. Dr. Gold has published articles in peer-reviewed journals including the New England Journal of Medicine, Psychiatry, and Science. His first book, Suspicious Minds: How Culture Shapes Madness was published in 2014.

Cultures, Minds and Medicines

Cultures, Minds and Medicines aims to bring together scholars from the social sciences, humanities, medicine and bioscience and technology to explore the ways that health and illness are made through complex social forces. We aim for informal, interactive sessions, full of debate and good will. We will meet every other week on Wednesday evening 5:30-7:00, for dinner and conversation. Talks will take place in Anthropology, Building 50, 51A (Conference room).

We are able to offer graduate students, medical students and residents a certificate in “Cultures, Minds and Medicines,” supported through the Institute for Research in the Social Sciences. iriss.stanford.edu/cmm

Spring 2017 Seminars:

May 3: Adam Haslett

May 17: Joe Henrich (Harvard University)