“Has the Whole World Gone Crazy?” – Psych Cinema
Using film as a teaching tool in psychiatry

J.J. Rasimas, MD, PhD, FAPM and Adnan Ahmed, MBBS
Department of Psychiatry, University of Minnesota

Introduction
Movies generate all sorts of reactions and emotions in us. The dynamics between cinema and real life can be used to teach students about the complexities of human emotions and relationships to broaden their appreciation of psychiatry. Psychiatry has insights to offer the society it serves and the culture in which it is situated; film highlights many of the salient issues.

Purpose
• Use film to discuss psychiatric themes in movies.
• Situate psychiatry within the world and culture around medicine.
• Demonstrate how a more complex appreciation of the human animal can enrich medical practice.

Methods
• Learners interested in Psychiatry are invited to a quarterly Psych Cinema event.
• Faculty select movies with mental health themes or rich sociocultural elements.
• The activity is not a required didactic – open to psychiatry interested learners and to the general public.
• Advertise via email, social media, word of mouth and flyers.
• Present only cinematic pieces rather than documentaries in order to keep the material raw for interpretation.
• Intentionally do not frame discussions in terms of diagnoses or how characters display pathology with particular labels.

Results
• Majority of attendees were medical students, followed by some residents, and then other faculty.
• Occasional attendance outside department.
• Smaller informal setting (e.g. conference room) better suited to generate discussion than an auditorium.
• Observed each other reacting to the movie and interacted more directly about it.
• Locating the venue within the Department of Psychiatry increased attendance due to proximity.
• Free food (and smells) played a key role in attracting people to the activity.
• Average of 15 – 20 attendees thus far.

Activities Thus Far
6 Screenings – Variety of Periods and Genres
3 in Hospital Auditorium & 3 in Department Conference Room
Faculty prepared for certain themes to be discussed
Growing emphasis on facilitating interactive experience for attendees driven by perspectives they share

Conclusions
Psych Cinema is a creative way to discuss complexities of the human mind and the world we live in. It permits learning through personal connections outside of a traditional didactic format. We hope to make Psychiatry more relevant to the university and the broader community and attract more attendees with their diverse perspectives.

References
The Big Lebowski, 1998