

Jeremy Brecher collection of Joseph Eyer material

Ms. Coll. 1404

Finding aid prepared by Laura Auketayeva.

Last updated on April 24, 2020.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2019 June 11

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Brecher, Jeremy
Creator	Eyer, Joe
Title	Jeremy Brecher collection of Joseph Eyer material
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1404
Date [inclusive]	1969-1982
Extent	1 linear foot (3 boxes)
Language	English
Abstract	Joseph (Joe) Eyer (1944-2017) was a scholar from Philadelphia whose research focused on social causes and health effects of stress. This collection includes Eyer's writings (both published and unpublished) on medicine, mental illness, and socio-economic issues related to stress; course material from his doctoral program in biology at the University of Pennsylvania; and letters to and collaborative engagement with his colleagues, in particular, Jeremy Brecher, Ingrid Waldron, and Peter Sterling. This collection documents the Philadelphia scholars' research on topics including mortality, addiction, suicide, ecology, physiology, and sex.

Cite as:

Jeremy Brecher collection of Joseph Eyer material, 1969-1982, Ms. Coll. 1404, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

Joseph (Joe) Eyer (1944-2017) was a scholar from Philadelphia whose research focused on social causes and health effects of stress. He and his colleague, Peter Sterling, coined the term "allostasis," an alternative view of physiological regulation which goes beyond its homeostatic roots, offering novel insights relevant to our understanding and treatment of several chronic health conditions.

He grew up in a single-mother household in West Philadelphia. Eyer attended Central High School; and in 1962, he graduated as a valedictorian from Haverford College, his education funded by a Westinghouse Science Scholarship. In 1978, he received his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania with a dissertation examining the social sources of stress and disease patterns. Eyer was married to Ingrid Waldron, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and was father to Katie and Jessie.

Throughout his education and early career, he was involved in organizing around a variety of radical causes, and also worked with the Civil Rights Movement in the South. He continued his academic career as a lecturer at Penn (1972-1984), Rutgers University (1985-1986), and Brooklyn College (1986-1987). In the late 1980s, his brilliant academic career was cut short as his bipolar disorder prevented him from further publishing. He died by suicide in 2017.

Scope and Contents

This collection includes the research and writings of Joseph Eyer which focused on social causes and health effects of stress. Researchers will find his scholarly and personal writings on medicine, mental illnesses, and socio-economic issues related to stress; course material from his Biology doctoral program at University of Pennsylvania; and letters to and collaborative works with his colleagues, especially Jeremy Brecher, Ingrid Waldron, and Peter Sterling. His works also examine topics of mortality, addiction, suicide, ecology, physiology, and sex. While exploring socio-economic issues, Eyer focused on the roles of capitalism and unemployment. His papers reflect an eclectic fusion of hard and social sciences, as Eyer's personal struggle with bipolar disorder led him to look into both physiological and sociological factors behind mental illnesses. Eyer found a great source of support and mentorship in Jeremy Brecher, who worked as a Fulbright researcher, editor, and Emmy-winning playwright and was heavily involved in social justice and civil rights activist movements.

The collection is arranged in 3 series: Series I. "Correspondence;" Series II. "Course notes, research, and writings;" and Series III. "Published writings." The correspondence series includes material that was largely directed to Jeremy Brecher and it is assumed that many of the letters were forwarded to him by

Eyer. Letters were sent to Archie Brodsky, Sol Levine, Maurice J. Moreau, Stanton Peale, Bob, Ed, Grace, Howie, Jack, Karen, Mark, Roger, and Sandy. For the most part, letters discuss his academic ideologies and his writings. The letters to Brodsky, Levine, Moreau, and Peale are very professional in tone, but his relationships with Brecher, Grace, Karen, and Roger were clearly of a personal nature, even though the letters largely relate to his work and his work processes. The letter to Roger describes his emotions at the birth of his daughter, Jessie. Letters to Eyer were sent from Brecher and Ferruccio Gambino.

Series II, "Course notes, research, and writings," includes a mixture of writings, notes, course proposals, ideas for projects, and research. In many cases, it appears that writings are directly related to course work, and as such, material was kept together. Researchers should also examine Series III. "Published writings," because it appears that ideas and drafts in the second series often evolved into a slightly different published work. When processors knew that research and notes were directly related to a specific course, it is noted in the finding aid. This material is arranged alphabetically by a heading applied by Eyer (or possibly Brecher) whenever possible. Researchers interested in Eyer as a person and how his youth and education influenced his academia should consult "Some Things about Myself," a document that Eyer clearly wrote for his students, although it is unclear for what class it was intended or if it was distributed. Eyer reflects intimately on his own mental health issues, his handling of those issues, and how his history directly translated to his treatment of his students.

The third series, "Published writings" contains reprints or offprints of published works, arranged alphabetically by author and chronologically within an author's works.

Researchers interested in mental illnesses, medicine, and University of Pennsylvania Biology Department during 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s will likely find this collection to be of value.

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2019 June 11

Finding aid prepared by Laura Auketayeva.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

Copyright restrictions may exist. For most library holdings, the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania do not hold copyright. It is the responsibility of the requester to seek permission from the holder of the copyright to reproduce material from the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Source of Acquisition

Gift of José A. Tapia, Jeremy Brecher, and Peter Sterling, 2018.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

At Cornell University: Jeremy Brecher research papers, 1939-1991, MS 039

Controlled Access Headings

CORPORATE NAME(S)

- University of Pennsylvania. Department of Biology.
- University of Pennsylvania.

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Articles
- Correspondence
- Research notes
- Writings (documents)

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Eyer, Joe
- Sterling, Peter, 1940-
- Waldron, Ingrid

SUBJECT(S)

- Academic writing
- Authors
- Capitalism
- Ecology
- Medicine
- Medicine and psychology
- Mental illness
- Mortality
- Physiology
- Sex
- Stress (Psychology)
- Substance abuse--United States--Prevention
- Suicide

Collection Inventory

SERIES I. CORRESPONDENCE.

	Box	Folder
Eyer, Joseph, letters to and/or forwarded to Jeremy Brecher, 1972-1975, undated.	1	1-2
Brecher, Jeremy and Ferrucio Gambino, letters to Joseph Eyer, 1972-1974, undated.	1	3

SERIES II. COURSE NOTES, RESEARCH, AND WRITINGS.

	Box	Folder
"Cycles and Trends in Capitalism," typescript with notes to Jeremy Brecher from Joel about Joe Eyer, undated.	1	4
"Emotional Physiology," typed notes (Biology 102), undated.	1	5
"Economic Development, Social Description and Stress Related Illnesses," notes for a talk at Cornell University, 1973 April.	1	6
"Healers, Rulers, and Doctors," typescript and notes to Jeremy Brecher, undated.	1	7
"New Directions," corrected typescript, undated.	1	8

Infant Mortality, notes and research, undated.	2	3
Limbic I, II, and III, undated.	2	4
"Living Conditions in America," background and data and typescript drafts, undated.	2	5-6
Preventive Medicine--Health and Education (Biology 317), course proposal, notes, and ideas, 1973.	2 1	1 10
"Social and Psychological Origins of Disease," notes and ideas for projects (Biology 315), undated.	2	2
"Social Causes of Coronary Heart Disease," typescript and possible research, after 1979.	2	7
"Some Things about Myself, typescript", undated.	2	8
"Stress-related Mortality and Social Organization," working copy, first draft and chapter (thesis), [1974].	2	9-11
Unidentified writings and notes about medicine and medical and social issues, undated.	1	9

SERIES III. PUBLISHED WRITINGS.

	Box	Folder
Brecher, Jeremy, "Sex, Stress, and Health," <i>International Journal of Health Services</i> , Volume 7, Number 1, 1977.	3	1
Eyer, Joseph, poems (possibly self-published, Twopenny Press), 1969 February 13.	3	2

Eyer, Joseph, "Addiction and Western Culture, Health Struggles and Popular Life," <i>Cultural Correspondence</i> , Number 3, 1973 October.	3	2
Eyer, Joseph, "Hypertension as a Disease of Modern Society," <i>International Journal of Health Services</i> , Volume 5, Number 4, 1975.	3	2
Eyer, Joseph, "Review of Mental Illness and the Economy," a book by M. Harvey Brenner, <i>International Journal of Health Services</i> , Volume 6, Number 1, 1976.	3	2
Eyer, Joseph, "Rejoinder to Dr. Brenner," <i>International Journal of Health Services</i> , Volume 6, Number 1, 1966.	3	2
Eyer, Joseph, "Prosperity as a Cause of Death," <i>International Journal of Health Services</i> , Volume 7, Number 1, 1977.	3	2
Eyer, Joseph, "Does Unemployment Cause the Death Rate Peak in Each Business Cycle?" <i>International Journal of Health Services</i> , Volume 7, Number 4, 1977.	3	2
Eyer, Joseph and Peter Sterling, "The Biological Basis of Stress-Related Mortality," <i>Social Science Medicine</i> , Volume 15E, 1981.	3	3
Eyer, Joseph and Peter Sterling, "Stress-Related Mortality and Social Organization," <i>Review of Radical Political Economics</i> , Volume 9, undated.	3	4
Eyer, Joseph and Ingrid Waldron, "Socio-economic Causes of the Recent Rise in Death Rates for 15-24 Year-olds," <i>Social Science Medicine</i> , Volume 9, drafts and published article, 1975.	3	5
Factor, Robert and Ingrid Waldron, "Contemporary Population Densities and Human Health," <i>Nature</i> , Volume 243, 1973.	3	6
Hawley, Amos H., "Ecology and population," <i>Science</i> , Volume 179, 1973.	3	7
Waldron, Ingrid, "An Analysis of Causes of Sex Differences in Mortality and Morbidity," chapter in <i>The Fundamental Connection Between Nature</i>	3	8

and Nurture, edited by W.R. Gove and G.R. Carpenter, Lexington Books,
1982.