Syllabus: Reading Madness (ENGL 28704, ARTH 28304, ARTV 28704): Fall 2015

Note: this syllabus is provisional. It will be trimmed, augmented, or modified from time to time.


JRL (Regenstein Library) Room 523, Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30-2:50

Texts: most will be on the course website as PDFs under “Course Material” (CM). Full length books available for download on Kindle will be indicated with a “K” (e.g., Freud, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (K). Kindle editions are, in general, much cheaper.

The following texts will be available at the bookstore:

Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization. Vintage Paperback. Highly recommended that you read this before the beginning of the term.
Elyn Saks, The Center Cannot Hold. Hatchette Books
Kay Jamison, An Unquiet Mind. Hatchette Books

Course requirements:

2. Oral report on your final paper during tenth week, to be presented either on Monday 11/30 or Wednesday 12/2.
3. Short response papers on the readings, opening the discussion with questions and issues for debate. These texts, no more than a page or two, are to be uploaded to the Discussion Board on the course website the day before the class discussion.
4. Comparing Notes: See course website for instructions.
5. Mad Proverbs and Aphorisms: We will assemble a commonplace book of famous quotations and sayings about madness. Classic example: “Insanity in individuals is somewhat rare—but in groups, parties, nations, and epochs, it is the rule.” --Nietzsche, “The Natural History of Morals.” Each class member will be expected to find and comment on at least one aphorism of this sort.
6. Depending on the interest of the class, a weekly evening session of screenings of selected films may be arranged. See the list of films for the November 23rd session for some possibilities.
7. Attendance at all classes is strictly required. Unexcused absences will result in grade reduction.
**Week 1:** Madness as Script and Spectacle


With special attention to his films, “Crazy Talk” and “Grid Theory.” Also pay a visit to the Antony Gormley sculpture, *Infinite Cube* at the Smart Museum, and look at the 4 minute Vimeo film about it: https://vimeo.com/album/3057212/video/119265545. This should be done before the first class.


**Week 2:** Language and/of Madness:


Wednesday 10/7: Guest Lecture by psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Dr. Bernard Rubin: A medical and literary map of madness.

**Week 3:** Poetic Madness I: Love, Prophecy, Inspiration, Poetry, Dreaming


**Week 4**: Poetic Madness II: Suffering, Silence, and Expression

Monday 10/19: John Wilkinson lecture on John Wieners and madness in contemporary poetry

Wednesday 10/21: Robert Lowell, “Skunk Hour,” (listen to his reading on YouTube); Sylvia Plath, selections from *Ariel*. Other poems/poets may be proposed by members of the class for presentation and close reading, e.g., Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*, Ann Sexton, etc.

**Week 5**: Narrative I: Non-Fiction


Wednesday 10/28: Case History: Freud, *A Case of Hysteria* (*Dora*) (*K*)

**Week 6**: Narrative II: Fiction


**Week 7**: Drama I: Ancient and Early Modern: The Exceptional Individual and the State of Exception


Thursday, 11/12: Mitchell lecture on Gormley’s *Infinite Cube*, Cochrane Woods Art Center, Room 157, 6 PM, followed by a visit to the Cube in the Smart Museum

**Week 8**: Drama II: Modern Theater and Performance


**Week 9**: Media and Visual Culture: Movies, Television, & Comics

Monday, 11/23: A review session on the stuff you already know about, want to talk about, or have been sneaking off to see during the term. Examples: *Mad Magazine* (how can madness be put to work as satire?); *Mad Men* (what does advertising have to do with madness?); *A Beautiful Mind* (what does mathematics have to do with madness); *A Page of Madness* (the greatest film ever made about madness); *Titicut Follies* (documentary expose of the state mental hospital); *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (is it worse to be classified as insane or as a criminal?); *Shutter Island* (see it next to *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*); *Spellbound* (reversing the gender roles of psychoanalyst and patient); *Shock Corridor* (how mental hospitals drive people mad); *The Snake Pit, The Manchurian Candidate* (brainwashing and the Cold War as psychosis). (You should try to watch these films before and during the course and be prepared to discuss them during this week).

Wednesday, 11/25: no class: Thanksgiving break

**Week 10**: Reports on term projects: 10 minute oral presentations, followed by 5 minutes of discussion.

Monday, 11/30: Oral Reports

Wednesday, 12/2: Oral Reports

Final Papers due: Wednesday, December 9