

HL8001 – Madness in Literature

Semester 1 (Academic Year 2020-2021)

Lecturer: Ho Jia Xuan

Course Description

This course will examine how madness has been presented and interpreted in selected works of literature and films, investigating how social institutions and the arbitrary nature of language can shape our understanding of mental disorders. Through close reading of literary and visual narratives, students will look at ways of how madness can function as a means of social commentary that challenges established perceptions of mental illness, whether it is through subversion, biological disorder, metaphor or perspective.



Course Assessment

Midterm Paper (1200 words) 50%

- Essay Questions to be provided by Week 4 (Due date: Week 10)

Take Home Examination (TBA) 50%

Core Texts

Readings

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Dover Publications, 2000

Franz Kafka, *Metamorphosis*

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Penguin Books Ltd, 2006

Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*. Faber & Faber, 2005

Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*. Vintage Books, 2006

Films

Apocalypse Now, directed by Francis Ford Coppola (1979)

Pi, directed by Darren Aronofsky (1998)

Fight Club, directed by David Fincher (1999)

Black Swan, directed by Darren Aronofsky (2010)

WEEK	TOPICS	READINGS/FILMS
1	Introduction to module	
2	Overview in Literary Theory and Philosophy – Definitions of Madness	TBA
3	Gender and Hysteria	<i>The Yellow Wallpaper</i>
4	Gender, Madness and Melancholy	<i>The Bell Jar</i>
5	Exploring the Depths of Madness	<i>Apocalypse Now</i>
6	Race, Colonialization and The Other	<i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i>
7	Essay Workshop	
8	RECESS WEEK	
9	Defining Reality	<i>Pi</i>
10	Art and Madness	<i>Black Swan</i>
11	Criminality and Deviance	<i>Fight Club</i> (Novel)
12	Constructed Realities	<i>Fight Club</i> (Film)
13	Course Summary	