

Academic Year: 2020/2021 (Semester 2)  
Study Year: N.A  
Course Code/Title: HL8001 Madness in Literature and Film  
Academic Unit: 3 AU  
Pre-requisite: NIL

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### **HL8001 Madness in Literature and Film**

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[Lectures: 39 hours; Pre-requisites: Nil; Academic Unit: 3.0]

**Lecturer:** Ho Jia Xuan

#### **Overview:**

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 Aims:**

At the end of this course students will have:

- 1) An awareness of how the representations and definitions of madness can vary in the context of race, class and gender relations.
- 2) An awareness of the historical and cultural contexts that create and construct these works of madness in literature and film.
- 3) An ability to analyse and evaluate different iterations and characteristics of madness through literary, filmic, and visual texts.

#### **Student Assessment Students will be assessed by:**

- a. Mid-Term essay (50%)
- b. Final 2-hour written examination (50%)

#### **Primary Reading List**

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*  
Franz Kafka, *Metamorphosis*  
Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* Faber & Faber, 2005  
Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*. Vintage Books, 2006

#### **Primary Filmography List**

Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now* (1979)  
Christopher Nolan, *The Dark Knight* (2008)  
Darren Aronofsky, *Pi* (1998)  
Darren Aronofsky *Black Swan*, directed by (2010)  
David Fincher, *Fight Club* (1999)  
David Fincher, *Mindhunter* Season 1 (2017)  
Todd Phillips, *Joker* (2019)  
Boon Joon-ho, *Parasite* (2019)

## Secondary Reading List

Lilian Feder, Excerpts from *Madness in Literature*

Sandra Gibert and Susan Gubar, Excerpts from *The Madwoman in the Attic*

Week	Topic	Lecture
1	<b>Introduction: Conceptualising Madness in Literature and Film</b>	Reading(s) Lilian Feder, Excerpts from <i>Madness in Literature</i> Sandra Gibert and Susan Gubar, Excerpts from <i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i> Film(s): James Uys, <i>The Gods must be Crazy</i> (1980)
2	<b>Gender and Hysteria</b>	Reading(s): Charlotte Perkins Gilman, <i>The Yellow Wallpaper</i>
3	<b>The Abject</b>	Reading(s): Franz Kafka, <i>Metamorphosis</i>
4	<b>Exploring the Depths of Madness</b>  Essay Questions	Film(s): Francis Ford Coppola, <i>Apocalypse Now</i> (1979)
5	<b>The Many Faces of Madness</b>	Film(s): Christopher Nolan, <i>The Dark Knight</i> (2008) Todd Philips, <i>Joker</i> (2019)
6	<b>Gender, Madness and Melancholy</b>	Reading(s): Sylvia Plath, <i>The Bell Jar</i> (2005)
7	<b>Essay Workshop (and Recap)</b>	
RECESS WEEK		
8	<b>Defining Reality</b>	Film(s): Darren Aronofsky, <i>Pi</i> (1998)
9	<b>Art and Madness</b>  Essay Due	Film(s): Darren Aronofsky, <i>Black Swan</i> (2013)
10	<b>Criminality and Deviance</b>	Film(s): David Fincher, <i>Mindhunter</i> Season 1 (2017)

11	<b>Constructed Realities</b>	Readings: Chuck Palahniuk, <i>Fight Club</i> Film(s): David Fincher, <i>Fight Club</i> (1999)
12	<b>Capitalism and Social Inequality</b>	Film(s): Boon Joon-ho, <i>Parasite</i> (2019)
13	<b>Course Review</b>	