

# MENTAL HEALTH and LITERATURE MID-CENTURY TO PRESENT

Semester No 4	Code LA -221	Credit Hours 3-0
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## COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine the relationship between literature and a range of mental health issues.
2. To configure mental distress from diagnosable states of acute depression
3. To test the correspondence between literature's ability to figure the inner life and the experience of silent reading as itself a feature of that life.
4. To examine matters including the spectacle of mental health,
5. To examine challenges of writing about the inner life, the genres of such writing, the question of mental health therapies, especially psychoanalysis and psychosurgery, and their relation to writing and reading, and questions concerning the aesthetics of mental illness.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES:

On completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Construct original, clear and coherent arguments about literature's figuring of a range of mental health topics and narratives
2. Analyze literary texts using recognized literary critical methodologies to substantiate and illustrate those arguments
3. Extrapolate, evaluate and assess ideas from a range of non-literary sources in order to bring them to bear on their analyses of mental health in literature
4. Evaluate the ways in which conceptions of mental health as represented in literary writing have changed and/or remained constant from the early-modern period to the present

5. Present orally the results of research undertaken individually and as part of a small group, respond judiciously to such research undertaken by others, and critically evaluate the importance of such material for an understanding of the chief themes of the course

**PRESCRIBED TEXTS:**

1. Meadows, G, Farhall, J, Fossey, E, Happell, B, McDermott, F & Rosenberg, S 2021, *Mental health and collaborative community practice: An Australian perspective*, 4th edn, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne.



**REFERENCE MATERIAL:**

1. Evans, K, Nizette, D and O'Brien, A 2017, *Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 4th edition, Elsevier, Australia
2. Bullock, S & Manias, E 2017, *Fundamentals of Pharmacology*, 8th edn, Pearson, Australia
3. Corey, G 2017, *Theory and Practice of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 10th edition, Cengage Learning, Australia
4. Mrs Dalloway, Virginia Woolf (1925)
5. Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison (1952)
6. The Bell Jar, Sylvia Plath (1963)
7. Wide Sargasso Sea, Jean Rhys (1966)
8. The Elected Member, Bernice Rubens (1969)

9. Ceremony, Leslie Marmon Silko (1977)

10. Girl, Interrupted, Susanna Kaysen (1993)

**PREREQUISITE:**

LA xxx -2 Reimagining Shakespeare: Adaptations in Film & Literature

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Is there something wrong with us, or with our world? Rising rates of clinical depression and other conditions have rendered mental health a pressing cultural concern, especially for young adults, leading institutions of higher education to expand resources to support student needs. But we have not always thought about mental health the ways we do today. In this course we read landmark literary texts from midcentury to present that both reflect and shape cultural constructions of mental health. From Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) to Elizabeth Wurtzel's *Prozac Nation* (1994) to Ottessa Moshfegh's *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (2018), we examine how literature destabilizes would-be binaries between mental health and mental illness. How do intersectional identity factors such as gender, race, and class inform whose mental illness is deemed deserving of treatment and whose is instead criminalized? Honing our critical writing skills by learning to employ the tools of cultural criticism, feminist theory, and critical race studies, we also engage selections from Doris Lessing, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Esmé Weijun Wang, and others. Traversing short stories, essays, drama, poetry, memoir, and novels, this timely multi-genre course equips us to historically contextualize and meaningfully respond to the current mental health crisis

**ASSESSMENT SYSTEM:**

<b>Quizzes</b>	10-15%
<b>Assignments</b>	5-10%
<b>Mid-Term</b>	20-25%
<b>ESE</b>	40-50%

**Weekly breakdown of course contents is as follows:**

WEEK	TOPICS	QUIZZES	ASSIGNMENTS
1-3	<b>Introduction to the course</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>William Shakespeare, King Lear</li> <li>(Folio) from The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)</li> </ul>	01	01
4-5	<b>The Bell Jar</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sylvia Plath (London: Faber, 2005)</li> </ul>		01
6-7	<b>Psychoanalysis and Creative Literature</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Llewelyn Jones The English Journal, 23 (1934): 443-452</li> </ul>	01	
8	<b>A Social History of Madness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The World Through the Eyes of the Insane</li> </ul>		
	<b>MID-TERM</b>		
10-12	<b>Dionysius in Literature: Essays on Literary Madness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press, 1994)</li> </ul>		01
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Psychoanalysis of Charlotte Brontë, as a Type of the Woman of Genius'</b></li> <li>Lucile Dooley, American Journal of Psychology, 31 (1920), 221-272</li> </ul>	01	

14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just Checking: Scenes from the Life of An ObsessiveCompulsive</li> <li>• Emily Colas, (London: Pocket, 2000)</li> </ul>		01
15	<b>Shoot the Damn Dog: A Memoir of Depression</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sally Brampton, (London: Bloomsbury, 2008)</li> </ul>	01	
16	<b>The Noonday Demon</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andrew Solomon, An Anatomy of Depression (London: Chatto &amp; Windus, 2001)</li> </ul>		
17	Revision		
18	<b>END SEMEASTER EXAMINATION</b>		