

English 407—Madness, Place, Story

Professor: Mary Wood
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445 PLC
Office Hours, M 3-5, Th 12-2

Description

In this interdisciplinary course, we will read works of creative nonfiction about first-hand experiences of mental and emotional suffering, analyzing them in relation to larger cultural representations of madness/mental illness/neurological difference. We will connect these works to representations of such experiences in visual art forms, such as graphic memoir, paper arts, and painting. In particular, we will look at the relationship of story-telling about such suffering to understandings of place and identity, reading first-person texts as counter-narratives within the history of psychiatric diagnosis, treatment, unequal distribution of mental health care, and the stigmatization of mental illness. As part of their work for the course, students will work with university archivists and art museum curators to identify, analyze, and present works of creative expression related to mental and emotional suffering.

Learning Outcomes

Students will learn to analyze narrative and visual creative work within the context of emotional and mental distress on the one hand and societal structures for conceiving, diagnosing, and treating such distress on the other. They will learn to recognize, analyze, and articulate the relationship between mental and emotional suffering and the artistic process. They will learn to recognize the ways that mental health and wellness are not just medical and/or psychiatric issues but issues embedded in social relationships and socio-political structures that are themselves determined by culture and history. From a perspective grounded in the study of literature and art, students will learn techniques and strategies of scholarly research that draw on different disciplines, bridging humanities and social sciences. Through observing and participating in the collaborative research and teaching activities of Wood and Yarris (as well as those of museum curators and library archivists), they will learn about research as a community activity that reaches beyond the college experience and beyond university walls.

This is a Mellon Grant for Museum-Library Collaboration Course

Our course (ENG 407: Madness, Place, Story) is connected to INTL 467/567: Global Mental Health, taught by Professor Kristin Yarris. Professors Wood and Yarris have received a UO-Mellon Museum-Library Collaboration Grant to teach these courses as they further develop their research project on the history of American psychiatry and nation-state formation. This project examines the story of the Morningside Psychiatric hospital, which was open in Portland from 1903-1963. Thus, several activities during Fall term will expose students in both courses to archival materials in UO libraries and artistic materials in the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (JSMA) related to mental illness and mental healthcare. This term's course is therefore somewhat experimental, so students should join in this class with a spirit of intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness. Additionally, students will have the option of working on class research projects (see below) related to Yarris and Wood's ongoing research.

Required Readings

Terese Marie Mailhot, *Heart Berries*

Margaret Elizabeth Stevenson and Lisa Stevenson, *Life Beside Itself: Imagining Care in the Canadian Arctic*

Ellen Forney, *Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me: A Graphic Memoir*

Additional articles and stories listed below, available on Canvas (canvas.uoregon.edu)

Assignments

Research project: The main project for the course is a research project that may take the form of a paper or website exhibit. The class has a Wordpress website that students may use for their projects if they so desire. If in written form, the paper should be about 15-18 pages. If presented as a website exhibit, the project should include narrative material that explains the images and builds an interpretive argument. There will be time in class to work on these projects. They may be done individually or in teams. **They may also include a creative element of your own choosing.** Projects are due Monday of Finals Week. Projects will be presented as posters or website exhibits on Tuesday, Dec. 10th, 2:45-4:45 p.m. We have been given this Finals slot in conjunction with Professor Yarris's class so we can all see each other's final projects on that day. Please let me know early on if this time conflicts with another final.

Discussion posts: Please post a 250-word response to the readings for the class coming up next. Your response should appear on Canvas (under Discussions) by midnight of the Thursday before class. Your response should touch on each reading for that week. **For ONE of these posts, you may substitute two questions for Professor Beatriz Reyes-Foster, posted on Canvas (see below) and brought to Professor Yarris's class on October 28th, when Professor Reyes-Foster will join us via Skype. Prof. Yarris's class, Global Mental Health, meets at 4-6:50 p.m. in 255 Lillis. I will be there to note (and appreciate) your presence.**

Questions for class guests: We are fortunate to have a number of guest lecturers, both live and through video conference. Please post to Canvas (under Assignments) two questions by midnight of the day before we will meet with the guest (see schedule below). Your questions should demonstrate that you have done the reading or watched the video (where applicable). Also, please remember to bring your questions with you to the meeting. I can't promise everyone will get a chance to ask two questions but you'll be ready just in case.

Additional Requirements

Punctual, regular attendance and participation in discussion are required. Active listening and speaking are both elements of participation. There may also be a few in-class writing assignments that will not be graded but will count towards the participation grade. Incompletes will be given only for a documented emergency.

Grades

Final project:	45%
Discussion posts:	30%
Questions:	15%
Participation:	10%

Accommodations

Appropriate accommodations will be provided for students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability and require accommodation, you must contact the Accessible Education Center (<https://aec.uoregon.edu/>) by the end of the first week of class. That office will help provide needed accommodations.

Mental Health

This course obviously issues related to mental and emotional distress and psychiatric intervention and treatment. You may find some of the readings, art, videos, and discussions troubling or upsetting. Please exercise self-care as you process thoughts and feelings that come up in relation to the course. On campus at UO, students have access to mental health and wellness support through the UO Counseling Center (<https://counseling.uoregon.edu>), through the Ducknest (<https://health.uoregon.edu/ducknest>), and through UO Recreation (<https://rec.uoregon.edu>). I encourage you to seek out these resources to support your mental health and wellness.

Course Schedule

Week One (Friday, Oct. 4th)—What is Madness and What Does Art Have to Do With It?

2-3 p.m.--Work of contemporary Oregon Artist Tom Cramer. Meet at classroom, then walk to Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art to meet with Cramer and view the exhibit of his work.

3-4:50 p.m.—Introduction of course. Further discussion of Cramer’s work.

Assignment: Watch video about Cramer before class: <https://watch.opb.org/video/oregon-art-beat-painter-tom-cramer/>.

Week Two (Friday, Oct. 11th)—How Is Art a Language About Mental/Emotional Distress?

Artwork of Elsa Mora, contemporary paper artist. Skype with Mora and discussion of her collections in relation to distress, mental illness, and diagnosis. We will see live her works “One Hundred and One Notions” and “Fading.” We will also see other works of art in the JSMA collection related to mental/emotional distress. Meet at Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art.

Assignment: Watch Mora’s gallery talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMP1cFBpj8>

Post on Canvas (under Assignments) two questions to ask Mora

Week Three (Friday, Oct. 18th)—Psychiatry: Care or Control?

Guest speaker and teacher: Professor Kristin Yarris

Read: 1) Beatriz Reyes-Foster, Ch. 4 (“Modernity: Problem and Promise of Mexican Psychiatry”) from *Psychiatric Encounters: Madness and Modernity in Yucatán, Mexico* (Rutgers University Press 2019).

2) Excerpt from Robert Whitaker, *Anatomy of an Epidemic* (Crown 2010).

Beatriz Reyes-Foster will join us Monday, October 28th via Skype. In Prof. Yarris’s class, Global Mental Health, which meets at 4-6:50 p.m. in 255 Lillis

Week Four (Friday, Oct. 25th)—Is Language Sufficient?

Read: 1) Gail Hornstein, “Introduction,” *Agnes’s Jacket: A Psychologist’s Search for the Meanings of Madness* (Rodale 2009).

2) Annie G. Rogers, Introduction and Ch. 8 from *The Unsayable: The Hidden language of Trauma* (Ballantine 2007).

ALERT: Rogers’ book contains references to child abuse, child sexual abuse, suicide, psychiatric institutionalization, and trauma.

Watch in class excerpt from Hornstein’s talk at Oregon Humanities Center:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4OnLtVmMIQ>

3:15-4:30—class will walk over to Knight Library for visit to Special Collections.

Week Five (Friday, Nov. 1st)—Case or Story? Is there a Difference?

Read: 1) Personal narratives from *Schizophrenia Bulletin* (Canvas)

2) Ellen Forney, *Marbles*

3) Watch Jim Gottstein’s “Psychiatric Adventures” talk at 2012 “Rethinking Psychiatry” conference at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-ancdxr268> (9 minutes)

4) Look at website: <http://psychrights.org>

We will continue discussion of reading from previous week as we move on to discuss this week’s reading. Possible time on projects in class.

Week Six (Friday, Nov. 8th)

Read: Lisa Stevenson, *Life Beside Itself: Imagining Care in the Canadian Arctic* (UC Press 2014), Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2.

Week Seven (Friday, Nov. 15th)

Read: Lisa Stevenson, Chapters 3-6 and Epilogue.

Week Eight (Friday, Nov. 22nd)

Read: Terese Marie Mailhot, *Heart Berries: A Memoir*
Read entire book.

Time in class for projects.

Week Nine (Friday, Nov. 29th)

Mailhot, *Heart Berries* discussion continued.

Time in class for projects.

Week Ten (Friday, Dec. 6th)

In class: Excerpts from Nate Powell's graphic novel, *Swallow Me Whole*

Finals Week

Final Presentations on Tuesday, Dec. 10th, 2:45-4:45 p.m. in Lillis 255