

Fall/Winter 2017-2018

AP/EN 4181 6.0A (Y)

Contemporary Literature: Writers & Drugs

Course Director:

Ila Goody
726 Atkinson

Delivery Format:

Seminar

Time:

Fridays, 2:30pm – 5:30pm, BC-325

Description:

This course explores the subject of writers and drugs (i.e. psychoactive substances) in Western literature and culture from several different perspectives: religious, scientific, technological, socio-cultural and ethnographic. In the first term we shall begin by examining some foundational Classical and Romantic literary texts that establish major topics and figures in the discourse of the drug experience. We will consider, for example, representations of Dionysus, the god of intoxication, in both ancient Greece and Nietzschean philosophy. We will also examine several narratives of addiction, particularly those by Thomas De Quincey, William Burroughs, and Ann Marlowe. Other contemporary topics to be explored will include: the role of dreams; heightened perception and the sublime; synaesthesia (fusion of the senses); anthropological studies of shamanic modulations of consciousness; drugs as technologies of speed; and the breakdown of conventional symbolic systems. In the second term we shall examine the ways in which these and related topics are manifested in several modern and contemporary works of fiction, many of which are autobiographical and confessional. Primary texts will be accompanied by relevant theoretical and cultural readings. The objectives of the course will be to enable students to engage with literary and cultural texts about the drug experience, and to acquire the skills for interpreting those texts.

Category:

B

Area:

2 or 4.3

Period:

3

Historical Requirement:

NA

Requirements:

1 Bibliographic Assignment (Term 1): 10%
1st Essay (Term 1): 20%
2nd Essay (Term 2): 30%
1 Final Essay Proposal (Term 2): 15%
1 Seminar Presentation: 15%
Class Participation: 10%
Total: 100%

Reading List:

Walter Benjamin: On Hashish

William Burroughs: Naked Lunch

Thomas De Quincey: Confessions of an English Opium-Eater

Philip K. Dick: A Scanner Darkly

Euripides: The Bacchae

Aldous Huxley: The Doors of Perception

Anna Kavan: "High in the Mountains" in Julia and the Bazooka

Michael Taussig: Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing

Gabor Mate: In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts

Hunter S. Thompson: Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas

Tom Wolfe: The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test

Ann Marlowe: How to Stop Time

Eduard St. Aubyn: The Patrick Melrose Novels

Irvine Welsh: Trainspotting

A course kit of selected short readings will also be provided.

First 3 texts to be read: De Quincey, Euripides, Benjamin

Open To:

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