

Fall/Winter 2019-2020

AP/EN 4181 6.A (Y)

Contemporary Literature: Writers and Drugs

Course Director:

Marcus Boon
mboon@yorku.ca

Delivery Format:

Fully Online

Time:

N/A

Description:

All human cultures have involved relationships with psychoactive plant substances (henceforth referred to as "drugs"). In this course, we will explore the connection between drugs and writing in a variety of cultures both modern and premodern, and the intersections between religious, scientific and cultural thought and practice that go into constructing descriptions of drug experiences. In the first semester, we will study a series of basic concepts that will help us to understand what a "drug" is, and what it means to write about drugs. We will focus on the figure of Dionysus, the god of intoxication, both in ancient Greece and after Nietzsche. We will also examine the concept of addiction in detail, looking at texts by Thomas De Quincey, William Burroughs, Mian Mian and Paul Preciado. In the second semester, we will examine the notion of "psychedelia", and aesthetic representations of "imaginal realms", via texts by Lewis Carroll, Aldous Huxley, Maria Sabina and Tao Lin. We will consider the problems of describing "drug experiences" in different types of media and genre (literature, scientific research, religious and anthropological accounts as well as popular cultural presentations such as TV series like Atlanta and Weeds, movies like Spring Breakers and Into the Void) and the close association of drugs with music, sound and vibration, from Eleusis to Compton. Primary readings will be accompanied by relevant culture studies and theoretical readings.

Category:

B

Historical Requirement:

N/A

Requirements:

Weekly forum comments on a discussion topic related to the week's readings.
25% per semester, Total: 50%
2000 word research paper on an assigned topic w. brief presentation in last class of semester. 15% per semester, Total: 30%
End of semester exam. 10% per semester, total: 20%

Reading List:

Antonio Escohotado, *A Brief History of Drugs* (1999)
William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* (1959)
Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland* (1865)
Clarence Cooper, Jr., *The Farm* (1967)
Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1823)
Euripides, *The Bacchae* (405 BC)
Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932); *The Doors of Perception* (1954)
Tao Lin, *Trip: Psychedelics, Alienation and Change* (2018)
Mian Mian, *Candy* (2003)
Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire* (2001)
Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie* (2008)
Maria Sabina, *The Life of Maria Sabina* (1977)
Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1972)
Virginia Woolf, *"On Being Ill"* (1926)

Open To:

Honours Year 4