FYS: T. A. Isabelle Duval Professor Benedict (she/her/hers); T/Th. 1:30-2:45 Fall, 2022 Office Hours: 12:15-1:30 T/Th

**CURIOSITY AND MADNESS IN WESTERN CULTURE**

Note: subject to change. You are responsible for understanding and following the information on this syllabus, including any changes discussed in class.

**Course Description:** what do the stories of Pandora, Eve, and Alice in Wonderland have in common? Is curiosity a virtue or a sin in Western culture? When is someone “curious” (inquisitive) and when is someone considered “a curiosity” (odd)? These and related questions will motivate our discussions in this seminar of English literature from all genres and all centuries (as well as an excursion to Hartford’s Cabinet of Curiosities and, perhaps, seeing some films) about “curious” and “mad” people; we will explore what makes people curious or strange, to whom and about what, and how the category of curiosity relates to madness. The readings will include Gothic mysteries and detective fictions; a play by Shakespeare; novels; poems; and satirical sketches.

**1) TEXTS:**

\* Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wall-Paper* (just this story, not the deceitful collection of short stories grouped under this title).

\*William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Signet Classics)

\*Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *Selected Stories of Sherlock Holmes*

\*Robert Louis Stevenson, “Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde” (World’s Classics)

\*Shirley Jackson, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*

\*Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Harcourt)

\*Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland* (annotated edition, preferably Broadview ed. Richard Kelly)

\*Edgar Allan Poe, *Selected Stories* (World’s Classics)

\*Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*

\*Barbara M. Benedict, “Peeping and Transgression” (essay on Moodle)

\*excerpts TBA on Moodle or duplicated for class including William Hogarth, *The Rake’s Progress* (a series of eight satirical drawings; also on reserve)

*Curiosity Studies* eds. Arjun Shankar and Perry Zurn; on reserve.

**2) ASSIGNMENTS:** Class attendance, **daily reading notes**, and participation in discussions. **ALWAYS BRING THE PRINTED TEXT TO CLASS: failure to do so will lower your grade** (4/10).

\*Three essays: two 3-4 pp. (1/10 each); one research essay 4-6 pp. (3/10)

\*Oral presentation (in pairs, if you choose) to the class on a curious/mad book, film, or object of your choice (1/10). You may do more than one if you wish.

\*Occasional quizzes and homework (grade factored into your participation grade).

\*Possible vocabulary list (grade factored into your participation grade).

**3) ATTENDENCE, READING NOTES, AND PARTICIPATION:** Students are expected to complete the daily reading, to keep legible **notes** on the themes, symbols, tone, meanings, ambiguities and problems of **every** assigned text (this syllabus provides prompts but you should feel free to write on what you wish), including **questions** about it, and to **attend every class**. More than **ONE** absence will **lower your grade**. Reading notes should be completed and brought (signed) to **every class**: these will occasionally be collected and graded. **Please do NOT use your computer/hand-help device etc. in class.**

**4) QUIZZES, VOCABULARY LIST, AND HOMEWORK:** quizzes are entirely punitive, so let’s avoid them by completing the assigned reading. Homework assignments are informal exercises designed to help you to understand the material. Since they will be collected occasionally, please write *legibly*, and sign and staple them. Include **in a separate file or notebook a list of at least 3 words new to you from each day’s reading, with their definitions.** **Bring notes and list to class**: “late” notes will never be accepted.

**5) PRESENTATIONS:** Every student, alone or in pairs, will present to the class a 15-20 minute analysis of a text of his/her choice (excluding class texts) that includes mad and/or curious themes or characters (for example, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, etc.) OR a research project into a curious or mad topic (like schizophrenia, the notion of the mad scientist, obsessive-compulsive disorder, Christopher Columbus as a curious explorer, etc.). If addressing a text, these presentations should include a succinct, cogent summary of the plot, an analysis of its themes, symbols, characters, narrative structure, etc., an account of how the text approaches the themes of this class, and a series of **questions** about salient issues to stimulate class discussion; if addressing a topic or historical figure, they should include an outline of pertinent information, an account of how the subject pertains to the themes of this class, and a series of **questions** about salient issues to stimulate class discussion. In all cases, students should present material short enough to display on power point or to fit onto a Xeroxed copy for each class member, and **students should submit a 1-2 pp. (or longer) written account with complete bibliography to the Professor following the presentation**. Presenters are expected to **generate discussion** by presenting questions to the class; audience members are expected to **provide written feedback** to the presenter of at least 3 lines isolating virtues or flaws in the presentation (“great job!” won’t do). Students may elect to deliver a second presentation for extra credit.

**6) ESSAYS:** Although topics appear on the syllabus, students are **urged** to create their own topics, especially for the research essay, and to consult with the Professor first to ensure the topic’s feasibility. **All essays must be printed out, proofread and stapled**. Include a bibliography, cite sources accurately using either the MLA or Chicago formulae (check the library’s reference page or the Handbooks in the library itself). **Plagiarism—using other people’s ideas and/or words, including your own from another course without due acknowledgement,—will result in immediate failure and possible expulsion. INFORM YOURSELF OF WHAT CONSTITUTES PLAGIARISM.**

**7) LATE POLICY**: Quizzes, reading journals, homework and/or revisions will **never** be accepted late, or “made up”: you must furnish a dean’s note to be exempted from the late penalty for any assignment, including essays. **There are NO exceptions**. Essays are due **at the beginning of class**, and will be docked 1/3 of a grade for every late day, **starting with the due date**. Thus, if you turn in an essay rating a B due on Tuesday at 1:30 when the class starts instead at 1:40, it will receive a B-, as it will at 4:00 p.m. Tuesday. (If you submit it on Thursday, it will receive a C+.) **DON’T COME TO CLASS LATE BECAUSE YOU ARE FINISHING AN ESSAY; printer problems are *not* an excuse—you should have finished the essay and printed it earlier**. Late entry to class disrupts it, and the essay is already late anyway. Instead, turn it in later that day. **Make sure Ms. Nikolov** or **Ms. Henning** signs and dates late essays to avoid further penalties. Graded essays cannot be returned until all essays have been submitted, so your late essay prevents everyone from receiving theirs back.

**8) REVISIONS:** other than those specified on the syllabus, only essays that were 1) submitted on time, and 2) receive a failing grade (D+ or lower) are eligible for revision. Students must meet with the Professor to determine whether revision is appropriate, and if so, *must submit their original essay* with the revision. Please **visit the Writing Center** for help with revisions.

**9) SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS:** please inform the Professor if you are entitled to Special Accommodations. The Coordinator of Special Accommodations Resources is Joel Copperthite, who can help you with any of your needs.

**10) OFFICE HOURS**: by appointment only. Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:05-1:30. Please email or

speak to me to set up an appointment.

**SYLLABUS** (subject to adjustment):

Friday September 2: Introduction, discussion of Hogarth’s series of etchings, “The Rake’s Progress” and Advising meetings.

Tuesday September 6: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wall-Paper.” **Write** a one-page analysis (hand-written or printed) of one symbol (except the wall-paper itself) in the story: make sure you include specific quotations from the text to prove your argument. Please write your name on it **and bring it to class**. Ungraded. Also read Moodle selection from Michel Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization* and apply to the Hogarth prints. **BRING printed-out SYLLABUS.**

Thurs 8: Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and “The Black Cat.” **Reading notes**: what is wrong with the Ushers? What is wrong with the narrators of “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Black Cat”? what has caused their problems? How does the symbolism in the stories illustrate or explain their debilities? Discussion of your one-page essays. Also **read ONE of the critical essays on “The Yellow Wall Paper” posted on Moodle, and be prepared to present its main argument to the class.**

Tues 13: Shirley Jackson, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, chapters 1-5. **Reading notes:** list 5 significant symbols or themes (objects, phenomena, ideas) and explain what they mean in the context of the novel. **Revision of your “The Yellow Wall-Paper” essay due with some reference to at least one of the critical essays posted on Moodle. Please submit STAPLED to the ORIGINAL one-page analysis and include a separate LIST of all the corrections you made. LIBRARY ORIENTATION: Isabelle will guide you through the library for the second half of the class.**

Thurs 15: finish *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*. What goes wrong in the second half of the novel and why? Why do the villagers act as they do and why do they change their behavior? Analyze Constance: is she a—or the—heroine? Has she flaws? Virtues?

Tues 20: **PRESENTATIONS BEGIN.** Read Robert Louis Stevenson, “Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hide” and also Barbara M. Benedict, “Peeping and Transgression” on Moodle, and **write** a one-paragraph application of its argument to any text from the class that we have read so far. Come to class prepared to discuss these; we may do some writing exercises in groups. **Bring your *topic* and *thesis* for your first essay, due next time.**

Thurs 22: **FIRST ESSAY DUE (3-4 pp. analysis of any text studied in class so far. Sample topic questions: how are sexuality and gender represented in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*? Does Jackson endorse, mock, destabilize, criticize etc. gender roles? What is the significance of buildings in any of Poe’s stories? What roles do cats play in “The Black Cat” and *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*? What do they symbolize? How are they similar or dissimilar? Are cats supernatural, evil, angelic, innocent, etc.? What is the cause of Dr. Jeckyll’s fall? How are he and Mr. Hyde alike?**

**\*\*\*\* Class visit by Professor Randy Lee (Department of Psychology). Please bring QUESTIONS to ask him about the psychology of madness or curiosity.**

Tues 27: Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Acts I and II. **Reading notes**: why does the play open where and when it does? What symbols, themes or metaphors are significant, and why? What is the function of Horatio? Is there anything you don’t understand—words, ideas, relationships, etc.? bring a list of problematic passages to class to discuss and clarify.

Thurs 29: *Hamlet*, Acts III and IV. **Reading notes**: is Hamlet mad? is Ophelia? How are they alike/different in their mental or imaginative states? Is the Ghost real or not, and how can you tell? Are there any disjunctive or disruptive scenes or elements in the play?

Tuesday October 4: Finish *Hamlet*. **Reading notes**: is Laertes justified? Is he a hero, villain, victim, crook? Does the end of the play present a moral? What are the play’s main themes? Possible film screening of a scene from the play. **In-class tutorial on library research with Jeff Litzka; bring your computers and an idea of what aspect of *Hamlet* you plan to research.**

Thurs 6: \*\*\*\***Class visit by Professor Raskin (Departments of Psychology and Neuroscience). Please bring QUESTIONS to ask her about the psychology of madness or curiosity.** **Make appointments with our Mentor Isabelle and in the Writing Center help on our research essays due on 18 October.**

Tues 11: Trinity Days. Class Cancelled. Write the first draft of your second essay.

Thurs 13: **Class Visit to Hartford’s Curiosity Cabinet in the Old State House. Assignment:** choose an object to analyze: why did you choose it? what (if anything) is curious about it? does it belong in the curiosity cabinet?

Tues 18: **RESEARCH ESSAYS DUE. (4-6 pp. including at least 3 secondary, critical, bibliographical, biographical, psychological and/or historical sources). You may write on any text from the class that you have not written an essay on previously. \*\*\*\* Class visit by Professor Dan Lloyd (Department of Philosophy and Neuroscience). Please bring QUESTIONS to ask him about Shakespeare’s idea of madness (or anything else).**

Thurs 20: Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, first third to p. 70: “’I will tell you the time,’ said Sepitmus… the quarter to twelve.” **Reading notes:** analyze Clarissa: what are her characteristics, virtues, weaknesses, flaws? Analyze Septimus: what makes him stand out? Is he a hero, a coward, or something else? Analyze the novel’s narrative structure: what links episodes and what does this explain about Woolf’s ideology and method?

Tues 25: read second third of *Mrs. Dalloway* to p. 129: “But she would think of something else; she would think of Russia; until she reached the pillar-box.” **Reading notes**: identify at least 5 symbols, and explain how they connect to each other, and how they illustrate or enhance the novel’s themes. Analyze Miss Kilman: what is her history? What are her interests, prejudices, beliefs, virtues, feelings, ideas, etc.? how does she feel about Clarissa and why?

Thurs 27: finish *Mrs. Dalloway*. **Reading notes**: how are Septimus and Clarissa alike and dissimilar? What is it that Septimus has that Clarissa envies? Does Clarissa come to a realization at the end of the book, and, if so, what is it? **Come prepared with your thesis for your next essay due on Tuesday.**

Tues NOVEMBER 1: **Class visit to the Wadsworth Atheneum’s Curiosity Cabinet. Assignment:** choose an object to analyze: why did you choose it? what (if anything) is curious about it? does it belong in the curiosity cabinet? How does *this* Curiosity exhibit compare to the one at the Old State House? **SECOND ESSAY DUE (3-4 pp. analysis of any text studied in class so far. Sample topic questions:** Who and/or what causes Septimus’ death? is it an act of triumph or—and/or—defeat? Compare/contrast Miss Kilman and Clarissa: what feelings, qualities, weaknesses, values do they share, if any? Compare/contrast Peter Walsh and Richard Dalloway: how are they similar/dissimilar, and why does Clarissa choose Richard? Is Septimus mad or something else? Analyze any minor character as an illustration of one or several, central themes in the novel. **PRE-REGISTRATION NAVIGATION DAY.**

Thursday November 3: Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*, first half (through chapter 11). **Reading notes**: what is the purpose of the introductory section (which is part of the fiction), before Chapter 1? What is the significance of Douglas? What characterizes Quint? Describe the governess-narrator: her background, values, formative experiences, class, nature, desires.

Tues 8: finish *The Turn of the Screw*. **Reading notes**: what happens at the end, and why is it ambiguous? How much is the governess to blame, if at all? What happened to Miss Jessel? Is *she* “mad,” as the governess claims, and if so, in what way?

Thurs 10: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” “The Case of the Speckled Band,” and “The Five Orange Pips.” **Reading notes:** how are Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson “curious” characters? Is it a virtue or vice—or both—in each? How does Conan Doyle depict madness? what are its causes and effects? What themes link these stories?

**FRIDAY 11: *Hamlet* production by Trinity’s Theater Department at Goodwin Theater in the Austin Arts Center.**

Tues 15: Lewis Carroll, *Alice Adventures in Wonderland*, chapters 1-6. **Reading notes:** in what way(s) is Alice “curious,” and is this a virtue or not? how are the creatures in Wonderland “curious” or “mad”? what questions, problems, themes and motifs link the episodes in the story? What kinds of games is Carroll playing in the novel?

Thurs 17: finish *Alice in Wonderland*. **Reading notes**: what makes the Hatter and the March Hare “mad”? are their madnesses linked or different, and how? How does the dream-vision of the novel represent, satirize, criticize or comment on anything? What is the underlying madness and curiousness of the Wonderland world? What are we to wonder at?

Tues 22: Independent library research and Writing Center day. Use it also to write a draft of your final essay:. Please check in with Isabelle when you arrive. Students are also asked to attend individual writing appointments at the Writing Center and to request that the Writing Center Associate notify the Professor of your session. In-class essay revisions**: bring to class 1) your graded first essay, and, on a separate sheet of paper, 2) type the first and last sentences of each of your paragraphs in order.** Also bring **3) one full paragraph of your choice** from the essay **that you have revised** to eradicate *all* errors, including punctuation, spelling and grammar, and plot out its structure topic sentence, development, evidence, explanation of evidence, etc. and conclusion) to illustrate how the elements build an argument. Don’t worry if they don’t appear to do so! Correcting that is one of the points of this assignment. Finally, bring **4) a complete outline of your second essay (due this Tuesday 18 October) and 5) one full paragraph from this second paragraph**. Students will meet in pairs to review each other’s work and point out problems (or beauties) in the first and second essays’ structures and in the revised and new paragraphs. Students are expected to **submit these exercises along with their first, graded essay when they hand in their second essays on Tuesday.** Please *staple these documents together.*

Thursday 24 November: Thanksgiving. No classes.

Tues 29: John Fowles, *The Collector*, Part 1. **Reading notes:** how do you characterize the narrator—his class, ideas, problems, preferences, desires, hatreds? How is he different from (or similar to) Miranda? How does his control of the narrative—and choice of genre—work to color the reader’s idea of Miranda? What themes, symbols and motifs appear in the story?

**FINAL ESSAY DUE (Submit *with* both graded essays.**)

Thurs DECEMBER 1: *The Collector*, Part 2. **Reading notes**: do you—and is the reader manipulated to—like Miranda, or not? Are her choices wise or not, and why? How do her revelations link to those of the Collector himself?

Tuesday December 6: finish *The Collector*. **Final reading notes:** Is Clegg mad? how does he—and the novel—pertain to the themes of this course?

Thurs 8: Last day of class. **SUBMISSION OF VOCABULARY LIST.** Discussion of the course themes and material, life and the future. **General celebration.**