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# ENG 5008-001: Madness and Early American Literature

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English 5008  
Madness and Early American Literature  
(Early American Lit: 1450?-1820)

Prof. Angela Vietto  
3345 Coleman Hall  
Office hours: M 2-3, T 3-4, W 2-4 *and by appointment*  
217-549-3203 (cell; 9 a.m.-10 p.m.; texts are okay, too)  
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An Un-Syllabus (Syllabus to be distributed next week)

I'd like us, in this class, to focus on how "madness" (a blanket term in common use in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries) was defined in early Anglo-American culture and how these understandings of madness performed cultural work in early American literature (or how early American writers performed cultural work *on* the idea of madness, however you prefer it).

Beyond that, however, since we are so small, I'd really like to design this course as a genuine seminar that will allow you flexibility and choice (and from which we will all learn a lot, I hope).

So, this is not a syllabus, but some notes to help us design a course together.

Some points that might help you think through how this course might connect to other interests of yours:

- American literature in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries is very much tied to British literature of the same eras.
- Madness is a frequent motif in both Gothic and sentimental literature.
- This is before Freud, so theories about less extreme forms of "madness" (like depression, usually termed melancholy) are likely to be different than theories you're already familiar with—but sometimes, they will seem surprisingly modern.
- If you're more interested in traditional national histories, the period we're most likely to focus on includes Constitutional debates and two different parties in power in the early U.S.
- Discourses about madness interact with discourses about gender, class, and (to a lesser extent) race.
- Although my own research focuses on literature in English from the period from about 1760-1820, I am happy to work with earlier materials from the colonial period or materials from Spanish or French American colonialism, in translation.

**Texts from TRS:**

Mulford, ed., *Early American Writings*  
Manvill, *Lucinda, or the Mountain Mourner*  
Brown, *Wieland*

**Other texts I have in mind:**

18<sup>th</sup> century British and American texts on mental illness: George Cheyne and Benjamin Rush

*Some Account of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge* (in *EAL*)  
*Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant* (in *EAL*)  
Margaretta Faugeres's biography of her mother Ann Eliza Bleecker in their volume of collected works  
*Female Quixotism*  
*The Power of Sympathy*

**Secondary:**

Excerpts from Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*  
Others to be determined

**Non-negotiable requirements:**

- Graduate level attendance and contribution to weekly discussion
- A final project equivalent in scope to a seminar paper
- Let's start with *Wieland*

**Negotiable:**

- Do you want shorter written assignments along the way?
- What do you think of, say, 4-6 weeks of common readings followed by individually selected readings to be reported on?
- How about workshopping of drafts in class? Conference presentation prep?
- Do you want a traditional or nontraditional final exam?
- Final project due last week of class or finals week?

## Schedule of Meetings

Jan 10 Intros, planning

Jan 17 *Wieland*

Jan 24

Jan 31

Feb 7

Feb 14

Feb 21

Mar 7 (Angela may/will likely have jury duty)

Mar 14 Spring Break

Mar 21

Mar 28

Apr 4

Apr 11

Apr 18

Apr 25

May 2 Final Exam

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**Assignments and Grading**

Assignment	Weight	Final Grading	
Seminar contribution	20%	93-100	A
Mid-term essay	20%	85-92	B
Reports on individual reading	20%	77-84	C
Seminar paper	40%	76-69	D
		75 and below	F

**The English Department's statement on plagiarism:**

“Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’ (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Office of Student Standards.”

**Information for students with disabilities:**

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

## Schedule of Meetings

Jan 10	Intros, planning
Jan 17	<i>Wieland</i>
Jan 24	Selections from Foucault and Porter
Jan 31	<i>Memoirs of Carwin</i> and self-selected chapters from Rush's <i>Medical Inquiries and Observations Upon the Diseases of the Mind</i> (in Dropbox)
Feb 7	<i>Some Account of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge</i> , <i>Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant</i> , and Margareta Faugere's biography of Ann Eliza Bleecker (all 3 will be in Dropbox)
Feb 14	P.D. Manvill, <i>Lucinda, or the Mountain Mourner</i>
Feb 21	William Hill Brown, <i>The Power of Sympathy</i>
Feb 28	Selections from Cheyne, <i>The English Malady</i>
Mar 7	Mid-term essay draft due (workshop)
Mar 14	Spring Break
Mar 21	Final version of mid-term essay due; begin individual reading
Mar 28	Reports on individual readings and discussion of seminar papers
Apr 4	Reports on individual readings and discussion of seminar papers
Apr 11	Reports on individual readings and discussion of seminar papers
Apr 18	Reports on individual readings and discussion of seminar papers
Apr 25	Reports on individual readings and discussion of seminar papers
May 2	Final Exam/final meeting: Final seminar paper due