

LMU SPRING 2025

COURSE TITLE: Women, Madness, and the Cultural Imagination

COURSE NUMBER: MDGK 3346/ WNST 3306

SECTION DAYS/TIMES: T/TH 11:50am-1:30pm

INSTRUCTOR: Pr. Christina Bogdanou

CORE AREA: IINC

FLAGS: ENGAGED LEARNING (LENL) ▶

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The course aims at an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural exploration of social, cultural, and literary representations of female “madness” varying from Greek tragedy, to medieval texts, to Victorian literature, to contemporary fiction, non-fiction, and film. By drawing on disciplines such as history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, as well as medical discourse, class discussions will focus on topics such as myths and archetypes of the “mad” woman, goddesses and witches, the connection between artistic creativity and madness, female sexuality and body image related issues (such as self-loathing, bulimia and anorexia, cutting, and substance abuse), as well as hysteria and personality disorders. A historical examination of the social and cultural attitudes and practices towards women will allow students to see how “madness” has been shaped by the patriarchal cultural imaginary and has been socially constructed as a way of exercising control over women, their voice and their bodies.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students completing the course will

- demonstrate the ability to recognize and analyze similarities/differences across disciplines and know their discrete characteristics
- learn to value different ways of knowing and multiple perspectives
- be able to integrate different disciplinary approaches in order to understand and analyze the social problem of the paradoxical position of women in society by becoming aware of how social structures and authority discourses (philosophical, medical, psychoanalytical, literary, etc.) shape women’s and men’s lives
- understand the texts discussed as the products of a certain place and time, yet also as products of a continuous patriarchal genealogy of ideas
- refine their critical reading, research, and writing skills in order to express their ideas with clarity, coherence, and intellectual force
- develop self-awareness and personal growth as individuals while in the service of others; become forces of social change (**Engaged Learning Flag ▶**)

PREREQUISITES/RECOMMENDED BACKGROUND: None

COURSE WORK/EXPECTATIONS:

- attendance and participation
- weekly discussion board participation
- two short papers (4-5 pages)
- final research project

*** 15 hours of service learning/volunteering to an organization of your choice** (there will be an orientation meeting and you will be provided with a list of possible placings).