DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

COURSE NO. LI587

TITLE OF COURSE: Women and Madness

I. Catalog Description and Credit Hours of Course:

A thematic study of the madwoman in autobiography, literature, drama, opera, and film. Various literary/cultural motifs of female madness ranging from Greek drama to contemporary writings will be examined. This course will fit into the curriculum in the following ways: 1) as a Women’s Studies Minor course; 2) a World Literature option; 3) a Literature elective. 3 credit hours.

II. Prerequisite(s): EN140 and any 200-level literature course, except LI243

III. Purposes or Objectives of the Course:

B. To develop a comprehensive definition of the literary motif of madness.
C. To achieve proficiency in identifying historic and contemporary realities/stereotypes of the madwoman.
D. To develop a comprehensive definition of the contemporary wild woman literary motif, specifically as it relates to female sexual/creative energy and liberation/destruction cycles.

IV. Expectations of Students:

A. To write a critical paper which demonstrates competency/understanding of a thematic issue relating to the madwoman motif in literature, drama, opera, or film.
   1. Undergraduates’ papers will incorporate appropriate research and documentation. 6-8 pages.
   B. Graduate students’ papers will include research with an analysis of broader philosophical/modernist/postmodernist issues of madness in the 20th c: 12-15 pages.
C. To demonstrate proficiency by two written examinations. (Ability to synthesize relevant information/quality and select appropriate textual references.)
D. To prepare an oral presentation on either a mad literary figure or an area of madness such as Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD/DID). Undergraduates: 15 min. Graduates: 30 min.
E. To keep a journal collection of cartoons, jokes, and other commentary which perpetuates the social stereotyping of women as crazy or insane.
F. Graduate students will be required to research and write on broader issues of madness in relation to modernist/deconstructionist or feminist perspectives.

V. Course Content or Outline (Indicate number of class hours per unit or section):

A. An overview of madness as a cultural phenomenon in Western culture:
Industrialization, alienation, fragmentation, uncoupling/disconnection of self; the glorification of madness in Nietzsche, romantics, surrealists, poststructuralists; incarceration/decarceration treatments; liberation/destruction themes. Three Hours

B. Dementia, hysteria, trances, somnambulism, various 20th c. disorders, such as MPD/DID, borderline personality, depression, etc., schizoid and schizophrenic personalities periodicals; Girl, Interrupted, Kaysen; Renee’s Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl; Sybil, Three Faces of Eve Six hours

C. Self-esteem issues such as self-loathing, anorexia, bulimia, cutting, scarification; prescription medications, litigation issues, insurance coverage; Madness and Modernism, Sass; Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Science of Memory, Hacking. Prozac Nation, Wurtzel Six hours

D. Myths, archetypes, goddesses, spiritual ties to nature, witchcraft, creativity; literary imagination; light/dark metaphors; creativity and madness; sexual reproductive energy; dance of death motif; Electra/Salome, Strauss; Wild Women, Hall; Greek drama, Medea, Antigone Six hours

E. Angel at My Table, Frame; The Bell Jar, Plath; The Four-Gated City, Lessing; ‘night, mother, Norma; Miss Julie, Strindberg; Hedda Gabler, Ibsen Nine hours

F. The Great Confinement, institutional conditions, incarceration/decarceration; Frances; Camille Claudel; Nuts; Blue Sky Nine hours

G. Liberation/destruction cycles; discussions of Oral Presentations Six hours

VI. **Textbook(s) and/or Other Required Materials or Equipment:**

**Required texts:**

Frame, Janet. *Angel at My Table.* (Pbk)
Lessing, Doris. *The Four-Gated City.* (Pbk)
Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar.* (Pbk)

**Required films/operas:**

*Nuts
Frances
Camille Claudel
Three Faces of Eve
Electra/Salome*
Reference texts (to be put on library reserve):

Bennett, Paula. *My Life a Loaded Gun: Dickinson, Plath and Rich, Female Creativity*


Hacking, Ian. *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory.*


VII. Basis for Student Evaluation:

1. Active discussion, participation in class activities. (100 its.)
2. Journal. (100 its.)
3. Critical paper. (100 its.)
4. Mid-term exam. (100 its.)
5. Comprehensive final. (100 its.)
6. Oral presentations. (100 its.)

Total: 600 its.