

## Brief Course Outline

**Course Title:** **Madness and Literature**

**Course Number and Section:**

ENGLISH

3250G 550

**Instructor Name(s):** Dr. Sarah Blanchette

**Instructor Email(s):** sarah.blanchette@uwo.ca

Disclaimer: Information in the brief course outline is subject to change. The syllabus posted on OWL is the official and authoritative source of information for the course.

### Course Description:

Madness is a subject of literary and cultural fascination from Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde to Fight Club. But what do people with mental illness have to say about Madness? Literature and art allow Mad people to share their experiences of mental distress and to critique, support, and/or challenge psychiatry. This new course examines the relationship between mental health and storytelling from the perspective of those with lived experiences of mental illness. It will rely on insights from Mad studies and the Mad movement, which have championed the importance of including Mad voices within mental health care. The course reading list will include a variety of mediums, including: a novel, poetry, short stories, personal essays, film, graphic novel, spoken word, zines, and excerpts from memoirs. Content warnings will be included for sensitive topics. This course is designed to be accessible for both English and non-English majors with an interest in reading Mad literature by Mad authors!

Some of the guiding questions of this course are:

1. What narratives exist about mental health/illness? (ex. biological, religious, cultural)
2. How has Madness become a reclaimed identity through the Mad Movement?
3. How can storytelling/art be a mode of narrative therapy for mental distress/trauma?
4. Why do Mad people share their stories with others?
5. What can we gain from reading these stories? What can we learn about ourselves?

### Learning Outcomes:

- examine canonical and non-canonical literary and cultural productions created by people who identify as mentally ill, mentally disabled, mentally different, neurodivergent, C/S/X (consumer/survivor/ex-patient) and/or Mad
- recognize how discourse around Madness has shifted since the 19th century and how literary and cultural productions responds to socio-political-historical contexts
- demonstrate an understanding of key theoretical debates and tensions within Mad Studies, disability studies, and anti-psychiatric discourse
- consider the role of survivor-based research and ethical methodologies of literary and cultural criticism in the Humanities

- utilize a more robust vocabulary to discuss mental health topics from an intersectional feminist and anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-oppressive perspective
- critically engage with cultural productions as a site of political activism and mental health and/or Mad knowledge
- apply theoretical approaches from Mad studies to the analysis of primary texts
- construct an argumentative thesis that is in conversation with key debates of secondary sources while maintaining their own critical voice
- explore the relationship between storytelling, close reading, narrative methodologies, narrative practices, and mental health
- reflect on core course themes or subject material through either an academic or creative product

**Textbooks and Course Materials:**

(Don't) Call me Crazy ed. Kelly Jensen (\$22.95)

Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, + Me, Ellen Forney (\$29.99)

What My Bones Know, Stephanie Foo (\$27.99)

Any edition/version of these textbooks is acceptable, and students are encouraged to buy from local used bookstores or AbeBooks.com. They will also be available under Course Reserves at the Huron library for short term loans. Western Book Store link here.

**Methods Of Evaluation:**

Assignment	Due Date mm/dd/yy	Weight - %
TAO Modules	Jan. 16	10%
Self-Care Practice	(ongoing)	10%
Reading Reflections (6 × 5%)	Feb. 6	30%
Close-Reading Essay (1000 words)	March 11	20%
Final Project (Creative or Research Based)	April 3	30%

In solidarity with the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton peoples on whose traditional treaty and unceded territories this course is shared.

Friday, January 24, 2025