

ENGLISH 9079A Romanticism and the Psychopathology of Happiness



Thursdays 9:30 AM to 12:30PM | Somerville House 2348

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Office Hours: Thursdays 12:30 to 2:30; or by appointment

Course Description: What's so good about feeling good? Romantic thought, writing, and culture were crucial in articulating what Darrin McMahon, paraphrasing Jeremy Bentham, calls the "felicific calculus of happiness."

Following in the wake of Enlightenment moral philosophy, medicine, and literature, the Romantics staked out an instrumental training ground in how to be happy. But they also challenged this discipline. Reading various literary, critical, theoretical, philosophical, and medical texts, we'll examine how Romanticism made us happy – or not. One component of this course will be to examine the rise of both psychoanalysis and psychiatry in the Romantic period, and to ask how these disciplines both contribute to and contest our current obsession with wellbeing. We will also explore historical, cultural, and theoretical contexts, Romantic and contemporary, including "happiness studies." Be prepared to be depressed.

Required Texts:

Austen, Jane. *Persuasion*. Ed. James Kinsley and Deirdre Lynch. New York: Oxford World Classics, 2010.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Ed. and trans. David Constantine. New York: Oxford World Classics, 2012.

Hays, Mary. *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. Ed. Eleanor Ty. New York: Oxford World Classics, 2009.

Wollstonecraft, Mary and Mary Shelley. *Mary, Maria, and Matilda*. Ed. Janet Todd. New York: Penguin, 1993.

Wordsworth, William. *The Two-Part Prelude* (1799) and *Glad Preamble* (to be posted to Sakai course website).

Wordsworth, William. *The Ruined Cottage* (to be posted to Sakai course website).

All other readings will be posted to the Sakai course site.

ASSIGNMENTS

Seminar oral presentation (25-30 minutes) 30%. Your seminar should address the week's readings, both primary and secondary, but take up research in critical and theoretical sources relevant to the topic. Do not rehearse the texts (i.e. plot or article summaries, unless these are crucial to your argument). Rather, give your critical impression/response to the theoretical issues and tensions raised in the readings as they build upon, revise, or react against previous readings or contexts discussed. I schedule all seminar presentations at the beginning of class, so they should also orient and generate that week's discussion. Within ONE WEEK of your oral presentation, either submit to me a cleaned-up version of the seminar or simply pass along your notes at the end of the class.

Final paper (5,000 words) 55%. DUE: December 10

Write a paper on a topic of your choice relevant to the course material, properly citing criticism relevant to your topic. This paper can develop from, but should expand significantly upon, your seminar.

Participation 15%. This grade evaluates your weekly contributions to the seminar, including attention to and interventions in class discussion and my sense of how well you're prepared for each class. It's important that you come to class with concrete things to say about that week's readings. Except for extenuating circumstances (medical/health issues, family deaths, disastrous acts of a divine power), I expect you to attend all classes. Prolonged absence from class (3 or more classes) means you will forfeit this grade.

All assignments must follow MLA citational guidelines outlined in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th ed.), also found at

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically the definition of what constitutes Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf (Academic Handbook, Exam, Course Outlines Page 4 Issued: 2011 02)

Weekly Schedule of Lectures, Reading Assignments, and Due Dates

Always come to class having read that week's assigned readings, primary, secondary, and contextual. This is a tentative list of readings. I will be adding a more supplemental readings, which I'll post to the Sakai course website.

*Seminars (list to be distributed)

- September 10 **Introduction**
- September 17 **Critical Introduction:** Psychoanalysis, Psychiatry and Happy/Unhappy Romanticism
Context: John Haslam, *Illustrations of Madness* (1817)
- September 24 **Historical Introduction:** Romanticism and Romantic Happiness
Context: Locke, Hume, Smith, Bentham (excerpts); from Soni, *Mourning Happiness*
- October 1 * **Goethe**, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*
Context: excerpts from Rousseau, *Emile*; Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*
- October 8 * **Wordsworth**, The two-part *Prelude* (1799)
Context: Abrams, "Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and the Crisis-Autobiography"; Potkay, from *The Story of Joy*
- October 15 * **Wordsworth**, The two-part *Prelude* (1799); Glad Preamble to the 1805 *Prelude*
- October 22 * **Wollstonecraft**, *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*
Context: Freud, from *Civilization and Its Discontents*; Ahmed, "Happy Objects"
- October 29 Study break
- November 5 **Shelley**, *Matilda*
Context: Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia"; Abraham and Torok, from *The Kernel and the Shell*
- November 12 * **Hays**, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*
Context: Rajan, "*Matilda* and the Political Economy of Romanticism"; Rajan, "Autonarration and Genotext in Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*"; Wilson, "Against Happiness"
- November 19 * **Wordsworth**, *The Ruined Cottage*
Context: Khalip, "The Ruin of Things"; Blanchot, from *The Writing of Disaster*
- November 26 * **Austen**, *Persuasion*
Context: Massumi, "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact: The Political Ontology of Threat"; Zunshine, "Why Jane Austen was Different"; Berlant, "Cruel Optimism"
- December 3