

Discourse and Madness in the Middle Ages and Renaissance

Course Description: This course introduces undergraduate students to key works of literature in the Middle Ages and Renaissance through the lens of language, discourse, and madness. The course addresses fundamental questions concerning the power of language in society, the empowerment and silencing of certain voices, the consequences of individual speech, and how discursive systems create “reality” and direct society. We will also examine visual depictions of madness, especially in the form of early modern woodcuts.

Aims and Objectives: At the end of the course, students should be able to examine the ability of women and men to speak during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in France and England, and the consequences for certain kinds of speech. Students will also develop close reading and textual analysis abilities, as well as discursive writing skills.

Requirements/Grading:

Paper in lieu of Final - 40%

Papers - 30%

Oral Presentation - 10%

Class Participation - 20%

Required Texts:

-Plato, *Phaedrus* (excerpts in reader)

-Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (excerpts in reader)

-Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, The Miller’s Prologue and Tale, The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale (in reader)

- *The Farce of Master Pierre Patelin* (in reader)

-Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools* (excerpts in reader)

-Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*

-*The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*

-*La Belle dame sans mercy*

-Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (excerpts in reader)

-William Shakespeare, *King Lear*

Course Schedule:

Unit I: Madness in Society

Session 1: Plato

Plato’s conception of madness in Socrates’ second speech.

Readings: Plato excerpt in reader

Session 2: Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*

Session 3: Chaucer

The relationship between speech and madness in society.

Readings: The Miller’s Prologue and Tale, the Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale

Session 4: Speech and Justice

Readings: *The Farce of Master Pierre Patelin*

Unit II: Foolishness and Folly

Sessions 5 and 6: *The Ship of Fools*

Session 7: Analysis of woodcuts from Jehan Drouyn's *Ship of Female Fools*

Sessions 8 and 9: Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*

Unit III: Love and Madness

Sessions 10, 11, 12, and 13: *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*

Sessions 14 and 15: *La Belle dame sans mercy*

Unit IV: Language, Imagination and Deception

Sessions 16, 17, and 18: *Don Quixote*

Sessions 19, 20 and 21: *King Lear*