

Abernathy – English 102: Inquiry into Madness

This course takes a loosely-defined approach to the topic of “madness,” investigating the history and repercussions of mental illness in Western civilization, as well as how madness manifests itself in individuals, groups, events, the arts, and the public imagination. Our goal is to establish preliminary definitions of madness and then pursue those definitions through different media and contexts, touching upon both conventional concepts of madness and more problematic applications. By the end of the course, students will be able to compare those original definitions with the more nuanced perceptions accumulated over the course of the semester (via literary, historical, sociological, psychological, medical, legal, anthropological, etc., inquiry), and will be able to demonstrate critical reading, thinking, and writing skills that will serve them well in their academic and future pursuits. Or, to put it more simply: In this class, we explore and discuss all kinds of crazy things!