

**Carleton University**  
**Spring Preliminary Course Outline**  
**Department of English**

**ENGL 1300A: Literature, Psychology, and the Mind**

Precludes additional credit for ENGL 1000, 1100, 1200, 1400, 1600, 1700 and FYSM 1004

**Instructor: Matthew Scribner**  
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**\*\*\* This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.  
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. \*\*\***

Literature is a unique way of exploring someone's mind. It transports us into the head of a character and even into the head of an author. Likewise, telling a story is a tried-and-true way of psychological treatment.

Or is it? Is everything I just said a psychological mind game?

Literature and psychology have a long history together. Occasionally that relationship has seemed positive, and even natural, but at other times, the two fields expose weaknesses and vulnerabilities in each other.

This course will explore that history and ask some key questions along the way. How do writers create characters? How do they represent the internal thoughts of characters? What ideas have psychologists abandoned, but fiction writers still use? What are some critiques of psychology, and how does fiction bring them out?

We will read a variety of fiction alongside psychological theory texts in order to address these questions.

**Course Objectives:**

- Learn basic psychological concepts and ideas that are relevant to the study of literature
- Apply critical theory to primary sources
- Refine skills in generating and supporting argumentative thesis statements across essays
- Improve the ability to express in writing sophisticated ideas and opinions using proper, correct, and effective academic English practice
- Use, cite, and interpret primary literary texts in complex ways while following MLA documentation standards
- Develop critical thinking skills

**Delivery:**

This online course will have two lectures a week, over Zoom. These live lectures present a chance to ask questions and everyone is encouraged to attend live. These lectures will be recorded to watch if anybody cannot attend on any given occasion.

**Evaluation:**

As stated in the Academic Regulations of the University, Section 2.1, students must complete all term papers and examinations to obtain credit for this course.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

<i>Three Term Papers</i>	1) Two pages	10%
	2) Three pages	20%
	3) Four pages	30%

Topics will be posted to Brightspace.

*Participation Assignments* 10%

Most weeks will have a participation activity, which involves watching at least one of the lectures and answering some questions about it. These due dates will be posted on Brightspace.

*Final Examination* 30%

Exam details to be determined.

**Late Policy**

Work handed in late will be penalized 10% per day. However, each student has three “extension days” that can be used for any assignment except the final exam. You can use more than one day per assignment. You can submit an online form in Brightspace to record use of these days.

**Etiquette**

Please give the person who is speaking in class—whether it is the instructor or one of your peers—your full attention.

In-class debate is encouraged, but (obviously) please disagree without being disagreeable.

**Required Texts**

- Dangarembga, Tsiti. *Nervous Conditions*. Greywolf Press, 2004. (ISBN 9781644450710)
- Hoffman, E.T.A. “The Sandman” (available online through Brightspace)

- Nothomb, Amelie. *The Character of Rain*. St. Martin's Press, 2003. (ISBN 9780312302481)
- Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. Edited by Craig Walker. Broadview, 2010. (ISBN 9781551119670)
- VanderMeer, Jeff. *Annihilation*. HarperCollins, 2014. (ISBN 9781443428392)

All non-online texts are available from the campus bookstore.

In addition to these primary texts, there are several short articles on psychology. These are available online through Brightspace. In most cases, you will need to log in to Ares, Carleton's online library program. Just use your regular Carleton log-in.

There are a number of these articles to read for each section, but they are short. It is okay if you do not understand them at first—we will talk about them in class.