

Carleton University
Fall 2024 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English Language and Literature

ENGL 2900A: *Literature of the Self*
Topic: *Illness Narratives*

Prerequisites: Second-year standing or permission of the department
Preclusions: None

Wednesdays 11:30 – 14:30
4236 ME

Instructor: Prof. S. J. Murray
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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. ******



Course description: This course explores the diverse ways in which illness is narrated in literary media, with a particular focus on how personal identity and the self are constructed and deconstructed through these narratives. Are illness narratives “technologies” of the self? Students will engage with a variety of texts, including graphic novels, memoirs, essays, and fiction, to examine how illness impacts individual and collective experiences and how these experiences are articulated through literary forms.

Learning Outcomes:

- To understand and analyze the ways in which illness narratives contribute to our understanding of the self.
- To critically examine the intersections of illness, identity, and society.
- To reflect on media “technologies” and the distinction between artificial intelligence and emotional intelligence.
- To explore the narrative techniques and stylistic choices authors use to convey experiences of illness and identity.

- To engage with a range of genres, including graphic novels, to appreciate the multimodal aspects of illness narratives.
- To develop critical thinking, reading, oral and writing skills through analysis and discussion of course materials.

Texts to Purchase (Carleton Bookstore):

Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Penguin Random House, 1996.

Drnaso, Nick. *Sabrina*. Drawn & Quarterly, 2018.

Durand, Élodie. *Parenthesis*. [2010]. Edited by Chris Stares. Translated by Edward Gauvin. Top Shelf Productions, 2021.

Other course materials will be made available digitally through Brightspace. Please bring a laptop or tablet to class for in-class access to these texts and in-class assignments and discussion.

Other course texts include selections from:

Barthes, Roland. “Death of the Author.”

Borges, Jorge Luis. “Borges and I.”

Ehrenreich, Barbara. “Welcome to Cancerland.”

Freud, Sigmund. “Katharina” [case study of hysteria].

Sousanis, Nick. *Unflattening*.

Woolf, Virginia. “On Being Ill.”

Evaluation: Evaluation will be based on a variety of written assignments, both in-class and at-home. This will include an in-class midterm essay-style examination and a final research essay or scholarly-creative assignment (the choice is yours). Attendance and in-class participation are required and will constitute at least 10% of the final grade.

