

Carleton University
Fall 2026 – Winter 2027 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

FYSM 1004C: Reading Literatures and Cultures
Topic: The Monster

Prerequisites: Normally restricted to students entering the first year of a B.A. program
Preclusions: Precludes additional credit for [ENGL 1000](#)

Instructor: Professor Stuart 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

Introduction to active literary reading skills, focusing on at least three literary genres including poetry, prose, and drama, with attention to literary, social, historical, and political contexts. This course is writing attentive. Strongly recommended for English majors.

Detailed Course Description

This course explores how literary and visual media shape our understanding of identity in a world saturated by social media, political rhetoric, and rapidly evolving technologies. We'll read across genres—memoir, graphic novel, fiction, film, poetry—to ask how literature not only expresses who we are, but also participates in constructing identity itself. Alongside illness narratives and stories about race, gender, sexuality, and embodiment, we'll explore what happens when identity is cast as monstrous—when people or bodies are deemed abnormal, dangerous, or “other.”

Are literary works merely tools of self-expression, or are they technologies that govern how we think, feel, and relate to the world? What role does rhetoric play in cancel culture or in the ways society and medicine define what's “normal”? From the intimate to the institutional, we'll consider how culture teaches us who belongs—and who doesn't.

Keywords

monstrosity, identity, illness narratives, rhetoric, visual culture, literary media, social media, embodiment, technology, artificial intelligence, gender, race, abnormality, cancel culture

Learning Outcomes

- Analyze how narrative and visual texts construct and challenge concepts of selfhood, identity, and otherness across literary and cultural contexts.
- Critically evaluate the intersections of identity, monstrosity, and technology in diverse media, including fiction, memoir, poetry, graphic novels, and film.

- Examine the ethical and cultural stakes of “technologies of the self,” with attention to the boundaries between artificial intelligence, emotional intelligence, and embodied experience.
- Interpret how authors use rhetorical strategies—such as metaphor, genre, apostrophe, and multimodal storytelling—to represent illness, race, gender, and marginalization.
- Demonstrate how literary form shapes meaning by producing written arguments that engage both textual analysis and theoretical frameworks.
- Develop academic writing through iterative practice, including in-class workshops focused on thesis development, evidence integration, revision strategies, and clarity of expression.
- Enhance critical reading, oral communication, and analytical reasoning through close reading, collaborative discussion, and sustained engagement with complex texts.

Texts

Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Penguin Random House, 1996. \$24.95.

[Amazon link](#)

Drnaso, Nick. *Sabrina*. Drawn & Quarterly, 2018. \$32.95. [Amazon link](#)

Durand, Élodie. *Parenthesis*. [2010]. Edited by Chris Stares. Translated by Edward Gauvin. Top Shelf Productions, 2021. \$25.99. [Amazon link](#)

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *Klara and the Sun*. Vintage Canada, 2021. \$23.00. [Amazon link](#)

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein: The Original 1818 Text*, 3rd Ed. Edited by D.L. MacDonald and Kathleen Scherf. Broadview Press, 2012. \$15.50 [Amazon link](#)

Winterson, Jeanette. *Frankissstein: A Love Story*. Vintage Canada, 2020. \$18.60 [Amazon link](#)

Evaluation

A series of written assignments, cumulative in-class midterm exam (winter semester), mandatory attendance and participation.