

# “Out of My Mind: Literatures of Madness”

LIT 4650 – Comparative Literature; Spring 2014, Department of English, University of North Florida

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## Course Description

“I have felt the wind of the wing of madness.”

—Charles Baudelaire, French poet (1821-1867)

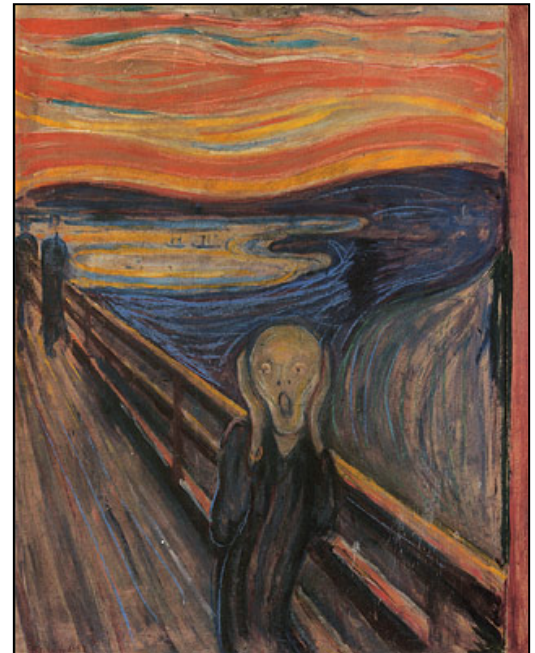
“‘Man’ signifies ‘thinker’: There lies the madness.”

—Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher/thinker (1844-1900)



Francisco de Goya: *The Sleep of Reason* (1799)

It may seem a bit crazy but for some time now a rich and powerful body of literature has been building around the topic of madness, insanity, loss of mind. In fact, crazy or not, stories of and about madness have, again and again, proven to be a source of fascination and the focus of attention in much modern and contemporary writing and art. Something about the derangements of mind would seem to have promised many writers and artists access to worlds otherwise unseen, unfelt, unimagined—an opportunity to escape the sanely familiar and to investigate forbidden zones of thought and



Edvard Munch: *The Scream* (1893)

emotion outside the bounds of the conventional imagination, rational

formulation. But what is really found in these often terrifying spaces of alienation and despair, darkness and danger, and what is gained through their fictional representation and examination? Why would one want to go there at all? What's to be learned? What's to be feared?

Our readings will move from, among others, the writings of Georg Büchner, Nikolai Gogol, Gérard de Nerval, Anton Chekhov and Charlotte Perkins Gilman to Franz Kafka, Luigi Pirandello and Antonin Artaud, while always keeping our eyes fixed onto the present, the mad world around us, and the shifting boundaries determining our own sense of self, our own always vulnerable self-confinements.

### Required Texts:

1. *Lenz*, Georg Büchner. Publisher: Archipelago Books; ISBN-10: 0974968021
2. *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*, by Nikolai Gogol. Publisher: Dover Thrift. ISBN: 0486452352
3. *Bartleby the Scrivener*, by Herman Melville; Publisher: The Art of the Novella; ISBN: 0974607800
4. *Ward No. 6 and Other Stories*, by Anton Chekhov. Publisher: Barnes & Noble Classics; ISBN-10: 1593080034
5. *Henry IV*, by Luigi Pirandello. Publisher: Grove Press; ISBN-10: 9780802141941
6. *The Yellow Wallpaper*, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Publisher: Dover Thrift. ISBN: 0486298574
7. *The Metamorphosis*, by Franz Kafka. Publisher: Touchstone, ISBN-10: 9780684800707
8. *Aurélia & Other Writings*, by Gérard de Nerval. Publisher: Exact Change. ISBN: 9781878972095
9. *Artaud Anthology*, by Antonin Artaud; Publisher: City Lights Publishers; ISBN-10: 0872860000