

English 399W: Dreams

Fall 2006 - Spring 2007 English Honors Seminar

Section 1434: T 6:30 – 9:20 / PH 245

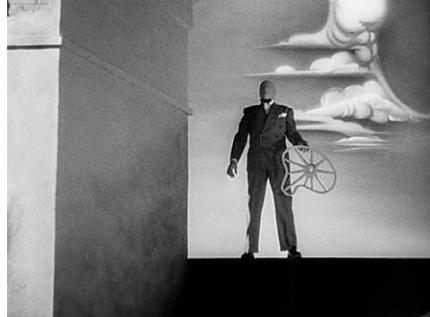
Section 1432: W 1:40 – 4:30 / PH 104

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T & W, 4:30 – 6:00



The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind.
–Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)

You must empty yourself for sleep. And before you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, you are not. And when you are filled with sleep, you never were.

–William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1930)

Can dreams help us understand the self, as Freud argues? Or do they blot out the self entirely, as Faulkner suggests? Are dreams mystical missives? Meaningless by-products of firing neurons? Do they consolidate memory? Drive artistic endeavors? The elusiveness of dreams, which propel us to imagined worlds whose logic falters when we wake, has made them an inspiration to innumerable artists and an object of study for neurologists, psychologists, and philosophers.

In this two-semester Honors Seminar, we will explore the art and science of dreaming. We will read classic dream theories by Aristotle, Freud, and Jung; examine contemporary theories by dream researchers such as J. Allan Hobson, Ernest Hartmann, and Stephen La Berge; read literary texts by writers such as William Shakespeare, Charlotte Brontë, Jean Rhys, Franz Kafka, and Kazuo Ishiguro; listen to music by Kurt Weill, Bob Dylan, and The Postal Service; view a variety of films, including Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's *Un Chien Andalou*, Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*, and Richard Linklater's *Waking Life*; and take a virtual tour of Dalí's *Dream of Venus*, the surrealist funhouse he built for the 1939 World's Fair (in Queens!).

We will all keep dream blogs, documenting our dream lives and reflecting on them through the lens of our course readings and discussions. Students will develop interdisciplinary research projects that address current questions in the field of dream studies and present their work at a student conference in the spring.

Required Texts (all available in the QC Bookstore)

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Norton Critical Edition)

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Oxford UP)

Ernest L. Hartmann, *Dreams and Nightmares: The New Theory on the Origin and Meaning of Dreams* (Perseus)

Allan J. Hobson, *The Dream Drugstore: Chemically Altered States of Consciousness* (MIT Press)

Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Unconsoled* (Vintage International)

C. G. Jung, *Dreams* (Princeton UP)

John Ratey, *A User's Guide to the Brain* (Vintage)

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Norton Critical Edition)

William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Oxford World's Classics)

*All other readings available on Blackboard, under "Course Documents"

Fall Requirements

2 Oral Presentations	20%
Annotated Bibliography for Honors Essay	10%
Sketch for Honors Essay	10%
Peer Reviews of Honors Essay Drafts	10%
Blogs	30%
Class Participation	20%

Blackboard

On our **Blackboard** site, you will find handouts, essay assignments, models of student essays, and a list of useful links. You will also submit some of your assignments on Blackboard. (See https://blackboard-doorway.cuny.edu/?new_loc=/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp; log in using your CUNY Portal Username and password.)

Dream Blogs

For the duration of the semester, every student will keep a dream blog. Most of the time, you will be describing recent dreams. You will also use your blogs, though, to respond to readings, films, and art about dreams. **Each student must post a minimum of two blog entries and two comments on others' entries per week. Please post more if you're having interesting dreams you want to document and share! (See fall semester calendar below for details.)** The blogs are intended to give you a place to write informally, communicate with an audience in mind, experiment with ideas and styles of writing, digest ideas we explore in the course, and accumulate a collection of your own dreams for interpretation. Approach the blogs informally and creatively. When I evaluate them, I will be looking for sincere effort and critical engagement, not polish, structure, or mechanics.

Oral Presentations

Every student will participate in several oral presentations over the course of the semester. Two of these will be graded, in preparation for the conference presentation in May. The first of these will be a group presentation, on a work of visual art discussed through the lens of a dream theory, and the second, an oral proposal for the research project. The conference presentations in May will not be graded.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation are necessary in order for us to form a productive classroom community, where we all learn from each other. I understand that life will make an occasional absence necessary. Whenever possible, please inform me in advance if you will be absent. In general, plan to attend every

class meeting and to arrive on time. Keep in mind also that attendance and participation will comprise a significant portion of your course grade.

Deadlines

- **Late work:** You will complete your major project for the course—the research essay required for you to graduate with honors—in a series of stages: proposal, annotated bibliography, essay sketch, draft, revision, etc. I will accept *one* of these up to one week late without penalty. (This does not include the oral presentation or the final revision of the essay.) After that, your final grade for the project will lose 1/3 of a grade for every two days the assignment is late. Blog entries must be up-to-date when I evaluate them for credit (four times per semester). Each entry will be worth ten points, so a missing entry will mean ten points deducted.

- **Missed conferences:** We will have one-on-one and/or group conferences a couple of times each semester, to discuss your works in progress. If you must reschedule a conference, please let me know twenty-four hours in advance. Otherwise I cannot guarantee that the conference can be rescheduled.

Grading Criteria

When I evaluate your writing, I am looking for independent thought expressed in engaging prose. Your essays should both please and enlighten readers and give them a sense of why your essay is important—why what you have to say needs to be said. I evaluate the words on the page before me and do not factor in potential, improvement, or effort. The work you put into an assignment will most certainly be evident in the completed essay. You will find below the general criteria according to which I will evaluate your formal writing—in this case, mainly your Honors Seminar Essay, which you'll begin in the fall and complete in early spring. These descriptions are very general and cannot capture the nuances and distinctions of individual writers or essays. Just use them as a guide, certainly not as a template. (Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference.)

- An “A” range essay is both ambitious and successful. It presents and develops solid, compelling ideas with grace, confidence, and control. It engages sources with nuance and complexity and makes its motives clear to readers. Generally, an “A” essay makes for a reading experience so engaging that the nuts and bolts of the writing become nearly invisible. Finally, an “A” essay should prompt readers think about the world in new ways. It should teach us something.

- A “B” range essay is one that is ambitious but only partially successful, or one that achieves more modest aims well. A “B” essay must contain solid ideas, but these may not always be particularly complex, or may not be presented or supported well at every point. Its motives may not always be clearly communicated. It engages sources in interesting ways, but doesn't always carve out the writer's stance in relation to these sources adeptly or clearly enough. A “B” essay is generally clear and readable, but may lapse into confusion from time to time. A “B” essay will make readers think, but it usually leaves them with an incomplete picture of its topic, some confusion about the ideas it explores, or a feeling of incompleteness.

- A “C” range essay has significant problems in articulating and presenting its ideas, though it usually contains an identifiable focus. Such essays often lack clarity and use source material in simple ways, without significant analysis or insight. A “C” essay doesn't make its motives clear to readers. It usually suffers at the level of the sentence as well, obscuring the writer's ideas. An essay like this is difficult to read because it doesn't approach and guide readers. It requires readers to do the difficult work of sorting out the writer's ideas.

- A “D” range essay fails to grapple seriously with either ideas or texts, or fails to address the expectations of the assignment. A “D” essay distinguishes itself from a failing essay by showing moments of promise, such as an emerging argument, which isn’t sufficiently developed or articulated. “D” essays do not engage or integrate sources effectively, though there may be some effort to discuss them.
- A failing essay does not grapple with either ideas or texts, or does not address the expectations of the assignment.

Essay Guidelines & Academic Integrity

All your formal writing should be typed, double-spaced, with 1” margins. Please proofread carefully, so that your essay is polished and free of typographical errors. Give every essay a title and include your name as well as the course name and number. Be sure to include a list of works cited. Use MLA guidelines (see link on Blackboard) for citing sources and constructing your works cited list. We will discuss my expectations in class, but in general I expect essays to contain serious thought, analysis, and reflection, not simply summary or description.

A student’s work should be his or her own. But a student’s ideas should also engage the ideas of other thinkers and writers. Communication gives ideas meaning and creates a community of thinkers. This is where citation and plagiarism can become tricky. Plagiarism is, of course, a serious issue. It is important that you establish your own point of view, make it clear what ideas are yours and which come from your sources, and respond to your sources critically. Be sure also to cite all sources appropriately, using MLA style. Finally, if you’re struggling with your ideas, your writing, or your sources, be sure to talk to me. Plagiarism sometimes arises from confusion and sometimes from desperation. I can help you work through problems before they escalate.

FALL SEMESTER CALENDAR

Tuesday 9 - 5 / Wednesday 8 - 30

Films: *Un Chien Andalou*, *Spellbound* dream sequence

Music: Weill and Gershwin, selections from *Lady in the Dark*, Bob Dylan, “Bob Dylan’s 115th Dream,” The Postal Service, “Sleeping In”

Workshop: Freud’s “Dream Work” and Your Blog Entries

Blogs: 1: Dream, 2: Response to first class

Tuesday 9 - 12 / Wednesday 9 - 13

Come to class with your questions about the syllabus.

Freud, pp. 78 – 97 & 211 – 254

Blogs: 3: Dream, 4: Reading Freud

Tuesday 9 - 19 / Wednesday 9 - 20

Jung, pp. 23 – 84

Kafka, “A Country Doctor”

Blogs: 5: Jung vs. Freud, 6: Dream

Tuesday 9 - 26 / Wednesday 9 - 27

Kafka, “Children on a Country Road” & “The Judgment”

Hartmann, Chapters 1, 2, 5, & 6

7: Reading Kafka, 8: Dream

Wednesday 10 - 4 (all students meet in PH 104 from 1:40 to 4:30) / no class Tuesday 10 - 3

Hobson, Introduction + Chapters 1 – 3 (+ review Ratey's *A User's Guide to the Brain*)
Blogs: 9: Hartmann vs. Hobson, 10: Dream
Guest: Susan Croll

Tuesday 10 - 10 / Wednesday 10 - 11

Jane Eyre

Casebook: Victorian Dream Theories

Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming By the Book*, Part One: Making Pictures

Blogs: 11: Reading Scarry or Victorian Dream Theories, 12: Dream

Tuesday 10 – 17 / Wednesday 10 - 18

Wide Sargasso Sea

Richardson, "The Dream of Reading"

Workshop: evaluating critical arguments and Gordon Harvey's "Elements of the Academic Essay"

Blogs: 13: *Wide Sargasso Sea* vs. *Jane Eyre*, with a critical article as a lens, 14: A Dream

Tuesday 10 – 24 (all students meet in PH 245 from 6:30 to 9:20) / no class Wednesday 10 - 25

A Midsummer Night's Dream + pp. 3 – 21 of the introduction to the Oxford World Classics edition

Blogs: 15: Renaissance Dreams, 16: A Dream

Guest: Susan Zimmerman

Wednesday 11 – 1 (all students meet in PH 104 from 1:40 to 4:30) / no class Tuesday 10 - 31

"The Dream of the Rood," Daniel 4 (Nebuchadnezzar's Dream), Genesis 37 (Joseph's Dream)

Guest: Steven Kruger

Blogs: 17: Biblical Dreams or Medieval Dreams (or both), 18: A Dream

Tuesday 11 – 7 / Wednesday 11 - 8

Group Presentations: Visual Art

Group 1: Dalí, *Dream of Venus* & other selected works; theory: Wegman, "Dream Rebound"

Group 2: Louise Bourgeois, Drawings (States, "Dreams: The Royal Road to Metaphor")

Group 3: Marcel Dzama, selected works; States, "Bizarreness in Dreams and Other Fictions"

Group 4: Fred Tomaselli, Hobson, Ch. 4: "The Neurodynamics of Dreaming" (*The Dream Drugstore*)

Blog: 19: A Work of "Dream" Art, 20: A Dream

Tuesday 11 - 14 / Wednesday 11 - 15

Waking Life

Stephen La Berge, from *The World of Lucid Dreaming*

Workshop: thesis and motive

Blogs: 21: Lucid Dreaming, 22: A Dream

Tuesday 11 - 21 / Wednesday 11 - 22

NO CLASS

Blogs: 23: A Dream, 24: A Dream

Tuesday 11 - 28 / Wednesday 11 - 29

The Unconsoled

Oral presentations: Research Project Proposals

Blogs: 25: Reading *The Unconsoled*, 26: A Dream

Tuesday 12 - 5 / Wednesday 12 - 6

The Unconsoled

Oral presentations: Research Project Proposals
Blogs: 27: Reflection on your research project, 28: A Dream
Annotated Bibliography due (Blackboard)

Tuesday 12 - 12 / Wednesday 12 - 13

The Unconsoled

Workshop: engaging sources effectively

Blogs: 29: Finishing *The Unconsoled*, 30: A Dream

Essay Sketch due (Blackboard)

Monday, 12 - 18

Preliminary drafts due (Blackboard)

Friday, 12 - 22

Peer responses due (by e-mail); first revisions due Monday, February 5; and writing groups will meet to discuss further revision the following week

Winter Break

Dream Blogs optional, but encouraged.