

The University of Toronto
Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures

German 332: Deviance – Madness - Outsiders in Literature

Winter 2023 Thursdays 10 AM-12 PM at TF 201

Instructor: Elisabeth Lange

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Office Hours: By appointment (Zoom or in-person meeting possible)

Office: OH307 (Odette Hall, 3rd Floor)

Course Description

What does it mean to be “normal” or “sane”? What do these categories signify and what value do they hold in our society? How can a “normal human experience” be distinguished from an “abnormal” one? What does it mean to be human in the first place?

In this course, we will examine a number of texts that deal with perspectives, states of beings and roles that were deemed “different” or “deviant” in present or past societal contexts. We will engage with the topic of deviance from a range of different literary eras, genres and styles and will thereby grasp for (a) meaning(s) of the terms “outsider” and/or “deviance.” What are examples for outsiders of the past and the present and what can we learn from them? What are positive and negative aspects of deviance?

We will discuss how our desire to belong and be recognized as normal stands in relation to past and present societal dynamics, our human condition, and the workings of our subjectivity.

We will engage with short forms of prose, excerpts from novels as well as poetry.

The primary literary texts will mostly be accompanied by philosophical texts (in English) on the concepts of deviance, madness, or related fields.

The methodology in this course will be a combination of close readings and broad historical and cultural perspectives. Our work in class will be shaped by class discussions, group work, and occasional lectures.

Course Requirements

Attendance & Participation: 15%

Regular attendance is mandatory. Absences may be excused if you provide the instructor with a reasonable excuse for why you cannot participate and do so prior to the session. For each subsequent unexcused, you will incur a 10% penalty off the class participation and attendance grade.

You are expected to join the class on time, having read/ engaged with the materials for each session in a thorough manner.

Please try to contribute to class discussions with your own ideas and reflections on the materials covered in each week.

Even though the class is conducted in German, there is no need to feel shy about your use of

German; it is no problem to make mistakes and we will all help each other out to find the “right” words.

Weekly Discussion Board Entries: 20%

After having studied the assigned materials, you will write a short paragraph (in German, about 250 words) that reflects on these materials and post it to the Discussion Board on Quercus. Your paragraph should be based on what you found most important/ intriguing about the materials. Study questions will be provided for guidance; however, you are welcome to write about *any* aspect(s) that you find worthy of discussion in the materials. Please try to write as clearly as you can and give reasons and examples for the points you are making. You are graded on content and style (not on language).

Please note, that you are not permitted to use Google Translate (or similar translation tools). You are welcome to use a dictionary or your German language textbooks for assistance. If it is detected that you have cheated, you will not get any points for your contribution.

Before each class, you are expected to have read and thought about the contributions of your classmates so that we can have a lively class discussion. Entries are due on **Tuesdays by 6 pm.**

Creative Response & Presentation: 20%

You will prepare a creative response to one of the readings from our course plan and present it in class. This response can, for instance, come in the form of a creative text, a poster, or a play/ performance. Through your response, you are channeling your reflections/ interpretations of the reading that you chose. You can, of course, also make direct references to the text(s) and incorporate quotes from and information on the materials. Please engage your classmates in your presentation (for instance by asking them questions or giving them a task that relates to your presentation/ the materials). You should also have read the Discussion Board entries of your classmates, but do not have to post one yourself for the week of your presentation.

You can either work on your own or in a group of up to 2-3 students.

Final Paper Proposal: 10%

Before writing your final paper, you will write a paper proposal in which you will briefly outline the topic, argument, goal, and methodology of your paper. The word count should be roughly 300 words. The Proposal is due **Friday, March 17**

Final Research Paper: 35%

Please choose a topic related to the contents of the class and write an academic paper of about 8 double-spaced pages. You will have to pick a primary text for interpretation. For your interpretation, you are required to conduct research (by consulting scholarly texts) on the precise concepts that are important for your argument and refer to the sources you have used in your paper in order to support and illustrate your argument. Detailed Criteria will follow.

The Final Paper is due **Friday, April 14.**