Introduction

In this course, you will become familiar with the vocabulary and narrative forms associated with distinct strains of thought about addiction. The readings consist of texts from the early 19th Century to the 21st Century, and consider how models of addiction both develop chronologically and recur. In the first unit, “Threatening Substances,” we discuss texts that engage with addictive substances in an attempt to explain them through science or through morality tale. In the second unit, “Afflictions of the Soul,” we discuss texts that explore addiction as a character trait, which often has an overlapping relationship with gender, race, and sexuality. In the third unit, “Languages of Habit,” we step outside of the paradigm of addiction, using a queer lens to explore representations of repeated actions. In the final unit, “Discourses of Recovery,” we discuss the hope and impossibilities of substance dependency, addiction’s reflexive relationship to human existence, and overlaps between recovery and socio-political reality.

We will ask throughout the course how the new words introduced in each unit affect the development of ideas on addiction. For example, how does DeQuincey’s “oblivion” manifest in later texts? We will also explore the texts’ narrative forms. For example, how does Lily Bart’s unraveling in House of Mirth compare to Augusten’s relapse in Dry? Throughout the semester, we will use close reading, in-class conversation, and writing to experiment with addiction as a narrative theory, and with habit as a descriptive language. In the process, we will resist the urge to use addiction to simplify or explain complex relationships with substance use and compulsive behavior.

Required Texts

- Course Reader ($6.50, check made out to Brandeis University)
- House of Mirth, Edith Wharton (1905)
- Another Country, James Baldwin (1962)
- Two Girls, Fat and Thin, Mary Gaitskill (1991)
- Topdog/Underdog, Suzan-Lori Parks (2001)

Learning Goals

Success in this course requires nine hours of work for every three hours in class.

- Learn about the literary conventions and historical contexts of the course texts
- Practice having complex and challenging conversations about gender, sexuality, and race
- Write convincing essays by carefully constructing arguments and using evidence effectively
- Recognize the vocabulary and narrative forms associated with distinct strains of thought about addiction

Rules and Requirements

- Laptops and phones are not to be used during class. Bring other materials (e.g., paper, pens) to take notes.
• All assignments must be completed and submitted to receive course credit. Late work will be penalized by one plus/minus for each day past due date.
• Three unexcused absences lowers the final course grade by one plus/minus, and each additional absence by another plus/minus.
• Plagiarism will be penalized by failure on the assignment or course, appearance before a university committee, and/or expulsion.
• If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.
• I strongly encourage use of the writing center. You may use documentation of visiting the writing center for a one day extension for your response papers. To receive the extension, you must ask your writing consultant for a consultant sheet, and deliver it to my mailbox before the deadline in question.

Grades and Assignments
• **Participation:** this grade will be determined by the frequency and thoughtfulness of your in-class comments. 15%
• **LATTE Posts:** Due once a week, the night before one of our class meetings, you are to post to LATTE a list of ten thoughts and/or questions about the reading. Each entry of the list must be written in complete sentences and provide evidence that you have completed the readings (i.e. they should not be too vague or abstract—base your sentences in the content of the readings). Entries should connect specific textual examples to course themes, previous class conversations, and readings from earlier in the semester. I will use your LATTE posts to generate discussion, so you may be occasionally expected to articulate one of your ideas to the whole class. Group A will post on Mondays, and Group B will post on Wednesdays. Groups will be assigned in class. 15%
• **Response Papers:** These 2-page papers will demonstrate your ability to close read a text by focusing on a passage from any text we have read so far in the semester. Use the passage to identify the text’s tone and style, extrapolate patterns in the larger text, and point out connections with course themes. You should contextualize the passage by introducing a specific topic, present an argument about the text’s representation of that topic, and analyze the excerpt at length. Do not assume that your reader has the same understanding of the text as you do—you must clearly state what makes your reading unique. Four response papers are required, which can be submitted by any four of the five deadlines. This means you can skip one deadline without penalty. 35%
  o Deadlines: 1/24, 2/7, 3/5, 3/21, 4/9
• **Final Paper:** For this 8-10 page paper, you may choose out of two options. A paper proposal and my approval are required. 35%
  o Extended Close Reading Paper about one of the course texts using 1-3 secondary sources.
  o Research Paper on a representation of addiction in any text focusing on addiction that is of interest to you. In addition to 1-3 secondary sources, you must use one of the critical texts we’ve read (i.e. Warhol or Sedgwick), or focus on a theme or concept that has been important to our studies throughout the semester.
Unit One: Threatening Substances

**Week 1**
Jan 10 (W) Introductions

**Week 2**
Jan 15 (M) *No Class, Martin Luther King Day*
Jan 17 (W) from *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, Thomas DeQuincey; from *The Cocaine Papers*, Sigmund Freud
Jan 18 “The Black Cat,” Edgar Allan Poe; “Goblin Market,” Christina Rossetti; *Reefer Madness* (1936) [LATTE Videos Block]

**Unit Two: Afflictions of the Soul**

**Week 3**
Jan 24 (W) *House of Mirth*, Edith Wharton, through chapter eight (book one)
**Deadline: first response paper**

**Week 4**
Jan 29 (M) *House of Mirth*, Edith Wharton, to end of book one
Jan 31 (W) *House of Mirth*, Edith Wharton, through chapter eight (book two)

**Week 5**
Feb 5 (M) *House of Mirth*, Edith Wharton, finish
Feb 7 (W) *Another Country*, James Baldwin
**Deadline: second response paper**

**Week 6**
Feb 12 (M) *Another Country*, James Baldwin
Feb 14 (W) *Another Country*, James Baldwin

**No Class Feb 19-23, Midterm Recess**

**Week 7**
Feb 26 (M) *Another Country*, James Baldwin
Feb 28 (W) *The Boys in the Band* (1970) [LATTE Videos Block]
Unit Three: Languages of Habit

Week 8
Mar 5 (M)  “Epidemics of the Will,” Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick
**Deadline: third response paper**


Week 9
Mar 12 (M)  *Two Girls, Fat and Thin*, part one

Mar 14 (W)  *Two Girls, Fat and Thin*, Mary Gaitskill, part two

Week 10
Mar 19 (M)  *Two Girls, Fat and Thin*, Mary Gaitskill, finish

Mar 21 (W)  *Two Girls, Fat and Thin*, Mary Gaitskill

**Deadline: fourth response paper**

Recovery Discourses

Week 11
Mar 26 (M)  *Topdog/Underdog*, Suzan-Lori Parks, scenes 1-3

Mar 28 (W)  *Topdog/Underdog*, Suzan-Lori Parks, scenes 4-6

No Class Mar 30-Apr 6, Passover and Spring Recess

Week 12
Apr 9 (M)  *Dry*, Augusten Burroughs

**Deadline: fifth response paper**

**Due: Final Paper Proposal**

Apr 11 (W)  *Dry*, Augusten Burroughs

Week 13
Apr 16 (M)  *Dry*, Augusten Burroughs

Apr 18 (W)  *Colossal* (2017) [LATTE Videos Block]

Week 14
Apr 23 (M)  Course Wrap-up

May 8 (T)  **Due: Final Paper**