Emily Dickinson closes her 1862 poem (#410) with a question: “And Something’s odd—within—/
That person that I was—/ And this One—do not feel the same—/ Could it be Madness—this?” In
this writing seminar, we will consider Dickinson’s question through the reading of novels (William
Wharton’s Birdy, Ken Kesey’s One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, Denis Johnson’s Resuscitation
of a Hanged Man, Margaret Atwood’s Surfacing), a play (Peter Shaffer’s Equus), and short stories
(Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper,” Kenzaburo Oe’s “Teach Us to Outgrow Our
Madness”). In exploring what the literature suggests about the nature of madness, we will consider
how a cultural moment’s understanding of madness and reason reveal a good deal about the way
power expresses itself in that world. We also will examine how the definition of madness changes
with the needs of society and social ideologies—and consider to what extent Shakespeare was
prophetic in his insistence that in much madness lies divinest sense.

And, of course, . . . we will write. During this semester, we will explore writing as an activity that
we learn by doing, with some coaching. For this reason, our class time will be spent generally
doing, not listening to lectures about writing. The way we will work toward our goal is through
lots of practice in writing, critiquing, and rewriting. A long distance runner improves her or his
times by running faster, more frequently, and through good coaching. A painter spends long hours
in the studio, reworking line and color—getting it just right. This class will be your writing studio.
You will work on your craft, rewriting, revising, rethinking, polishing; and I will be your coach,
your advisor, and your supporter, but not the only coach. All of your writing will be read by other
students, and each of you will become a coach. We will take seriously the opening line of Patricia

More specifically we will try to accomplish these goals:
(1) build up your writing confidence so that you can tackle a variety of writing tasks
(2) help you find a writing process that works well for you
(3) let you experience the benefits of writing teamwork—the encouragement, advice, and response
   of prepared readers and writers
(4) increase your ability to generate a topic and a controlling idea
(5) help you to write a documented essay that paraphrases as well as integrates quoted material
(6) provide you with the skills to support an evaluative statement by establishing criteria
(7) enable you to strengthen your analytic reading skills by learning to recognize the writer's
   intention, central ideas, organization, and use of language
(8) help you to understand the importance of unity, organization and supporting evidence
(9) allow you to experience the value of language as a tool for thinking deeply and clearly
We will work toward our goal through lots of practice in writing, critiquing, and rewriting.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, Ken Kesey  
*Equus*, Peter Shaffer  
*Resuscitation of a Hanged Man*, Denis Johnson  
*Birdy*, William Wharton  
*Surfacing*, Margaret Atwood  
*A Pocket Style Manual*, Diana Hacker  
*Handling Sources* (Marlboro’s Style Guide)

The above texts are available at the College Bookstore. All secondary materials will be in the form of handouts.

**WHAT YOU NEED TO DO**

Well, first off and of most importance—**keep up with the reading and writing**. Since each discussion and assignment will grow from the preceding one, it is important that you **attend class regularly and come prepared to share your ideas**.

**Papers:** You will be writing **three papers**—two 5-6 page personal/critical essays on class texts and one 8-10 page research paper. Each of these essays will be revised at least twice, and my comments as well as your peers' comments will provide reader response that leads to revision. Since I am concerned with the process you move through to reach your final version, I am asking you to attach to your completed work all preliminary notes, drafts, diagrams, and outlines leading to your final copy. Since other students in class will come to depend on your writing and feedback, being on time with drafts is crucial. Paper grades will go down by half a grade if they are received late. If you are unable to attend class the day a draft is due, please make sure someone brings your paper to class or puts it in my mailbox. If you are late with more than one draft, I will ask you to drop the class and take it when you are better prepared for it.

You will also be writing a **1 single-spaced response to each week’s readings**. These will be due at the **beginning of Wednesday’s class** and will provide a foundation for class discussion. Though I may, at times, assign a topic, most often the responses are open; you may choose to comment upon a theme, characters, plot, narrative style—what you respond to as a reader and what seems important, confusing, entertaining, or problematic at the time of your reading. Since the purpose of these writings is to express your ideas prior to class discussion, they will not be accepted late. Daily responses will be assessed on a check-plus-minus system.

In addition to your essays, each of you will be responsible for **peer reviews** of other students’ papers. I will be looking at these peer reviews for enthusiastic, honest, and constructive criticism. We will be discussing helpful ways in which to do this in class.

**Attendance:** Because of our workshop format, attendance is extremely important. Three absences from class can be tolerated—no effect on your grade and no questions asked. More than three absences will affect your final grade. (In extraordinary cases of proven emergency, this provision will be modified). Whether or not you are absent, you are still responsible for the work covered and essays are still due on the date requested. Chronic lateness will also affect your grade.
Conferences: Three or four times during the semester. Classes will be cancelled and each of you will meet with me for a conference. These conferences will provide individual time for each of you to discuss your writing. A missed conference is considered an absence.

Evaluation: In assessing your writing I look for the following qualities: (1) Competence: how thoroughly you introduced your topic, and developed and supported your ideas; (2) Creativity: how much you exerted yourself in being inventive, in taking a risk and trying something new or difficult, in approaching the assignment as more than just an assignment, in making what you write interesting to your readers; (3) Clarity: how clearly you were able to get your ideas across to your readers by focusing your topic and using effective organization, sentences, and words; (4) Correctness: how well you followed grammatical and mechanical conventions (punctuation, syntax, spelling), and how clearly you documented your footnotes and bibliography; (5) Care: how well you incorporated suggestions and comments from your colleagues and instructor, and to what extent you presented a neat, readable paper.

Don't let this overwhelm you. I guarantee that it is not as much as it sounds. The writings will be fun, thought provoking, and even entertaining. And, in addition to our class’s community of writers and readers, you have two other great sources for help: check out the Writer's Block, and also look up Marlboro's clear writing page on the web at www.marlboro.edu/academics/requirements/writing_program.

CALENDAR (all dates subject to change)
The following is a list of our readings for the semester. All essays and poems are in the form of handouts. The reading must be completed by the date listed.

M 9/11—Introduction to the class. One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, Ken Kesey, pgs. 3-72

W 9/13—One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, pgs. 73-138

M 9/18—One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, pgs. 139-245

W 9/20—One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest pgs. 247-311


W 9/27—Draft of essay #1 due. Please bring three copies to class.

M 10/2—CONFERENCES (no class)

W 10/4—Birdy, William Wharton, pgs. 3-85. ESSAY #1 DUE with drafts, peer response sheets, and my comments. Please bring two copies of completed essay to class

M 10/9—Birdy., pgs. 86-199


M 10/16—Equus, Peter Shaffer, pgs. 7-109

W 10/18—Draft of essay #2 due. Please bring three copies to class.
M 10/23 — NO CLASS/WALTER HENDRICKS DAY

W 10/25 — CONFERENCES (no class)

M 10/30 — Library research class. ESSAY #2 DUE with drafts, peer response sheets, and my comments. Please bring two copies of completed essay to class.

W 11/1 — Resuscitation of a Hanged Man, Denis Johnson, pgs. 3-56

M 11/6 — Resuscitation of a Hanged Man, pgs. 57-170

W 11/8 — Resuscitation of a Hanged Man, pgs. 171-257. RESEARCH PROSPECTUS DUE

M 11/13 — Workshop on integrating sources and documentation

W 11/15 — Exploratory draft of essay #3 due. Please bring 3 copies to class.

M 11/20 — CONFERENCES — no class

W 11/22 — NO CLASS/THANKSGIVING BREAK

M 11/27 — Complete draft essay #3 due. Conferences will be held throughout the week.

W 11/29 — Research Workshop

M 12/4 — Research Workshop. Conferences will be held throughout the week.

W 12/6 — ESSAY #3 DUE with drafts, peer response sheets, and my comments.

M 12/11 — Portfolio review/Self assessment

W 12/13 — Portfolio reviews (mini-conferences)

TH 12/14 — Portfolios due at 8:30 in DAL 38

“. . . I have come to see how important a certain restlessness and discontent can be in one’s life; how important the jagged edges and pain can be in determining the course and force of one’s life.”

Kay Redfield Jamison