

FW 2025-26

AP/EN 4182 3.0A (F)	<i>Contemporary Literature: Writers & Drugs</i>
Course Director:	Marcus Boon Office: Atkinson Building, 722 Ext. 40675 e-mail: mboon@yorku.ca other information: www.marcusboon.com
Time:	Lecture day and time: Thursdays, 11 30 - 2 20.
Delivery Format:	SEMINAR
Description:	All human cultures have involved relationships with psychoactive plant substances (henceforth referred to as "drugs"). In this course, we will explore the connection between drugs and writing in the modern and contemporary periods, and the intersections between religious, scientific and aesthetic discourses that go into constructing descriptions of drug experiences in our time. We will read a series of literary works, ranging from nineteenth century texts by Thomas De Quincey and Samuel Coleridge, through twentieth century texts by Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, Philip K. Dick, Jacqueline Susann and Cesar Calvo., to more recent works by Jeet Thayil, Ottessa Moshfegh, Amitav Ghosh and others. Topics discussed will include basic questions of what a drug is, the way that our ideas of drugs change according to the kind of society we live, the history of drugs and writing about drugs, the current renaissance in psychedelic research and the advent of medical/psychedelic humanities, and indigenous perspectives on psychotropic plants. We'll also look at Freud's ideas about the human psyche as a model for thinking about the meaning of drugs. And we'll look at the representation of drugs in recent TV shows such as <i>Breaking Bad</i> and <i>Euphoria</i> .
Category:	B
Historical Requirement:	N/A
Requirements:	Group presentation on drug related TV show (15%) 20 minute class presentation on course materials (20%) Writing assignments (25%) Participation (20%) End of semester exam (20%)
Reading List:	Thomas De Quincey, <i>Confessions of an English Opium Eater</i> (1823). Philip K. Dick, <i>A Scanner Darkly</i> , (1977). Antonio Escohotado, <i>A Brief History of Drugs</i> (1999). Sigmund Freud, <i>Civilization and its Discontents</i> , (1930). Amitav Ghosh, <i>Sea of Poppies</i> (2009). Aldous Huxley, <i>The Doors of Perception</i> (1954). Tao Lin, <i>Trip: Psychedelics, Alienation and Change</i> (2018). Ottessa Moshfegh, <i>My Year of Rest and Relaxation</i> , (2019). Paul B. Preciado, <i>Testo Junkie</i> (2008). Maria Sabina, <i>The Life of Maria Sabina</i> (1977). Jacqueline Susann, <i>Valley of the Dolls</i> (1966)

	Virginia Woolf, "On Being Ill" (1926).
Open To:	YR 4 Honours (EN, ENPR and CRWR students only)