



Madness and the Politics of Unreason

CHID 390A

Professor Thurtle | T TH 11:30—1:20 | I&S | CHID Gateway | Spring 2014

"Western society loves and hates to reason. On one hand it upholds reason as the ultimate enlightenment value. The rise of scientific thought during the 16 and 17th centuries, for instance, is often referred to as the "age of reason". On the other hand, it produces conditions of life and cultural artifacts that are anything but reasonable. Selfishness and greed, not reason, often seem to guide social policies; while spectacle, sexuality, and violence, often seem to whet media appetites. Western society has been especially harsh with those who are believed to have unreasonable thoughts or bodies, marginalizing them through incarceration, hospitalization, poverty, or neglect. During the ten weeks of the class, we will read intellectual history, ethnographic analysis, writings of those deemed to have a mental disability, novels, comic books, cultural theory, and continental philosophy in order to gain a more sophisticated understanding of the role of unreason in the theoretical and practical problems of interpretation and knowledge. Come join me as we become a little more unreasonable and a little more informed about the politics of knowledge."