FSEM 100M9
First-Year Seminar: Down the Rabbit Hole

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Fall 2015
Combs 322
01: MWF 9:00
02: MWF 10:00

Office hours:
MW 8:15-9:00
11:00-12:00
F 11:00-12:30
and by appointment

Student Success Coordinator: Mr. Charles Tate: ctate@umw.edu; Lee 206.8
Peer Mentors: Jordan Riser: jriser@mail.umw.edu
Josh Smallwood jsmallwo@mail.umw.edu

Course Description
The phrase “down the rabbit hole” refers to Lewis Carroll’s classic story Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, in which our title character follows a white rabbit into a land of magical and capricious characters, inexplicable actions, and incomprehensible communications—a place where things are, to put it succinctly, “curiouser and curiouser.” Over time the expression has exceeded Alice’s story, suggesting not only an adventure but also a physical or psychological journey into the unknown, into chaos or the unpredictable, even into danger. Like Alice, you enter a new world of sorts when you come to college, a world where it’s sometimes hard to figure out how to act, whom and what to believe, what words mean, what is right and wrong, how to get people to listen to you, who’s in charge, and how to navigate.

Though Carroll’s work is sometimes dismissed as nonsense or simple fantasy for children, it may help us think about many very sophisticated and important things indeed; arguably Carroll could just as easily be discussed as a major thinker with a tremendous cultural influence. Approaching this complicated writer who has himself become an object of many interpretations, we will place Carroll’s literary works and photography at the core of our seminar, and will also view various films that represent or respond to those creations, considering the interpretation of Carroll’s works for different audiences and purposes. Guided by our class’s insights and by the analyses of scholars, our study will lead us into examinations of philosophy, identity, sexuality, language, authority, hallucination, justice, visual art, madness, ethics, gender, psychology, film, logic, childhood, mathematics, the body, narrative, education, social codes, memory, time—and reality itself.
Our course will develop in two spaces: the classroom and our collaborative website, which can be accessed at [http://rabbithole.umwblogs.org](http://rabbithole.umwblogs.org). Additionally, we will use Canvas for exchanging assignments and assessments.

**Required Texts**
Lewis Carroll. *The Complete Illustrated Lewis Carroll*. Wordsworth Library
Richard Brian Davis, ed. *Alice in Wonderland and Philosophy: Curiouser and Curiouser*
Melanie Benjamin. *Alice I Have Been*
Scanned documents on our blog and online resources

**Companions on our Adventure**
Our FSEM community is very lucky to include three other persons, our designated Student Success Coordinator from Academic and Career Services and our Peer Mentors, all of whom are also part of your support network this semester. Our Student Success Coordinator is Charles Tate and our Peer Mentors are Jordan Riser and Josh Smallwood. You can find their email addresses on the first page of the syllabus.

The Student Success Coordinators in the Office of Academic and Career Services are professional advisors who have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum and university policy and procedure. When unique circumstances require resolution, Student Success Coordinators can be very helpful in suggesting creative solutions. Joining us in class at least once this semester, Mr. Tate will review important information relevant to your academic progress, such as how to perform and understand a degree evaluation or how to prepare for advising sessions with your professors.

The Peer Mentors are a group of energetic Mary Wash students who worked with first-year students during the June orientation program on campus as Orientation Leaders and now have transitioned into their new role as Peer Mentors for the fall. I expect that you will see Jordan and Josh frequently in class, the dorm, and so on, and I encourage you to look to them for support about your coursework and/or campus life in general as often as you like.

**Course Requirements**
As a whole, our assignments are designed to support the shared learning outcomes for the first-year seminar course, which nurture the intellectual skills necessary for liberal learning. It is agreed that, while successfully completing an FSEM, students will

- utilize a variety of research techniques to retrieve information efficiently, evaluate retrieved information, and synthesize information effectively to support their messages or arguments;
- improve development and organization of written arguments;
- demonstrate the ability to edit and revise in the writing process;
- apply the basic theories and principles of oral communication; and
• communicate effectively in a variety of settings, including public speaking and group discussion.

**Online Learning Modules and Library Orientation Tutorial (5 pts. for completion of all):** You will complete a series of six online learning modules designed to reinforce fundamental skills in research, writing, and oral communication necessary for academic success. Each module is an interactive online application in Canvas that focuses on discrete ideas and introduces a topic or a basic skill. By the end of the semester, you will get the opportunity to hone these skills via the following six modules: Handling Communication Apprehension, Checking for CRAAP, Deconstructing Citations, The Writing Process, Punctuation, and Effective Visual Aids. The due dates for each are noted on the schedule and in Canvas. They may be completed ahead of time, but all will be disabled by midnight on October 10 (Fall Break). To access the modules, go to the Module tab on the left navigation bar in Canvas; each one has several different sections you will read or watch before taking the quiz.

Additionally, prior to our library session with Mr. Peter Catlin, you complete the online introduction to library services, including the worksheet. The librarian will confirm your completion of the assignment for me. This assignment must be submitted by midnight on September 20. It is accessible in the Assignments section of Canvas, grouped with the FSEM module quizzes.

**Assigned Readings:** This course has a demanding and constant reading load, sometimes from very challenging texts. You should have completed assigned readings before class and should bring the necessary works to each meeting, including those from the blog (printed or digital).

“Completing” the reading does not mean just skimming your eyes over an assigned number of pages. It means assuring that you’ve understood the language of a text by researching unfamiliar terms and ideas, and also beginning the process of critical engagement with the concepts in those assigned pages, even if you only feel prepared to formulate a few good questions. This semester we will be working on active reading skills.

**Class Participation: Discussion and Free Blogging (15 pts.):** This course asks you to respond thoughtfully in several ways to our readings. A primary way is through discussion, which will be our principal format for class meetings. You needn’t be an “expert” to participate. Remember that asking a good question is as—or sometimes more—valuable than offering a completed thought. *Some of the topics we discuss this semester may evoke strong responses; I should not need to say that I expect respect and civility even in disagreement, and this applies equally to the blog.*
In addition to hosting announcements, assignments, etc., the blog will function as a place to develop threads we begin in class; to introduce topics of interest we didn’t talk about; to supplement our knowledge with outside materials, links, or information; to respond personally to the literature we read; and more. Original posts and comments on posts are equally valuable; this should emerge as a dialogue, not a series of disconnected monologues. Occasionally I may give a prompt for blog posting, but most of the time the writing will be done on your own initiative. **All class members should be reading the blog throughout the week, and you should plan on posting and commenting quite regularly.**

An unusual feature of the blog is that it is a site you will share with my other section of the Down the Rabbit Hole FSEM. I understand that the danger in this is that the larger audience may shift the way you frame your writing or develop your voice in complicated, but not necessarily negative, ways. The benefit is that you will have the intellectual power of two times as many students supporting your own learning this semester; since class discussion and interests are somewhat fluid and student-centered, the blog posting done by the other section may expose interesting threads of analysis that never came up in your own class.

I don’t want you to think about class discussion or the blog chiefly as a time to impress me; this seminar’s success depends on our commitment to one another as a community of learners, and being willing to take risks and able to listen are essential for this dialogue to flourish. You will need to revise any sense you have of the classroom and blog as a place for passively receiving knowledge. Instead, these are places where we will think, write, share, and learn together collaboratively.

Participation is required in both fora and will be assessed for frequency and quality. To some degree, this portion of your grade is up to you—your engagement with the course material, your commitment to sharing ideas verbally and in writing. **If you miss four or more classes (except in extraordinary circumstances), the portion of your grade for participation will be substantially lowered.** Chronically tardy arrivals are not acceptable. It is your responsibility to find out what you have missed when you are absent.

►►Extra Credit (huzzah!)◄◄
See the page on the blog marked EC for information about campus events that may enable you to earn extra credit for participation.

Speech on Childhood and Memory (10 pts.): This assignment will challenge you early in the semester to become comfortable speaking in front of the seminar and to begin polishing your formal speaking skills. Each student will give a speech (5-6 minutes) that will be essentially personal in nature. Memory is something that we agree is subjective, idiosyncratic, and even changeable, and yet for most of us it is also something we rely on heavily to establish our identities as individuals, within
communities and families, and in or at certain spaces and events. For this assignment, you will choose one visual aid (tangible object or image to show) on which to focus your reflection on your childhood. 

Your speech should
a) narrate for or explain to us the significance of the object or image and what very specific memory it represents, and
b) reflect on what that memory illuminates about you now, how it illustrates or prompted the person you became.

**Essays (2 at 15 pts. each = 30 pts.):** These assignments accomplish more than one objective. Careful focus on the texts will enrich understanding of course themes as they develop and shift throughout the semester. And the practices will also build or reinforce essential critical reading, thinking, and writing skills you will use throughout college, with the goal of improving those proficiencies. Because they are short-ish essays, they demand excellent focus, meaningful development, and lucid prose. Each will be assessed for the depth and sophistication of its thinking and the grace, correctness, and clarity of its writing. More information about the essays will be available on Canvas and the Blog. They will focus on analysis of literature (*Alice on the Page*) and film (*Alice on Screen*).

**Library Research Assignment (20 pts.):** With this assignment, you will begin to gain
  1) familiarity with the methods of appropriate scholarly research, a task in which we will be aided by UMW Librarian Peter Catlin;
  2) practice in understanding and summarizing professional writing and, importantly, assessing and responding to it.

The first product of the LRA will be an annotated bibliography of four sources related to one of the following topics that shape our seminar:
- Cultural, historical, or psychological models of childhood
- Victorian photography
- Illustrators or translations of Carroll’s works
- Alice and/in drug culture
- Alice and/in gaming
- Medicine and/in Alice (e.g., Alice in wonderland syndrome, mercury poisoning, mental health)
- Literary analyses of qualities like Carroll’s use of satire, of linguistic play, of the genre of the *bildungsroman*
- The 19th-century emergence of children’s literature
- Gendered childhood in the Victorian era (clothing, education, activities)
- Legal codes and the Alice books
- Ethics in/from the Alice books
- Politics in/of Alice books or films
- Topic of your choice approved by Dr. Scanlon no later than Friday, October 16.
More information on your process and the requirements of an annotated bibliography will be posted to the blog. The due date is midnight on **Wednesday, October 28**, submitted as a document or pdf in Canvas.

**Oral Presentations of Research (10 pts.):** This is the second product of your Library Research Assignment. Like your speech on childhood and memory, this is an assignment designed to improve your formal public speaking skills. However, in this case, rather than a personal subject, you will be talking about a scholarly topic, informed by expert voices from your research. That task will require different organization, incorporation of materials and concepts, and use of visual aids. All speakers must present for 6-8 minutes. The oral presentations of research will have several options for their format and purpose, from analytical/argumentative to informative. More details will be given on the blog and Canvas.

**Final Project (10 pts.)**

**Policies and reminders**

- Grades of B and A are reserved for work that is distinctly above average or excellent.
- Unless otherwise specified, your written assignments will be submitted in Canvas as url links, word documents, or pdf files.
- Generally an assessment rubric will be available in Canvas with each assignment for your reference as you complete the work. I will use Canvas for returning feedback on graded material and maintaining the gradebook.
- Due dates are not estimates and are not flexible except under extraordinary circumstances (as determined by me). **You should contact me as soon as possible if you anticipate a problem with a due date so we can discuss an extension.**

The **Speaking Center**, **Writing Center**, and **Digital Knowledge Center**, all located on the fourth floor of the ITCC, are excellent resources for this class, and I urge you to use them. We will tour these centers early in the semester. Trained peer consultants can provide support and targeted feedback for speeches, pieces of writing, and technological projects. The Speaking Center also has a collection of instructional materials on topics from posture to speaking anxiety to organizing a speech to constructing effective visual aids, found here: [http://academics.umw.edu/speaking/speaking-center/useful-handouts/](http://academics.umw.edu/speaking/speaking-center/useful-handouts/). Likewise, the Writing Center also has numerous reference handouts on writing, grammar, references, and more, which are available here: [http://academics.umw.edu/writing-fredericksburg/printed-resources-and-links/](http://academics.umw.edu/writing-fredericksburg/printed-resources-and-links/).

**A note on academic integrity:** All work in this course is covered by the UMW Honor Code, and I expect you to adhere to it at all times. This refers to the promise you
made to your fellow students and the UMW community not to lie, cheat, or steal. Details of the UMW Honor System are available here.

Plagiarism, like all cheating, is a serious offense. It means presenting another person's work as your own—whether that person is a friend, writing center or speaking center tutor, professional, or published author. Copying passages or paraphrasing ideas belonging to another person without acknowledging the source of those ideas is plagiarism. You can avoid this offense if you simply cite and reference the source you use, if any. I am quite willing to help you understand strategies for quotation and citation but I am not willing to be lenient on plagiarism, so please consult with me if you need to.

**Disability services:** The Office of Disability Resources has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through ODR and require accommodations for this class, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss confidentially your approved accommodation needs and bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. If you have not made contact with the Office of Disability Resources and need accommodations, their phone number is 540-654-1266.
Provisional Course Schedule

Week 1

Prologue: “Begin at the beginning.”

M Aug 24  Introductions
W Aug 26  Tech training: BRING YOUR LAPTOP

Down, down, down


Week 2

M Aug 31  Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland 19-41; throughout, refer to Milner, “Poems of Alice in Wonderland” (blog)
W Sept 2  Carroll, Wonderland 41-66; Module due by midnight: Handling Communication Apprehension
F Sept 4  Carroll, Wonderland 67-83; Module due by midnight: The Writing Process

Week 3

M Sept 7  Carroll, Wonderland 83-99; Module due by midnight: Effective Visual Aids
W Sept 9  Carroll, Wonderland 99-113 and Knapp, Philosophy 47-58

Echoes live in memory yet

F Sept 11  Speeches on Childhood and Memory

Week 4

M Sept 14  Speeches on Childhood and Memory
W Sept 16  Speeches on Childhood and Memory

“I’ve a right to think.”

F Sept 18  Class will meet on the 4th floor of the ITCC for tours of the Writing, Speaking, and Digital Knowledge Centers
Sunday, Sept 20  Modules due by midnight: Checking for CRAAP, Deconstructing Citations AND Library Orientation Tutorial

Week 5
M Sept 21  Meet in Simpson Library 225B for research orientation with Peter Catlin (MAY BRING LAPTOP)

The Dark Art

W Sept 23  Carroll as photographer: Wullschlager, “Victorian Images of Childhood” (blog); Princeton University photos Series I, II, and III (link from blog)
Sept 25  Carroll as photographer; Hollingsworth, “Improvising Spaces” (blog); UT-Austin photos (link from blog); Module due by midnight: Punctuation (Commas and Semicolons)

Week 6
M Sept 28  Advising session with Charles Tate: BRING YOUR LAPTOP.

“Something like our books, only the words go the wrong way”

W Sept 30  Carroll, Alice Through the Looking-Glass & What Alice Found There 119-139 and Shores, Philosophy 197-211
F Oct 2  Carroll, Looking-Glass 139-158

Week 7
M Oct 5  Carroll, Looking-Glass 158-181
W Oct 7  Carroll, Looking-Glass 181-202

Saturday, Oct 10  All modules disabled at midnight

Week 8
M Oct 12  Fall Break

“It means just what I choose it to mean.”

W Oct 14  Philosophical Readings: Mayock, Philosophy 153-166; Brown, Philosophy 79-91; Shea, Philosophy 93-106
Psychoanalytic Readings: Goldschmidt, Schilder, and Bloomingdale essays (blog); 
**special topics for LRA must be cleared with Dr. Scanlon by today**

"Who are you?"
"I hardly know, sir, just at present."

**FIELD TRIP**
**Alice in Wonderland**
**Wednesday October 21, evening**
**Synetic Theater**
**Arlington, VA**
**Details on the blog under Adventure!**

"What is the use of a book without pictures or conversation?"

"That's the most important piece of evidence we've heard yet."
“They don’t seem to have any rules in particular.”

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<td>M Nov 16</td>
<td>Whiting, <em>Philosophy</em> 107-121;</td>
<td>Westmoreland, <em>Philosophy</em> 167-180</td>
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<td>(blog); Grace Slick/Jefferson Airplane,</td>
<td>“White Rabbit” (blog)</td>
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<td>F Nov 20</td>
<td><strong>mns at an academic conference; class will not meet</strong></td>
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Week 14

| M Nov 23      | *Alice*: children’s literature? Debate. *Alice on Screen* essay due at midnight. |
| W Nov 25      | Thanksgiving Break                    |
| F Nov 27      | Thanksgiving Break                    |

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<th>Week 15</th>
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<tr>
<td>M Nov 30</td>
<td>Carroll, “The Hunting of the Snark”</td>
<td>753-774</td>
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<td>W Dec 2</td>
<td>Carroll, “Snark” 775-788</td>
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<td>F Dec 4</td>
<td>Course wrap up</td>
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“Go on till you come to the end; then stop.”

FINALS WEEK

Section 01: Wednesday, December 9, 8:30-11:00
Section 02: Friday, December 11, 8:30-11:00