

This course explores the representation of the human mind in a range of media practices— cinema, television, literature, and games. We will consider how our conceptions of the mind and its many facets are reflected through our media artifacts, and how these artifacts in turn inform cultural understandings of psychological, ontological, and neurological systems. Literature has long engaged with the puzzles of the mind: from mental atrophy in William Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1606), to PTSD in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), to artificial intelligence in William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984). Film and television have brought narratives of the mind to the screen, where addiction, insomnia, depression, dementia, autism, and other disorders of the brain are dramatized. The fragility of memory is performed in *Memento* (2000) and *Still Alice* (2014), while the protocols of psychiatric treatment are chronicled in *The Sopranos* (1997) and *Homeland* (2011). Digital technology has afforded us new ways to represent, explore, and experience the mind through immersion and interactivity in online environments, virtual reality, and video games. Zoe Quinn's *Depression Quest* (2013) conveys the experience of depression by situating the player in a space as it would appear to a sufferer of that illness; in MIT's *EyeWire* (2012), a research venture that fuses gameplay and neuroscience, online players work collaboratively to map 3D neurons in a retina. Through analysis of the expressive and transformative capacities of media, we will confront and critique cultural understandings of what the human mind is and what it may become.

## CTCS 499: Media and the Mind

Professor Kiki Benzón · SCA 316  
Wednesdays, 10:00am - 1:50pm

