

NCUR Application

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Title of Presentation:

Dick Diver's Demise: Mimetic Desire and the American Dream in Tender is the Night

BHSU IRB, IACUC or Biosafety #:

Abstract:

In *Tender is the Night*, F. Scott Fitzgerald introduces readers to successful American born psychologist, Dick Diver. Intelligent, charismatic, and driven, Dr. Diver lives a life of luxury with his family and sophisticated circle of friends on the French Riviera in post-World War I Europe. Early on in the novel, Diver is the poster boy for the American dream as he experiences success in his career, family life, and social sphere. However, as the story progresses, Diver falls from the pedestal he once resided upon. Diver's fall, I argue, occurs because he becomes entrapped within a version of René Girard's Mimetic Triangle of Desire. More specifically, Diver (the subject) is pursuing an object of desire (success) which the mediator (the American dream) has identified as the goal. He is tragically driven by his instinctive pursuit of the American Dream which motivates him to chase an unattainable level of success. Diver's failures stem not only from his pursuit of success, but also due to the abstractness of his goal, the elusiveness of the American dream as a mediator, and the way Diver obtains power from and control of those around him. Diver also fails because he creates counterfeit versions of himself, thereby damaging his sense of personal identity. As Dr. Diver, he wholeheartedly invests in the lives of his patients, but really he takes advantage of them on the side. As a husband, he is the strong leader of his household, but really he uses his authority to maintain control. As a friend, he is a most gracious and entertaining host, but really he uses the attention he receives to feed his ego and generate a superficial sense of power. Ultimately, Diver's lofty idealism and unhealthy relationships with others lead to his failure.

I certify that: My project is at or near completion and the abstract accurately represents my findings:

Yes

Statement of Student Responsibilities:

If my project is accepted for NCUR and I receive funding, I agree to:

- complete my project before departure
- make a trial presentation to my faculty advisor before departure
- present my paper/project at NCUR and attend other sessions
- all required IRB, IACUC and Biosafety approvals have been received
- give presentation at Black Hills Research Symposium (BHRS)
- Represent BHSU in a professional & responsible manner