

The Superior Aesthetic: Dark Academia

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It's that time of the year where school is in session and the days are getting shorter. The sun sets earlier, darkness takes over and not all of the streetlights work. In my mind, it is the perfect time for the dark academia aesthetic to take up every part of my life. Although, I'd like to think I'm always in that mindset being an English creative major and studio art minor. Literature and art consume my soul and I'm here for it.

Dark academia is a romanticized version of the college experience, especially in association with elite universities, that focuses on subjects that fall under the category of the humanities, such as literature, and the arts instead of STEM or business for example. It focuses on being intelligent and having a deep appreciation and understanding of a specific topic.

However, the darkness of dark academia suggests gothic undertones such as obsession, following the lines of a tortured artist. Visually speaking, dark muted or dusty colors are associated with it such as burgundy, navy, deep forest green, black, dark brown, etc. Following the color scheme, clothing items include trench coats, loafers, button down shirts, ties, gingham skirts, tights and more are considered components of the fashion style. Other words or objects associated with dark academia are libraries, old books, candle light, moody, workaholic, overachiever and so much more.

The internet has obviously been obsessed with this aesthetic for years, so with one Google search you can find lists upon lists of recommendations of movies, books, and music to consume that fall under the dark academia category. Being a fan of the aesthetic myself, I have a number of recommendations and things that I want to read, watch and listen to that I haven't had the chance to yet.

Starting off with books, there are a number of classical literature stories that would fall under this category such as "Frankenstein" by Mary Shelly, "The Picture of Dorian Gray" by Oscar Wilde, anything by Edgar Allen Poe and I'd also consider "The Bell Jar" by Sylvia Plath to be under this category too, but I might be biased since I love Sylvia Plath's writing.

For more contemporary selections, I'd suggest "The Secret History" by Donna Tartt, "If We Were Villains" by M.L. Rio, "The Curse Workers" series by Holly Black and "The Maidens" by Alex Michaelides. Obviously, there are far more that fall under this category but these are a mixture of books that I've read and some that I would very much like to read. All of these stories are in an academic setting and have dark undertones that make the morals of the characters questionable.

As for movies and TV shows, some of these could be argued to be light academia or just gothic in general; however, I would still consider the following to be dark academia: "Dead Poets Society," "The Vampire Diaries," "Mona Lisa Smile," "Good Will Hunting," "The Holdovers," "Cruel Intentions," "Whiplash" and there are probably more.

Again this is a combination of ones that I've seen and ones that I'd like to watch. I think there should be more movies and TV shows that are specifically made with dark academia themes in mind because this aesthetic is so visually appealing and the story lines paired with them are intelligent, making the audience question the characters in addition to what they would do in their situations.

Music has more options when it comes to dark academia, especially since there are playlists made by people with specific aesthetics in mind. Classical music as a whole is a great genre to listen to in order to get in the mood of being an academic weapon while doing homework and walking around campus with leaves crunching under your feet.

Some albums and artists that embrace these vibes are "The Tortured Poet's Department" by Taylor Swift, "Everybody Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?" By The Cranberries, Hozier, "Prelude to Ecstasy" by The Last Dinner Party, "Amir" by Tamino, Lana Del Ray, The Neighbourhood and more. All of these I've actually listened to though, so these are genuine and thoughtful recommendations.

If you couldn't tell, I am a bit obsessed with dark academia and find that it suits my likings and falls in line with the media that I enjoy consuming the most. I do think that there should be more forms of media that follow the aesthetic despite the promotion of an unsustainable and unhealthy lifestyle of tortured artists but the romanticized version is intriguing.