

Course:	PHIL 2220	Meeting Times:	Tues & Thurs: 10:00 – 11:20
Term:	Fall 2015	Location:	MINS 106
Instructor:	Casey Ford	Prerequisites:	N/A
Email:	fordc@uoguelph.ca		
Office Hours:	Tuesdays, 1:00 – 2:00 & By Appointment		
Office:	MACK 325		

Philosophy and Literary Art

The distinct studies of philosophy and literature seem to pertain to different worlds and types of inquiry. While philosophy seeks after the truth of the world, literature has sought different ways of aesthetically expressing the world and our experience of it through the diversity of written human language. Despite this difference, the two fields often find themselves coming into contact. Philosophy frequently draws from literary situations and insights about the human condition, and literature often lends itself to philosophical reflections on both the nature of reality and the type of being at the center of human expression. The aim of this course is to investigate this point of encounter between philosophy and literature. Throughout the course we will read pieces of literature from four major genres: drama, poetry, short stories, and the novel. We will take these pieces up with a philosophical eye toward analyzing their implications for understanding human experience and its complicated situation in the world. To assist us in this type of investigation, we will read a series of philosophical texts alongside this literature. Some of these texts provide direct interpretations of the literature themselves, while others pursue philosophical themes central to them. In seeking to elucidate the human condition, we will focus specifically on the individual's relation to death, time, and memory.

Our study will begin with one of the most philosophically rich and seminal pieces of literature in the Western tradition: Sophocles' tragic play *Antigone*. We will devote a number of weeks to closely analyzing the play's challenging depictions of human decision in light of the antagonisms between social, familial, and divine values, as well as the inevitability of death in human life. We will read a series of philosophical interpretations of the figure of Antigone that bring to light both the paradoxical nature of her decision and what it expresses about human nature and the social world more generally. Turning from Ancient Greece to the modern era, we will take up T. S. Eliot's *The Four Quartets*, a modern piece of poetry that reflects on the human experience of time. We will read two classical pieces that provide metaphysical and existential reflections on the nature of time and eternity, ideas at the core of Eliot's poetic reflections. We will then turn to a very different form of literature: the contemporary short story. Building on our discussion of time, Borges and Kafka give expression to alternative and fantastical worlds that manage to elucidate the strangeness of our own world. In the final part of the course, we will read W. G. Sebald's contemporary novel *Austerlitz*, with which we will think about the nature of memory and the struggle at the heart of personal identity. Following from these themes, Benjamin contextualizes the significance and loss involved in the historical transition from the form of the story to that of the modern novel, Barthes questions the role of single authorship, and Simone Weil provides a challenging appraisal of human identity. This final series of texts will allow us to philosophically question the form of modern literature, the role of identity and perspective, and the significance of memory in human writing.

Course Goals

The primary goal of this course is to learn and discover what it would mean to study literature philosophically. To accomplish this, we will (1) do close textual analyses of a diverse range of literature from a philosophical perspective, (2) write clear and sophisticated explanatory and interpretative essays on this literature using philosophical ideas, and (3) discuss and challenge our interpretations of these texts with one another. Rather than treating these literary works as containing a single meaning, we will endeavor to use philosophical ideas to discover the multiple implications these works have for the understanding the strangeness and complexities of human life.

Required Texts

- Sophocles, *Antigone* Eds. Grene & Lattimore / 978-0-226-31151-7
- Jorge-Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions* Penguin / 978-0140286809
- Franz Kafka, *The Complete Stories* Schocken Books / 978-0-8052-1055-2
- W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* Modern Library / 9780676974348]
- Additional texts available on CourseLink

Seminar Format

This course will be a combination of lectures and group discussion. Each meeting will be devoted to a portion of text specified in the reading schedule below. Together we will work through the problems and questions motivating each work, explain their important ideas, critically assess their arguments, and think about the significance of these ideas and arguments in the context of understanding human life.

Assignments & Assessment

Participation (20%)

The study of philosophy is an essentially collaborative practice. It requires one to encounter the ideas of another and to develop responses that are personal, critical, and charitable. Active participation in the classroom, in relation both to the texts being studied and your colleagues, will be a significant part of a rewarding experience in this course. Serious philosophical participation will involve making your ideas, interests, and interpretations known, and in working with others to challenge them. It is your responsibility as a student to determine the level and quality of your participation, and to communicate regularly with the instructor about the required work to receive the grade you desire. Students will be expected to attend *all* class sessions. Moreover, you will be expected to come to class having read the assigned material, with careful notes from your readings, and critical questions prepared for the class.

Critical Questions. Your participation mark will involve completing 10 Critical Questions throughout the semester. There are two formats for these questions. (1) You must formulate a philosophical question about the reading for a particular class session in which the question can be posed, and attempt to answer this question with your own interpretation. (2) Exemplary selections from class will be posted each week, and your task will be to re-phrase another person's interpretation (of your choice) in your own words, and to respond to it with your own interpretation. 50% of your total Critical Questions should be in the second format. These written questions must be turned in *as hardcopies* at the end of class: *No digital copies will be accepted.* They need not be longer than 1/2 single-spaced page (not including heading). These must be submitted for at least 1 class per week, with the exception of Weeks 1 & 12. *Late assignments will not be accepted.*

Explications Essays (x2 / 15% each)

To “explicate” something literally means to unfold it. In the first half of the course, these short writing assignments will be exercises in *explanation*. You will be given short passages or complicated ideas that you must unpack in a clear, nuanced, and sophisticated explanation. You will be asked not to consult or reference secondary scholarship and to focus on the primary text as something to interpret on your own. These explications may be assigned prior to discussing this material in seminar, allowing you to come to seminar with an already developed interpretation. These papers should be roughly 1 page single-spaced.

Midterm Exam (20%)

This take-home exam will involve short explication and interpretative questions pertaining to all the material covered in the course up until the due date of the exam, including *Antigone* and its interpretations, Eliot, Plotinus, and Augustine. Questions must be answered within a limited space as specified on the exam sheet. Spatial limitations will force you to edit your writing carefully to create explanations that are as comprehensive and concise as possible. Answers must be *explanatory* rather than *critical*, which means that you will be evaluated primarily on how well you answer the question or explain the specified idea. Students will be evaluated on the comprehensiveness, clarity, and conciseness of explaining philosophical arguments and concepts.

Final Essay (30%)

This final essay will give you the opportunity to analyze and interpret a specific piece of literature studied in the course with the use of the philosophical ideas. As an *interpretative essay*, the goal is twofold: (1) to *explain* the philosophical meaning behind the specific ideas in question, and (2) to provide an *original interpretation* of the relation between different ideas in different texts. In developing your own thesis, you will thus employ the skills developed throughout your Critical Questions. An interpretation can show how ideas relate or differ in a significant way, especially how literary ideas are elucidated by philosophical ones. A list of possible questions will be provided, each of which will be designed to focus your attention on specific ideas and to provide the opportunity to develop an original thesis and interpretation of these ideas.

Course Policies

Regular attendance and active participation are mandatory requirements for this course because they are essential components of a rich and rewarding classroom experience. To this same end, students are expected to engage respectfully with their colleagues in philosophical discussion. Computers are permitted only for note-taking and reading purposes and should not be used to the distraction of the class. Any student disrupting the attention and work of the class or its instruction will be asked to leave.

If you require any special assistance as a student, I will make my best effort to help you in any way I can to succeed and find the classroom to be an accessible and rewarding space. Please contact me with any information that would assist me in this.

Reading Schedule

Reading schedule is subject to modification by instructor based on the needs, interests, and course of discussion in the class. Check CourseLink regularly for updated Reading Schedule. It is necessary to complete the assigned reading prior to the class for which it is assigned. “Focus” sections designate important portions of larger readings to which you should devote extra attention. Texts marked with an * are available as PDFs on CourseLink.

Week	Assigned Reading
THE INDIVIDUAL AND TRAGEDY	
Th 9/10	Introduction to Course • Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i> (all)
Tu 9/15	• <i>Antigone</i> (cont'd)
Th 9/17	• <i>Antigone</i> (cont'd) • Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Bks. 1-2 [Focus: Bk. 1, Chs. 1-2; Bk. 2, Chs. 1-2] *
Tu 9/22	• <i>Antigone</i> (cont'd) • Hegel, “The Ethical Order” [from <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i>] *
Th 9/24	• <i>Antigone</i> (cont'd) • Jacques Lacan, “Antigone between two deaths” [from <i>Seminar 7: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis</i>] *
Tu 9/29	• <i>Antigone</i> (cont'd) • Luce Irigaray, “The Eternal Irony of the Community” * Explication 1 Due (in class)
TIME AND THE POEM	
Th 10/1	• T.S. Eliot, <i>The Four Quartets</i> (all) *
Tu 10/6	• Plotinus, “Time and Eternity” [from <i>The Enneads</i>] *
Th 10/8	• <i>The Four Quartets</i> (cont'd) • Plotinus (cont'd) Midterm Exam Handed Out
Tu 10/13	<u>Fall Study Break – No Class</u>
Th 10/15	• <i>The Four Quartets</i> (cont'd) • Augustine, “Time and Eternity” [from <i>Confessions</i>] * Midterm Exam Due (in class)
Tu 10/20	• <i>The Four Quartets</i> (cont'd) • Augustine (cont'd)

WORLDS AND THE SHORT STORY	
Th 10/22	Jorges-Luis Borges, from <i>Collected Fictions</i>
Tu 10/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Funes, His Memory” • “The Lottery in Babylon” • “The Library of Babel”
Th 10/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gilles Deleuze, “Literature and Life” [from <i>Essays Critical and Clinical</i>] *
Tu 11/3	Franz Kafka, from <i>The Complete Stories</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Penal Colony” • “The Great Wall of China” • Friedrich Nietzsche, “Second Essay” [from <i>The Genealogy of Morals</i>] *
Th 11/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kafka (cont’d) • Nietzsche (cont’d) Explication 2 Due (in class) * Drop Date: <u>Friday, Nov. 6th</u>
MEMORY, SELF, AND THE MODERN NOVEL	
Tu 11/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller” *
Th 11/12	
Tu 11/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W. G. Sebald, <i>Austerlitz</i>
Th 11/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Austerlitz</i> (cont’d)
Tu 11/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author” *
Th 11/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Austerlitz</i> (cont’d) • Simone Weil, “Human Personality” and “The Self” [from <i>An Anthology</i>] *
Tu 12/1	
Th 12/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Austerlitz</i> (cont’d) • Concluding Course Discussion
TBD	Final Essay Due

8 Standard Statements of the College of Arts

Fall 2015

E-mail Communication

As per University regulations, all students are required to check their **uoguelph.ca** e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, ID#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester **Fall 2015** courses, without academic penalty, is **November 6, 2015**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities which, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c14/c14-strightsrespon.shtml>

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>

If you find yourself in difficulty, contact the undergraduate advisor in your program, or the BA Counseling Office: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/baco/contact.shtml>