

PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE

HOURS: Monday, Wednesday 3-4:50
CLASSROOM: 60/109; FILM SCREENINGS IN 460/334

INSTRUCTORS

Lanier Anderson, Philosophy
Office: Building 1
Office hours: by appt.

John Holliday, Philosophy
Office: 100/102M
Office hours: W 12-2 p.m.

Joshua Landy, Comp. Lit.
Office: 260/104
Office hours: by appt.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Radhika Koul, Comp. Lit.

Taylor Madigan, Philosophy

COURSE OUTLINE

Why would a writer whose aims are philosophical produce anything other than a treatise? Why would a writer whose aims are literary make use of philosophical ideas, motifs, and vocabulary? What, in general, can literary forms achieve that non-literary forms cannot?

In this course, we will discuss whether it is more appropriate to think of imaginative literature as conveying *truths*, as transmitting idiosyncratic *visions*, as inventing glorious *lies*, as setting up useful *make-believe* scenarios, or as providing *formal models* for the well-lived life. We will also ask whether literature can improve its readers morally—or whether, on the contrary, its core function may depend on a steady refusal to offer clear positions and to adopt definitive stances.

We will explore three general kinds of connection between philosophy and literature:

- (1) philosophy *on* literature: philosophical approaches to the understanding of literary texts (issues of truth, authorship, selfhood);
- (2) philosophy *in* literature: literary texts that explicitly invoke philosophical problems or approaches (particularly those belonging to the ethical domain);
- (3) philosophy *as* literature: problems raised by certain philosophical texts whose proper use requires careful attention to their form.

TEXTS

Sophocles, <i>Oedipus The King</i>	Hackett	0872204928
Plato, <i>Gorgias</i>	Hackett	0872200167
Milan Kundera, <i>Ignorance</i>	Harper	0060002107
Toni Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i>	Harvest	0307264238

Additional readings may be found on Canvas.

NB: *it is your responsibility to bring copies of required reading to class.*

ELIGIBILITY

This is an undergraduate class—preference will be given to sophomores and juniors—designed in part as a gateway course for the major tracks in literature and philosophy. Affiliation with these tracks is, however, *not* a requirement.

REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

NB: *requirements are the same regardless of unit count.*

Close reading / argument reconstruction (2-4 pages): 10%

First paper (c. 1800 words): 30%

Second paper (c. 2500 words): 40%

Intellectual engagement (including regular attendance at lecture and section): 20%

Late papers will be penalized by one third of a letter grade the first day and an additional third of a letter grade every second day thereafter.

NB: in order to pass the class, you must secure a passing grade *on every component.*

SCHEDULE

Monday September 24: INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS LITERATURE FOR?

Wednesday September 26: LITERATURE AS TRUTH, LITERATURE AS LIES

LITERATURE: Sophocles, *Oedipus The King*; Lydia Davis, "New Year's Resolution"

PHILOSOPHY: Plato, *Republic X*, 595a-608b

Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* vol. I, section 51; vol II, section 37, p. 450; two-page introduction (Suggested: Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* vol. I, sec. 34)

Monday October 1: LITERATURE AS GOOD LIES

PHILOSOPHY: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* §7, §24, §25; *Beyond Good and Evil* §24; *The Gay Science* §54, §78, §107, §290, §299, §344; *The Will to Power* §853. (Suggested: *Beyond Good and Evil* §4.)

LITERATURE: Sophocles, *Oedipus The King*

Wednesday October 3: LITERATURE AS EXPRESSION (METAPHOR)

LITERATURE: Marcel Proust, The Steeples at Martinville [excerpt from *Swann's Way*]; Charles Baudelaire, "The Swan"; Kay Ryan, "Intention"

THEORY: Marcel Proust, The Septet of Vinteuil [excerpt from *The Captive*]

Wednesday October 3, 7p.m.: SCREENING: "Adaptation" (w. Charlie Kaufman, d. Spike Jonze, 2002, 114 min)

Monday October 8: LITERATURE AS EXPRESSION: AN OBJECTION ["DEATH OF THE AUTHOR"]

THEORY: Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" [read for the general idea]

Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" [read for amusement]

Alexander Nehamas, "The Postulated Author" [read carefully]

Virginia Woolf, Incandescence [excerpt from *A Room Of One's Own*]

LITERATURE/FILM: Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*"; Charlie Kaufman, "Adaptation"

Wednesday October 10: LITERATURE AS EMOTION-GENERATOR

LITERATURE/FILM: Charlie Kaufman, "Adaptation"; Rita Dove, "Five Elephants"; Philip Larkin, "Aubade"; Charles Johnson, "Moving Pictures"; Kay Ryan, "Intention"

THEORY: William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, paragraphs 5-8, 15, 26

Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art*, pp. 50-51

Monday October 15: LITERATURE AS EMOTION-GENERATOR II: INTIMACY

THEORY: John Holliday, "Emotional Intimacy in Literature"

LITERATURE: Toni Morrison, *A Mercy* (read at least to p. 49, i.e. end of third chapter)

Tuesday, October 16, 5 p.m.: CLOSE READING / ARGUMENT RECONSTRUCTION DUE. Please upload to Assignments on the Canvas site.

Wednesday October 17: LITERATURE AS EMOTION-GENERATOR III: THE ROLE OF SOUND

LITERATURE: Toni Morrison, *A Mercy* (read at least to p. 78, i.e. end of fourth chapter)

THEORY: Peter Kivy, *Once-Told Tales* (excerpt)

Monday October 22: LITERATURE AS MAKE-BELIEVE

LITERATURE/FILM: Toni Morrison, *A Mercy* (read at least to p. 136, i.e. end of seventh chapter); Charles Johnson, "Moving Pictures"

PHILOSOPHY: Kendall Walton, "Fearing Fictions"

(Suggested: Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Ch. 1, esp. pp. 11-16, 21-43, 51-54)

Wednesday October 24: LITERATURE AS MAKE-BELIEVE II

PHILOSOPHY: Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Ch. 1, esp. pp. 11-16, 21-43, 51-4 (also recommended: pp. 57-69);

Christopher Bartel, "The Puzzle of Historical Criticism"

LITERATURE: Toni Morrison, *A Mercy* (no additional reading required for today, but please read ahead if you have time)

Monday October 29: LITERATURE AS IMAGINATION

LITERATURE: Toni Morrison, *A Mercy* (finish the novel)

PHILOSOPHY: Richard Moran, "The Expression of Feeling in Imagination" (focus on sections 1 & 3; skim section 4)

Monday October 29, 7p.m.: SCREENING: "Vertigo" (w. Alec Coppel/Samuel Taylor, d. Alfred Hitchcock, 1958, 128 min)

Wednesday October 31: LITERATURE AS EDIFICATION

PHILOSOPHY: Martha Nussbaum, "Finely Aware and Richly Responsible": Literature and the Moral Imagination"

LITERATURE: Toni Morrison, *A Mercy* (whole novel); Coppel/Taylor/Hitchcock, "Vertigo"

Friday November 2, TIME TBA: event with R. A. Briggs and Anna Zusman. Extra credit available.

Saturday November 3, 5 p.m.: FIRST PAPER DUE. Please upload to Assignments on the Canvas site.

Monday November 5: LITERATURE AS CLARIFICATION

LITERATURE/FILM: Coppel/Taylor/Hitchcock, "Vertigo"; Lydia Davis, "The Old Dictionary"

THEORY: Joshua Landy, "Chaucer: Ambiguity and Ethics"

Wednesday November 7: LITERATURE AS A WAY OF LIFE: LIFE AS A (TRUE) STORY

PHILOSOPHY: Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of a Tradition";

Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress" (read pp. 348-51; pp. 340-43 are also recommended)

LITERATURE: Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* (excerpts)

Monday November 12: LITERATURE AS A WAY OF LIFE: LIFE AS A (TALL) STORY

LITERATURE: Samuel Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*

PHILOSOPHY: R. Lanier Anderson, "Nietzsche on Truth, Illusion, and Redemption," esp. 185-7, 196-212

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §34, §54, §78, §110, §290, §307, §335, §341, §354

Wednesday November 14: LITERATURE AS A WAY OF LIFE: LIFE AS A POEM / PORTRAIT

LITERATURE: Shakespeare, Sonnet 35

November 19-23: NO CLASSES—THANKSGIVING WEEK

Monday November 26: LITERATURE AS CATALYST: FORMATIVE FICTIONS

PHILOSOPHY/LITERATURE: Plato, *Gorgias*

Wednesday November 28: LITERATURE AS CATALYST: FORMATIVE FICTIONS (II)

LITERATURE/ PHILOSOPHY: Plato, *Gorgias*

Monday December 3: LITERARY PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE (I)

LITERARY PHILOSOPHY: Michel de Montaigne, "Of Repentance"

PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE: Milan Kundera, *Ignorance*

Wednesday December 5: LITERARY PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE (II)

LITERARY PHILOSOPHY: Michel de Montaigne, "Of Repentance"

PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE: Milan Kundera, *Ignorance*

Thursday December 13, 5 p.m.: SECOND PAPER DUE. Please upload to Assignments on the Canvas site.