COURSE SYLLABI:

PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE:

FALL 2004

PROFESSOR: Chris Latiolais, Chair
Philosophy Department
Kalamazoo College
Humphrey House #201
Telephone # 337-7076

Offices Hours:
1) Mon. 11:30 - 1:30.
2) Tues. 11:30- 12:30.
3) By Appointment.

TEXTS:


6. Bakhtin, Mikhail:
   A) "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism", in Speech Genre and Other Essays (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986). [handout]
   B) "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel" and "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope of the Novel", in The Dialogic Imagination (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981):


COURSE GOALS:

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of literature. The fundamental question we address in this course is how "story-telling" in ordinary life and literature are related. In everyday situations, we tell ourselves and others stories about our aspirations, actions and predicaments. These narratives are our fundamental means of communicating how we make sense of, and give meaning to, our involvements. In literature, artists create complex narratives — often improbable or fantastic, but sometimes realistic — about make-believe characters and their worlds. How are such narratives structured? Are there analogies or connections between mundane and artistic narrative representations of life? Are experiences, actions and events structured like stories? Can literary stories alter our own sense of self and world? What is the role of time in human experience, action and self-understanding and how is time represented in literary artworks? With these questions, we address the "large" philosophical question about the role of art in human life. A basic intuition guiding the instructor’s organization of the course is that the continuity of everyday life and the coherence of artistic literature are, of course, distinct though closely related. In the first part of the course, we will explore how 20th-century philosophers have analyzed the connection between narrative structures and the temporal unity of the human self. In the second, we will examine, firstly, Bakhtin’s idea that literary forms can be classified in terms of their different ways of representing time and, secondly, his ambitious claim that the history of Western literature presents the evolving literary assimilation of the real-life experience of time. The order of our literary readings -- a pre-modern epic (Beowulf), a modern novel (Heart of Darkness) and a postmodern novel (The Crying of Lot 49) -- reflects our intention to test this theory. If Bakhtin’s classification of literary forms has any merit, then everyday life and literary creations "correspond" to each other in intricate ways. More importantly, if Bakhtin’s sketch of Western literary history has any merit, then traditional philosophical accounts of personal identity are seriously flawed. Finally, our attention will turn to the so called "post-modern" critique of the unity of the text and the coherence of the self. We end by taking note of recent attempts in psychology to use Bakhtin’s ideas to re-conceive the foundations of narrative self-psychology. In many ways, the overall goal of the course is to attain a better understanding of how narrating -- i.e. "telling stories about" -- actual and possible situations allows humans to "give meaning to" or "make sense of" their lives.
EVALUATION:

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, vocabulary quizzes, midterm examinations and a final paper.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF EVALUATION</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation: Seminar presentations, classroom discussion and email correspondence</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Examinations</td>
<td>2 @ 20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>5 @ 5%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (10-15 pages)</td>
<td>1 @ 25%</td>
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POLICIES:

Students are expected to follow the reading schedule and to come to class prepared to actively discuss the texts they have read. More specifically, students must bring their texts to class with marginal notes, highlighted or underlined passages of particular importance, and pages marked where they have encountered difficulties in understanding the material. Quizzes offer students the opportunity to identify and to clarify central terms and concepts. The midterm assignments allow student to write essays on key philosophical issues and arguments, and the final paper offers students the opportunity to respond in depth to a single topic. The final paper is due on the day scheduled for the final examination. 3 unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction. Late papers will be marked down a half grade for the first day and a full grade for the second day. All work must be turned in at the end of term, unless alternative assignments have been given by the instructor.

BRIDGE READING COMPONENT:

Students interested in exploring interdisciplinary links between course material and their major course of study will be given special readings and assignments. Tutorial meetings are required, and the final paper must be completed in consultation with a professor in a home department.

- **Psychology**: Students interested in studying interdisciplinary connections between the philosophy of literature and the field of psychology may choose, in consultation with the professor, readings from the Psychology Bridge-Reading List (See Philosophy Homepage). Students will be encouraged, however, to read Hermanns and Kempen’s The Dialogical Self: Meaning As Movement (Academic Press, Inc., San Diego, 1993).
- **English**: Students interested in gaining familiarity with literary criticism will be encouraged to read Standard texts dealing with prominent traditions and schools of literary interpretation.
- **Political Science**: Students interested in examining how the philosophy of literature may be connected to normative political issues will be given readings dealing with group-based political theory.

PORTFOLIO WORK:

Some of the assignments of this course may well be revised and used as portfolio entries. The portfolio requirement of the K-plan demands, among other things, that students form some narrative account of their educational development and its contribution to their life-goals. Given that the course is devoted to the study of narrative structure and identity formation, the professor encourages students to use midterm assignments as a basis for raising philosophical questions about the role of education within a reflectively held life-plan.

LECTURE NOTES:

SCHEDULE OF READING

Introduction:

WEEK ONE

**TUESDAY**: Introductory Lecture: Philosophy and Literature:

1. NARRATIVE UNITY, BIOGRAPHICAL WHOLENESS AND THE TEMPORAL CONTINUITY OF THE EXPERIENCE AND ACTION:

   **THURSDAY**:
   2. Begin reading Beowulf.
   3. Quiz # 1.

**WEEK TWO**

**TUESDAY**:  
1. Carr:  
   A) "Temporality and Narrative Structure."
   B) "The Self and the Coherence of Life."

   **THURSDAY**:
   1. Carr: "Temporality and Historicity."
   2. Quiz #2.

2. BEOWULF AND BAKHTIN'S ANALYSIS OF EPIC TEMPORALITY:
WEEK THREE
TUESDAY:
1) Carr: "From I to We."
2) Beowulf

THURSDAY:
1. Beowulf (Cont.)
4. Quiz #4.

WEEK FOUR
TUESDAY:
1. Beowulf (Cont.).
2. Bakhtin: "Epic and Novel" (Cont.)

THURSDAY:
1. Beowulf (Cont.).
2. Bakhtin: "Epic and Novel" (Cont.)
3. Midterm Assignment #1.


WEEK FIVE
TUESDAY:
1. Bakhtin: "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope of the Novel."
2) Begin reading Heart of Darkness

THURSDAY:
1. Bakhtin: "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope of the Novel." (Cont.)
2. Quiz #5.

WEEK SIX
TUESDAY:
1. Bakhtin: "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope of the Novel." (Cont.)
2. Heart of Darkness (Discussion: Author, Narrator and Character).

4. THE TEMPORALITY OF THE BILDUNGSROMAN AND THE IDEAL OF SELFHOOD AS A NARRATIVE UNITY:
THURSDAY:
1. Bakhtin, "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism", in Speech Genre and Other Essays (Handout).
2. Heart of Darkness (Discussion: Author, Narrator and Character).
4. Midterm Assignment #2.

WEEK SEVEN
TUESDAY:
1. Bakhtin, "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism" (Cont.)
2. Frederic Jameson: Excerpt from Postmodernism.

Wednesday Evening Movie: Apocalypse Now (OU 103: 8:00 PM)

5. THE POST-MODERN FRACTURING OF NARRATIVE UNITY: DISCONTINUITY, SELF-IRONY AND MULTIPLE VOICES:
THURSDAY:
2. The Crying of Lot 49.

WEEK EIGHT
TUESDAY:
1. Kristeva, "The Semiotic and the Symbolic" (Cont.)
2. The Crying of Lot 49 (Cont.).
3. Final Assignment.

THURSDAY:
1. Kristeva, "The Semiotic and the Symbolic" (Cont.)
2. The Crying of Lot 49 (Cont.).

WEEK NINE
TUESDAY:
1. Discussion of Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49.

THURSDAY: Thanksgiving Holiday

WEEK TEN
TUESDAY:
1. Discussion of Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49. 1. Student Evaluations.