

PHIL 177 Philosophy and Literature

Syllabus
Fall 2017
MW 5:00-6:20 pm
HSS Building
Room 233A

Andy Lamey
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Office: HSS 7017
W 11:00 am-Noon Th. 2:00-3:00 pm

Content

This class brings philosophical analysis to bear on literary texts. We will read two topical novels with an eye to the philosophical questions they raise. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is set in an alternative reality in which religious fundamentalists have taken over the United States and proclaimed it the Republic of Gilead. We will investigate how Atwood's famous work "employs Plato's 'utopian' vision of state and family in the *Republic* to construct a dystopian vision of state and family in the Republic of Gilead," as one critic has put it. We will then familiarize ourselves with the philosophical debate over the narrative view of the self and well-being before turning to *The Orenda*, which depicts the fraught encounter of indigenous people and European missionaries in early 17th-century North America. A guiding question of our analysis will be what support, if any, the narrative view finds in the self-understanding of the book's central characters. We will also make time to address other questions as they arise in the course of our discussions. Students can do well with no philosophical background.

Assessment

A 1,500-word essay due 5:00 pm Thursday November 2 (25%)

A 2,000-word essay due 5:00 pm Thursday November 30 (25%)

Final cumulative exam (35%) Class Participation (15%)

The key to doing well in this class is staying current with the weekly readings.

Readings and Schedule

There are two assigned texts:

- 1) *The Handmaid's Tale*, by Margaret Atwood. New York: Anchor, 1998 [1985].
- 2) *The Orenda*, by Joseph Boyden. New York, Knopf, 2014.

In addition we will read several philosophical chapters and articles, which will be available on TritonEd.

Week One: Introduction to Phil 177 and Plato

Plato, "Book V," *The Republic* (1991). Allan Bloom, trans. Second Edition. New York: Basic Books, 127-62.

Week Two: Plato's Republic in *The Handmaid's Tale*

Provencal, Vernon (1998). "Byzantine in the Extreme: Plato's *Republic* in *The Handmaid's Tale*." *Classical and Modern Literature* 19/1, 53-76.

Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 1-33.

Week Three: *The Handmaid's Tale*

Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 34-86.

Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 87-127.

Week Four: *The Handmaid's Tale*

Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 128-170.

Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 171-224.

Week Five: *The Handmaid's Tale*

Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 225-76.

Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 277-311.

Thursday November 2nd: First Essay Due 5:00 pm

Week Six: Narrative

Velleman, J. David (1991). "Well-being and Time." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 72: 48-77.

Strawson, Galen (2004) "Against Narrativity." *Ratio* 17 (4): 428-52.

Boyden, *The Orenda*, 1-27.

Week Seven: *The Orenda*

Boyden, *The Orenda*, 28-85.

Boyden, *The Orenda*, 86-144.

Week Eight: *The Orenda*

Boyden, *The Orenda*, 145-202.

Boyden, *The Orenda*, 203-258.

Week Nine: *The Orenda*

Boyden, *The Orenda*, 259-316.

Boyden, *The Orenda*, 316-74.

Thursday November 30: Second Essay Due 5:00 pm

Week Ten: *The Orenda*

Boyden, *The Orenda*, 375-432.

Boyden, *The Orenda*, 433-487.

General Information

Office Hours

I keep both normal and electronic office hours. Drop by in person or contact me via Skype (ID: andy_lamey). I am also available immediately after class or by appointment. I am always happy to discuss any aspect of this course with you.

Email Policy

I am happy to reply to emails sent from UCSD email addresses. I do not reply to emails from non-UCSD addresses. Please note that there are two subjects I do not discuss by email, even if they are sent from a UCSD account. These are:

- a) Requests for information about the exam that arrive in the 24-hour period immediately preceding the exam.
- b) Requests to adjust your final class grade. If you have an issue with your grade please make an appointment to discuss it during my office hour next quarter.

Submission

Both essays will be submitted electronically. Hard copies are not required.

One-time Discretionary Essay Extension

I am happy to grant each student one essay extension of up to 48 hours without requiring a medical certificate or other documentation. In order to grant such an extension I need to receive your request before noon on the day the essay in question is due. Email is fine, but please note that UCSD's email servers sometimes go down, and students are advised not to leave their requests to the last minute. Requests received after noon on the due date will require documentation, as will requests for extensions longer than 48 hours. Please note that if you receive an extension your paper may be returned a few days after those that were completed on time.

Note that each student is entitled to only one discretionary essay extension. So if you receive one for your first essay, any extension for the second essay will require documentation.

Late Work

For all assignments handed in after the due date and without an extension, a five percent penalty applies for the first day of the missed deadline. After that, a subsequent penalty of two percent per day will be applied for the next thirteen calendar days after the due date (including Saturdays and Sundays). No assignment can be accepted after more than fourteen calendar days except in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with your professor. Assignments that are handed in late without an extension will be graded and returned after those that were completed on time and will not receive comments.

Note that there is no option to complete assignments for bonus marks.

Accommodation for Disability

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged. Contact the OSD for further information: 858.534.4382 (phone), osd@ucsd.edu (email), disabilities.ucsd.edu (web)

Academic Integrity

Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. More information about UCSD's policy on academic integrity is available at <http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/appendices/2>

Technology in the Classroom

Please note that until further notice, laptops and tablets are not permitted in lecture. Your TA will let you know what the policy is in discussion group.

Waitlist

Students will be admitted to this class according to their place on the waitlist.

Exams

All students except those registered with the OSD are required to take the exam on the scheduled day and time.