

Phil 177 Philosophy & Literature

Syllabus
Winter 2024
Tu.-Thu. 9-30-11:50 am
Ridgewalk Academic Complex
My office: RWAC 0491

Andy Lamey
alamey@ucsd.edu
(858) 534-9111 (no voicemail)
Room 0426
Student drop-in hours: M&T: 11:00-11:50 am

1. Overview

Philosophy has been in dialogue with literature for over two thousand years. This class will examine that dialogue by bringing philosophical analysis to bear on literary texts. We will begin by examining the nature and function of narrative, as it has been discussed in philosophy, fiction and literary-non fiction. We will then read three 20th-century authors broadly associated with literary existentialism, Sartre, Beckett and Kafka, although we will try to get past that label to take note of their unique concerns as much as their shared ones. The second half of our class will primarily be concerned with close readings of two novels. The first, *Remainder*, by Thomas McCarthy, is a 21st work of philosophical-informed fiction that continues and updates themes found in our module on narrative and among our “existentialist” authors. Finally, we will engage in a close reading of Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*, which also continues the preceding themes, but which also retells the Faust myth, satirizes Russian literary life under Stalin and comments critically on Biblical narrative and Christianity. Along the way we will make time to address other questions as they arise in the course of our discussions. Students can do well with no philosophical background.

2. Assessment

A 1,500-word essay due at 5:00 pm Wednesday January 31 (30%)

A 2,000-word essay due at 5:00 pm Wednesday February 28 (30%)

A 2,000-word word essay due at 8:00 am Tuesday March 19 (30%)*

In-class Participation (10%)

* Students can be excused from writing the third essay by regularly submitting 200-word discussion questions. See the final page of this syllabus for further details.

Please note that there is a strong penalty for using ChatGPT to create or partially create written work for this class. Students who are found to have done so will receive a class grade of F (fail).

3. Readings and Schedule

Most of the readings are on Canvas. The exceptions are the books by McCarthy and Bulgakov, which are in stock and available for purchase or rent at the bookstore. Both

are also on reserve at the library. Note that it will help your class participation, and so your grade, if you are able to access print or electronic copies of assigned texts during class.

Week One Jan. 8-12.

Tues: No Reading

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

Week Two January 15-19.

Thurs: Joan Didion. The White Album. *The White Album* (New York, Pocket Books, 1979), 11-47.

Tues: Alice Munro, Menesetung. *The Best American Short Stories of the Century*. John Updike and Katrina Kenison eds. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 633-51.

Note second ending. From: Alice Munro, *Friend of My Youth* (New York: Knopf, 1990).

Week Three January 22-26.

Tues: Jean-Paul Sartre. No Exit. *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (New York: Vintage International, 1989 [1944]), 1-46.

Thurs: Samuel Beckett. *Waiting for Godot* (New York: Grove Press, 1954 [1953]).

Week Four January 29-February 2.

Tues: Franz Kafka. The Metamorphosis. *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories* (New York: Schocken, 1995 [1915]), 89-139.

Thurs: Franz Kafka, In the Penal Colony. *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories* (New York: Schocken, 1995 [1919]), 191-230.

First Essay Due: Wednesday January 31 5:00 pm.

Week Five February 5-9.

Tues: Tom McCarthy. *Remainder* (New York: Vintage, 2007 [2005]), 1-72.

Thurs: McCarthy. *Remainder*, 73-154.

Week Six February 12-16.

Tues: McCarthy. *Remainder*, 155-228.

Thurs: McCarthy. *Remainder*, 229-end.

Week Seven February 19-23.

No class Tuesday.

Thurs: Zadie Smith. Two paths for the novel. *The New York Review of Books* 55 / 18 (2008): 1-13.

Thurs: Carlos Fuentes, *Aura* Lysander Kemp, trans. (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux 1986 [1962]).

Week Eight February 26-March 1.

Tues: Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, trans. (London: Penguin, 2016 [1967]), 1-66.

Thurs: Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 67-133.

Second Essay Due: Wednesday February 28 5:00 pm.

Week Nine March 4-8.

Tues: Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 134-200.

Thurs: Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 201-66.

Week Ten March 11-15.

Tues: Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 267-333.

Thurs: Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, 334-396.

Exam-week essay due at start of scheduled exam time.

4. General Information

Student Drop-in Hours

I am happy to meet with students during drop-in hours. I am also available 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 an exam or assignment due during exam week that arrive in the 24-hour period immediately preceding the exam or assignment deadline.

b) Requests to discuss or 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. If you are graduating let me know and we will make alternative arrangements.

One-time Discretionary 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 (San Diego time) 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 48 hours 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.

Also please note that discretionary extensions are NOT available for assignments due during exam-week.

Late Essays

For all essays 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 non-essay assignments (e.g. Perusall assignments or online quizzes, if this class has either) are likely to have different lateness penalties. If so these will normally be outlined in the first class.

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 <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/process/policy.html>

Health and Well-being

During your time at UCSD, you may experience a range of issues that can negatively impact your learning. These may include physical illness, housing or food insecurity, strained relationships, loss of motivation, depression, anxiety, high levels of stress, alcohol and drug problems, feeling down, interpersonal or sexual violence, or grief.

These concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and affect your ability to participate in day-to-day activities. If there are issues related to coursework that are a source of particular stress or challenge, please speak with me, Professor's Lamey, so that I am able to support you. UC San Diego provides a number of resources to all enrolled students, including:

Counselling and Psychological Services (858-534-3755 | caps.ucsd.edu)

Student Health Services (858-534-3300 | studenthealth.ucsd.edu)

CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center (858-534-5793 | care.ucsd.edu)

The Hub Basic Needs Center (858-246-2632 | basicneeds.ucsd.edu)

We care about you at UC San Diego, and there is always help available.

Discussion Questions Option

Students have the option of submitting 200-word discussion questions in lieu of writing the final essay. Students who exercise this option will be excused from having to write the third essay. The third essay grade will instead be determined according to the following formula:

12 discussion questions submitted throughout quarter: third essay grade is the *lower* of your first and second essay grades.

15 discussion questions submitted throughout quarter: third essay grade will be the *average* of your first and second essay grades

18 discussion questions: third essay grade will be an A (A+ for students who received an A on both the first and second essay).

Note that a condition of exercising the discussion question option is meeting a minimum threshold of class participation, enough to merit a participation grade of C-.

A discussion question should raise some topic for discussion from an assigned class reading. It should engage one of the ideas in the reading and be at least 200 words in length (it is fine if it is longer). There is no expectation that discussion questions will summarize an entire reading (which is impossible to do in 200 words).

Discussion question should show evidence of having done the assigned reading. A very general question that anyone could raise (i.e. "What is justice?") is not the right kind of question.

Discussion questions should not draw on texts that are not assigned class readings.

To be accepted, discussion questions need to be emailed to Prof. Lamey at least an hour before class. Be prepared to have a question rejected if it arrives even one minute after this time. Students can send more than one question per class session, depending on how many readings are assigned for that day.

In general, any 200-word question that is about the relevant reading that arrives on time is an acceptable discussion question, and most students should not find it difficult to write them. Students are encouraged to aim for at least 12 questions, but are not required to.