

PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE

HOURS: Monday, Wednesday 3:15-5:05
CLASSROOM: Education 334

INSTRUCTORS

Joshua Landy, French & Italian
Office: 260/104
Mailbox: 260/124
Email: landy@stanford.edu
Office hours: **sign up at jloh.pbwiki.com**

Lanier Anderson, Philosophy
Office: 100/101D
Mailbox: bldg. 90
Email: lanier@stanford.edu
Office hours: **TBA**

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Lucy Alford, Comparative Literature
Email: lucya@stanford.edu

Fernando Rudy, Philosophy
Email: ferudy@stanford.edu

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
Virginia Woolf, <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	Harvest	0156628708
Milan Kundera, <i>Ignorance</i>	Harper	0060002107

Additional readings may be found online, via coursework.stanford.edu.
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 new set of major tracks in literature and philosophy. Affiliation with these tracks is, however, *not* a requirement.

REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

Take-home exercise (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.

SCHEDULE

Monday January 7: INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS LITERATURE FOR?

Wednesday January 9: LITERATURE AS TRUTH, LITERATURE AS LIES

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

Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* vol. I, sections 34, 51; two-page introduction

(Suggested: Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* vol. II, pp. 433-4)

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

Monday January 14: LITERATURE AS GOOD LIES

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* §1, §7, §8, §24, §25; *The Will to Power* §853;

Beyond Good and Evil §1, §4, §24; *The Gay Science* §54, §107, §290, §299, §344; *The Genealogy of Morals* III:23-25

TEST CASE: Sophocles, *Oedipus The King*

Wednesday January 16: LITERATURE AS EXPRESSION (METAPHOR)

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

T. S. Eliot, "Hamlet"

M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, pp. 326-33

(Suggested: M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, pp. 8-26; Arthur Danto, "Metaphor, Expression, and Style" 165-71)

TEST CASE: Marcel Proust, The Steeples at Martinville [excerpt from *Swann's Way*]

Monday January 21: NO CLASS (MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY)

Wednesday January 23: LITERATURE AS EXPRESSION: METAPHOR CONTINUED

Max Black, "Metaphor"

Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean"

(Suggested: David Hills, "Aptness and Truth in Verbal Metaphor")

TEST CASES: Emily Dickinson, "I Dwell in Possibility"; Wallace Stevens, "Man and Bottle";

Charles Baudelaire, "The Swan"; Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants";

Lydia Davis, "Away from Home"

Wednesday January 23, 7p.m.: SCREENING: "Crimes and Misdemeanors" (w. & d. Woody Allen, 1989, 104 min)

Monday January 28: LITERATURE AS EXPRESSION: AN OBJECTION ["DEATH OF THE AUTHOR"]

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*]

TEST CASES: Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*"; "Crimes and Misdemeanors"

Tuesday, January 29, 5 p.m.: TAKE-HOME EXERCISE. Please send as email attachment to both professors and your TA.

Wednesday January 30: LITERATURE AS MAKE-BELIEVE

Kendall Walton, "Fearing Fictions"

(Suggested: Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe*, Ch. 1, esp. pp. 11-16, 21-43, 51-4.)

TEST CASES: "Crimes and Misdemeanors"; Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (read at least to p. 48)

Monday February 4: LITERATURE AS MAKE-BELIEVE / SIMULATION

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

TEST CASES: "Crimes and Misdemeanors"; Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (read at least to p. 122)

Wednesday February 6: LITERATURE AS IMAGINATION

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

TEST CASE: Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (finish the novel)

Wednesday February 6, 7p.m.: SCREENING: "The Usual Suspects" (W: Christopher McQuarrie, D: Bryan Singer, 1995, 106 min)

Monday February 11: LITERATURE AS EDIFICATION

Martha Nussbaum, “‘Finely Aware and Richly Responsible’: Literature and the Moral Imagination”

Tamar Gendler, “The Puzzle of Imaginative Resistance”

TEST CASE: Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*; “The Usual Suspects”

Wednesday February 13: LITERATURE AS CLARIFICATION

Joshua Landy, “A Nation of Madame Bovarys”

(Suggested: Richard Posner, “Against Ethical Criticism”)

TEST CASES: Geoffrey Chaucer: “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” (incl. prologue & epilogue), “Valediction” (aka “Retraction”); “The Usual Suspects”; Lydia Davis, “The Old Dictionary”; Edgar Allan Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart”

Friday February 15, 5 p.m.: FIRST PAPER DUE. Please send as email attachment to both professors and your TA.

Monday February 18: NO CLASS (PRESIDENTS’ DAY)

Wednesday February 20: LITERATURE AS A WAY OF LIFE: LIFE AS A POEM / PORTRAIT

Michel de Montaigne, “To the Reader”; “Of Giving the Lie”; “Of Presumption”

Suggested reading: Anderson & Landy, “Philosophy as Self-Fashioning: Alexander Nehamas’s Art of Living”

TEST CASES: Shakespeare, Sonnet 35

Friday February 22, 4:00-6:30 p.m.: NARRATIVE SELFHOOD EVENT (extra credit available)

Saturday January 15, 10 a.m. – 6:45 p.m.: NARRATIVE SELFHOOD EVENT (extra credit available)

Monday February 25: LITERATURE AS A WAY OF LIFE: LIFE AS A (TRUE) STORY

Alasdair MacIntyre, “The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of a Tradition” (*After Virtue*)

TEST CASE: Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* (excerpts)

Wednesday February 27: LITERATURE AS A WAY OF LIFE: LIFE AS A (TALL) STORY

R. Lanier Anderson, “Nietzsche on Truth, Illusion, and Redemption,” esp. 185-7, 196-212.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §34, §78, §110, §290, §307, §335, §341, §354; *Ecce Homo* frontispiece

TEST CASE: Samuel Beckett, *Krapp’s Last Tape*

Monday March 4: LITERATURE AS CATALYST: FORMATIVE FICTIONS

TEST CASE: Plato, *Gorgias*

Tuesday March 5, 5:30-7:00 p.m.: Robert Gooding-Williams on “Obama, DuBois, Autobiography” (extra credit available)

Wednesday March 6: LITERATURE AS CATALYST: FORMATIVE FICTIONS (II)

TEST CASE: Plato, *Gorgias*

Monday March 11: LITERARY PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE

LITERARY PHILOSOPHY: Michel de Montaigne, “Of Repentance”; “To Flee from Sensual Pleasures at the Price of Life”

PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE: Milan Kundera, *Ignorance*

Wednesday March 13: CONCLUSIONS

Thursday March 21, 5 p.m.: SECOND PAPER DUE. Please send as email attachment to both professors and your TA.