

POLITICS AND LITERATURE

Syllabus

Lewis Fallis

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Office Hours: Fridays 2-5, in person

CTI324/GOV3350

Spring 2023

In this course, we will investigate a selection of great works of literature, paying special attention to what these novels, plays, short stories, and poems can teach us about political psychology, justice, leadership, law, and partisanship. The five units of the course will be: (i) Greek Playwrights on Justice, War, and Demagoguery, (ii) Shakespeare on Honor and Ambition, (iii) Race and Partisanship, (iv) Russian Nihilism, and (v) Utopias and Dystopias. Some of the questions we will explore are:

- 1) What is the good society?
- 2) What is justice?
- 3) What is good leadership?
- 4) How should we think about the psychology of ambition?
- 5) How should we think about race, racial prejudice, and racial justice?
- 6) How should we think about partisanship, discord, and the role of social media?
- 7) Do universal moral standards exist, which can guide politics?

Because the course will be a discussion-based seminar, you should come to class each day with several questions or comments about the reading, either written down or in your head, which you could share with the class.

Texts

1. Shakespeare's Four Great Histories (Dover)
2. Sweat by Lynn Nottage
3. Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift
4. Course Reader

The course reader will be available at Jenn's Copies on Guadalupe and Dean Keeton. Be sure to buy the course reader by Wednesday, January 11th.

Grades

Your grade will be calculated by the following method. *Plus/minus grades will be used in the final grades.* (A = 93-100, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72, D+ = 67-69, D = 63-66, D- = 60-62, F = below 60.)

- 10% Attendance and Participation
- 15% Six Canvas Posts
- 10% First Creative Assignment (due 2/16)
- 10% Second Creative Assignment (due 3/30)
- 25% Major Paper (due 3/9, OR 4/20)
- 30% Final Exam

Class participation is essential in this course. Each class will begin with an opening lecture in which I will outline some discussion questions we might take up. Much of the rest of each class will depend on your participation, and the discussion's trajectory will depend on what interests you most about the texts we read for that day. I also encourage you to direct your questions and comments not only to me, but also to each other, so that we can spark whole-class discussions.

Over the course of the semester, you will need to post on Canvas SIX reading response paragraphs. Each response paragraph should be 5-7 sentences long. The first three of these six must be submitted by 10:30 AM on the Tuesdays of weeks 2, 3, and 4. The fourth can be submitted by any Tuesday morning you choose (by 10:30 AM) over the course of the rest of the semester. For each Thursday class, feel free to read over the paragraphs your fellow classmates have submitted to the Canvas discussion. Your fifth and sixth Canvas paragraphs (due on 2/21 and 4/4) should be responses to your fellow students' creative assignments.

Each of the two creative assignments (due 2/16 and 3/30) will require you to write a 3-5 page short-story or a one-act play.

At two points in the semester I will hand out possible prompts for the major essay. The major essay will have two possible due dates (3/9, for the first set of prompts, or 4/20, for the second set of prompts).

The final exam, which will be an essay exam, will be written in person during the final exam week.

Electronics Policy

No computers are allowed in class, unless you have a special need for one. Please turn cell phones off, and do not take them out at any time in the classroom.

Accessible/Compliant Statement

If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations, please contact Disability and Access (D&A). You may refer to D&A's website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations.

Writing

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Ethics

This course carries the Ethics flag. Ethics courses are designed to equip you with skills that are necessary for making ethical decisions in your adult and professional life. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments involving ethical issues and the process of applying ethical reasoning to real-life situations.

Requirements

Careful reading is the most important requirement. The reading assignments in this course are subtle and multi-layered. Be sure to read slowly and to take notes, in the margins or in a separate notebook, while you read. Look up frequently from the text and ask yourself, "What are the characters' personalities and motives? What do they seem to believe about politics, their lives, human nature, or the human situation? Why are these speeches, actions, and events being presented to us, and what can we infer about the author's view?"

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One: Can Literature Teach us about Politics?

Week One: Socrates' Critique; A Possible Defense

Reading One: N/A Jan. 10

Reading Two: Plato's *Republic* excerpt, pages 277-291 (course reader) Jan. 12

+ Adichie: "A Private Experience"

+ Forché: "The Colonel"

Weeks Two-Three: Greek Playwrights on Justice, War, and Demagoguery

Week Two: Euripides' *Orestes* (course reader)

Reading One: *Orestes* pages 2-48 *First Canvas Post Due Jan. 17

Reading Two: *Orestes* pages 48-84 Jan. 19

Week Three: Aristophanes' *Peace* (course reader)

Reading One: *Peace* pages 2-44 *Second Canvas Post Due Jan. 24

Reading Two: *Peace* pages 44-80 Jan. 26

Weeks Four-Six: Shakespeare on Honor and Ambition

Week Four: Henry IV Part 1 (in *Four Great Histories*)

Reading One: *Henry IV Part 1*, pages 5-47 *Third Canvas Post Due Jan. 31

Reading Two: *Henry IV Part 1*, pages 48-91 Feb. 2

Week Five: Henry IV Part 2

Reading One: *Henry IV Part 2*, pages 97-153 Feb. 7

Reading Two: *Henry IV Part 2*, pages 154-198 Feb. 9

Week Six: Henry V

Reading One: *Henry V*, pages 203-259 Feb. 14

Reading Two: *Henry V*, pages 260-307 Feb. 16

*****First Creative Assignment Due 2/16*****

Weeks Seven-Nine: Race and Partisanship

Week Seven: Short Stories about Race, Partisanship, and Social Media

Reading One: Baldwin, “Previous Condition” (course reader) *Canvas Post Due Feb. 21

+ Countee Cullen, “Incident”

+ Danielle Evans, “Boys Go to Jupiter”

Reading Two: ZZ Packer, “Brownies” Feb. 23

+ Zadie Smith, “The Lazy River”

+ Muriel Rukeyser, “Ballad of Orange and Grape”

+ Karen Solie, “The Spies” and “She is Buried”

Week Eight: Lynn Nottage, *Sweat*

Reading One: *Sweat*, pages 1-69 Feb. 28

Reading Two: *Sweat*, pages 70-112 Mar. 2

Week Nine: Nottage, *Intimate Apparel*

Reading One: *Intimate Apparel*, pages 268-299 (course reader) Mar. 7

Reading Two: *Intimate Apparel*, pages 300-324 Mar. 9

+ Lucille Clifton, “mulberry fields”

*****Major Paper Due Date One, 3/9*****

Week Ten: SPRING BREAK: March 13-18

Weeks Eleven-Twelve: Russian Nihilism

Week Eleven: Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground*

Reading One: *Notes from Underground* pgs. 5-61 Mar. 21

Reading Two: *Notes from Underground* pgs. 61-113 Mar. 23

Week Twelve: Tolstoy’s *Confession*

Reading One: *Confession* pgs. 13-55 Mar. 28

Reading Two: *Confession* pgs. 55-93 Mar. 30

*****Second Creative Assignment Due 3/30*****

Weeks Thirteen-Fifteen: Utopias and Dystopias

Week Thirteen: Gulliver's Travels

Reading One: *Gulliver's Travels* pages vii-39

*Canvas Post Due

Apr. 4

Reading Two: *Gulliver's Travels* pages 40-75

Apr. 6

Week Fourteen: Gulliver's Travels

Reading One: *Gulliver's Travels* pages 75-113

Apr. 11

Reading Two: *Gulliver's Travels* pages 113-150

Apr. 13

Week Fifteen: Gulliver's Travels

Reading One: *Gulliver's Travels* pages 151-193

Apr. 18

Reading Two: *Gulliver's Travels* pages 194-226

Apr. 20

*****Major Paper Due Date Two, 4/20*****

Final Exam: Date To Be Announced