

Topics in Religion and Literature Rel. 248, Fall 14

Instructor: Dr. Arash Naraghi

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Office Hours: Tue. 2:30-3:30pm, Wed. 2:30-3:30pm,, and by appointment.

Lectures: MW 1:10-2:20pm, Main Street Campus, Memorial Hall, 301.

Course Description:

How the religious dimension of human experience is expressed and interpreted in literature, with focus on a particular author, group of writers, theme, or school of critical interpretation. Identification and evaluation of the way human religious experience is articulated through the literary imagination, whether classical, modern, or contemporary.

Course Objectives:

1. To become familiar with some of the major works of literature in modern culture.
2. To learn about some major theological issues, such as the problem of evil, the meaning of life, religious experience, guilt and guilt feelings, etc.
3. To learn about the relation between modern art and religion.
4. To increase in students' understanding of themselves and their own society.
5. To help students to better articulate their own religious/existential concerns.
6. To increase in students' understanding of other religious perspectives through the imaginative world of literature.
7. To learn critical evaluation of different ideas and perspective, and how be sympathetic and critical as a scholar.
8. To learn how think and write clearly and critically.
9. To understand the relevance and importance of the literary works we cover to individuals and society.
10. To improve students' ability to effectively communicate with others in oral and written forms.

Required Texts:

1. *The Fall*, by Albert Camus
2. *The Myth of Sisyphus*, by Albert Camus
3. *Stranger*, by Albert Camus
4. *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Beckett
5. *Malone dies*, by S. Beckett
6. *Death of Ivan Ilyich*.by Leo Tolstoy
7. *Confessions*, by Leo Tolstoy
8. (Some parts of) *The Brothers Karamazov*, by F. Dostoyevsky
9. (Some parts of) *Crime and Punishment*, by F. Dostoyevsky
10. (Some parts of) *Swann's Way*, By Marcel Proust
11. *The Castle*, by F. Kafka
12. *In the Penal Colony*, by F. Kafka

13. *Trial*, by F. Kafka
14. *Laughter in the Dark*, by Vladimir Nabokov
15. *Phaedrus*, by Plato
16. *The Book of Genesis*
17. (Some parts of) *A Secular Age*, by Charles Taylor
18. (Some parts of) *The Gay Science*, by F. Nietzsche

There would be some other sources including articles and some chapters of books, which will be posted on Blackboard.

Note: You will find that you get the most out of the course if you read each assignment before lecture and then re-read the assignment after the lecture.

Lecture attendance:

It is not possible to perform well in the course without attending lectures regularly. We will cover substantial amounts of material in the lectures not necessarily included anywhere in the readings. It is highly unlikely that you will learn this material adequately by, e.g., borrowing your friend's lecture notes. You have two class sessions you can miss with no question asked. Beyond those two class sessions, any further missed classes without a really good excuse (involving a note from your doctor, psychiatrist, parole officer, etc.) will cost you 2% of your final grade.

Academic honesty:

Students are required to honor academic integrity. The course imposes the application of Moravian College's Academic Honesty Policy. The policy is to be found at Moravian College's *Student Handbook*.

Important Note: Please turn off your cell phones before walking into class! If you are having an emergency that requires you to have your cell phone on, please tell me at the beginning of class. No text messaging is allowed during the class, and the use of computers should be strictly confined to the things directly related to the class.

Course requirements:

- (1) One paper (around 1500-2000 words). Paper should be typed, double spaced, and spell-checked. You are responsible to submit a hard copy of your paper. In some exceptional cases, you may be allowed to submit your paper through email. If so, you must receive a confirmation email from me, otherwise, you must assume that I have not received your paper. If the paper is turned in late without prior permission, the grade will be adjusted downwards by a third of a grade for each day the paper is late (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.). It is always helpful to discuss the draft of your paper with your friends, roommates, or classmates so as to solicit feedback.
- (2) You will be required to write some short paragraphs (roughly two pages) consist of your critical evaluation of the material to be discussed in the class. In the paragraphs, you should concentrate on a specific concept, theme or question. I am to assign 12 assignments throughout the semester; however, you are required to complete only 10 assignments of this sort by the end of the semester. The topic for

the reflecting paper will be posted on Thursdays and the due date will be the next Thursdays (There would be no assignment for the first week).

(3) Each of you is also required to present one presentation.

Grading:

Paper: 30% - Class presentations: 30%, - Weekly assignments: 30%- Class participation: 10%.

The grading scale is as follows:

Points	Grade	4-point conversion
95-100	A	4
90-95	A-	3.7
87-90	B+	3.3
84-87	B	3
80-84	B-	2.7
77-80	C+	2.3
74-77	C	2
70-74	C-	1.7
67-70	D+	1.3
64-67	D	1
60-64	D-	0.7
0-60	F	0

Tentative Lecture Schedule:

Part I: Grand-Narrative vs. Secularization

August: 25, 27

Readings:

- *Phaedrus* (Plato) (Will be posted on Blackboard)
- *The Book of Genesis*
- *A Secular Age* (Taylor) (Will be posted on Blackboard)
- *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche) (Will be posted on Blackboard)

Part II: A world abandoned by God

September: 1, 3, 8

Reading:

- *Stranger* (Camus)

Part II: A World with no meaning

September: 10, 15, 17

Readings:

- *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Camus)
- *Confessions* (Tolstoy)

Part IV: We are going to die
September: 22, 24, 29, October :1
Readings:

- *Malone Dies* (Beckett)
- *The Death of Iyvan Ilyich* (Tolstoy)

Part V: Sin and Punishment
October: 6, 8, 15
Readings:

- *Crime and Punishment* (Dostoyevsky)
- *The Fall* (Camus)
- *Trial* (Kafka)
- *In the Penal Colony* (Kafka)

Part VI: Where are you, God? (The Problem of Evil)
October: 20, 22, 27
Readings:

- *The Brothers Karamazov* (Dostoyevsky)
- *Laughter in the Dark* (Nabokov)

Part VII: Is God coming back?
October: 29, November: 3, 5, 10, 12
Readings:

- *Waiting for Godot* (Beckett)
- *The Castle* (Kafka)
- *Swann's Way* (Proust)

Part VIII: Presentations
November: 17, 19,24 December: 1, 3

Important Notes:

- Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support in the lower level of Monocacy Hall, or by calling 610-861-1401. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.
- The Writing Center is located in a building that is not accessible to persons with mobility impairments. If you need the services of the Writing Center, please call 610-861-1392. The Writing Center tutors will make arrangements with the student who needs tutoring services to meet in an accessible location, such as the library or a study/conference room in PPHAC.

