

PHIL 31050 (section 001): Philosophy Through Literature
Part I: Syllabus Material Unique to PHIL 21001

Spring 2024
MW 11:00-12:15
Bowman 313

Professor: Dr. Deborah Barnbaum
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Office Hours: MW 12:15-2:15, W 3:30-4:30, and by appointment

Course Content: This course introduces several philosophical problems via an examination of those problems and themes in works of literature. The course combines philosophical essays with works of poetry, short novels, and short stories, so as to expose students to diverse perspectives on complex philosophical problems.

Learning Outcomes: Students will emerge with an understanding of several philosophical problems, and the ways in which those problems are explored in both philosophical writings as well as literature.

Texts:

1. Amis, Martin, *Time's Arrow*, Vintage International (New York, NY), 1991.
2. Borges, Jorge Luis, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, New Directions Publishing (New York, NY), 2007 (first published 1962).
3. Dick, Philip K., *The Man in the High Castle*, Mariner Books (New York, NY), 2011 (first published 1962).
4. Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*, Broadview Press (Buffalo, NY), 2012 (first published 1818). **This title is available through FlashBooks in Canvas**

Philosophical essays, and two of the literature readings, will be posted on Canvas, in addition to the title available via FlashBooks. See the course schedule below to see which readings will be available via Canvas.

Course Requirements:

Prerequisites for this class include junior-level standing. Students who do not meet this requirement risk being de-registered from the class.

Students will be required to write three exam papers between 6-8 pages each. Topics will be available a week before each paper is due. The papers will each comprise 25% of your grade.

One of the questions on the final paper will ask you to engage short work of literature, such as a poem or short story, of your choosing, and its philosophical themes. Each member of the class will be asked to share their work of literature with the class, via Canvas, by April 17th, and discuss it during the final week of class. Students may wish to start thinking early about their choice of literature.

Since this is a comparatively small, seminar-sized class there will be a participation component which will be explained in class. Participation can take the form of asking questions, answering questions, reading aloud in class, or engaging in discussion. Please be aware that since this is a class that ranges across topics in both literature and philosophy that topics discussed in this class will include: gender identity, genocide, racism, religion, the problem of evil, and war, among others. Students are asked to do the readings ahead of each class so that they can be aware of concerning material prior to each class session and can communicate with the professor accordingly. Participation will comprise 25% of your grade.

Grades for each assignment and over-all will be assessed using the following scale:

100-92%	A	77.9-72%	C
91.9-90%	A-	71.9-70%	C-
89.9-88%	B+	69.9-68%	D+
87.9-82%	B	67.9-62%	D
81.9-80%	B-	61.9-60%	D-
79.9-78%	C+	<59.9%	F

Class Management

Papers will not be accepted if handed in late; if you are unable to hand in any of your papers on time you may hand them in early. If you miss a class for any reason, it is recommended that you get notes from at least two other students in the class. After getting notes from other students, if you still have questions about that class, please see the professor in office hours.

It is recommended that you turn off your cell phone during class. If you are expecting an emergency call, then you may leave it on. However, in such an emergency you should both 1) tell the professor before class that you may be expecting an emergency call, and 2) sit close to the door so that you can discretely leave class once you receive the call. It is understood that if this is an emergency that you will be unable to return to class.

Class Schedule (subject to change during the course of the semester, with appropriate notice by the professor). All items available on Canvas are marked '[C]':

Week #1, January 15 and 17: Introduction, Introducing Robert Browning

Literature: Robert Browning, "Caliban Upon Setebos; or, Natural Theology on the Island" [C]

Philosophy: St. Thomas Aquinas, selections from *Summa Theologica* [C]

Week #2, January 22 and 24: Philosophy of Religion: Divine Attributes

Philosophy: St. Thomas Aquinas, selections from *Summa Theologica* [C]

Week #3, January 29 and 31: More on Divine Attributes, Introducing the Problem of Evil

Philosophy: Harry Frankfurt, "The Logic of Omnipotence" [C]

Week #4, February 5 and 7: More on The Problem of Evil

Literature: Jorge Luis Borges, "Three Versions of Judas"

Philosophy: J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence" [C]

Week #5, February 12 and 14: Metaphysics I: Philosophy of Time

Literature: Martin Amis, *Time's Arrow*
Literature: Jorges Luis Borges, "Deutsche Requiem"

Week #6, February 19 and 21: Philosophy of Time: What Is the Direction of Time?

Literature: Jorges Luis Borges, "The Garden of the Forking Paths"
Philosophy: David Lewis, "Counterfactual Dependence and Time's Arrow" [C]

Week #7, February 26 and 28: Philosophy of Time: Is Time Travel Possible?

Literature: Robert A. Heinlein, "—All You Zombies—" [C]
Philosophy: David Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" [C]

Week #8, March 4 and 6: Philosophy of Time: Is Time Travel Possible?

Philosophy: Connor Kelly and Eric Kincanon, "A New Paradox of Time Travel" [C]
First Paper Due Wednesday, March 6th

Week #9, March 11 and 13: Metaphysics II: Modality

Literature: Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*
Literature: Jorges Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel"

Week #10, March 18 and 20: What Makes You You Across Possible Worlds?

Philosophy: Roderick Chisholm, "Identity Through Possible Worlds: Some Questions" [C]

Spring Break: March 25-29

Week #11, April 1 and 3: Modality: Is Childan's and Frink's World the Actual World?

Literature: Jorges Luis Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" and "The Lottery in Babylon"
Philosophy: Alvin Plantinga, "Actualism and Possible Worlds" [C]

Week #12, April 8 and 10: The Intersection Between Social Philosophy and Bioethics

Literature: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
Second Paper Due: Wednesday, April 10th

Week #13, April 15 and 17: Frankenstein and Research Ethics

Philosophy: Thom Brooks, "Moral Frankensteins" [C]
Jason Scott Robert, "Rereading Frankenstein: What if Victor Frankenstein Had Actually Been Evil?" [C]
Literature: Jorges Luis Borges, "The House of Asterion"
Due date to post your choice of literature on Canvas: April 17th

Week #14, April 22 and 24: Social Philosophy and Gender Identity in Frankenstein

Literature: Jorges Luis Borges, "The Circular Ruins"
Philosophy: Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage" [C]
Zoe Beenstock, "Lyrical Sociability: The Social Contract and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein" [C]

Week #15, April 29 and May 1: The Social Contract, continued, and Your Own Contribution

Philosophy: Zoe Beenstock, "Lyrical Sociability: The Social Contract and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein" [C]

In-class SSIs – bring laptops or smart phones

Final Exam Time: 10:15-12:30 Monday, May 6th – due date for final paper

**Part II: Syllabus Material Common to the College of Arts and Sciences
and/or Kent State University
(in alphabetical order)**

Academic Complaints: The Philosophy Department Grievance Procedure for handling student grievances is in conformity with the Student Academic Complaint Policy and Procedures set down as University Policy 3342-16 in the University Policy Register. For information concerning the details of the grievance procedure, please see the departmental chairperson.

Academic Dishonesty: University policy 3342-3-01.8 deals with the problem of academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism. None of these will be tolerated in this class. The sanctions provided in this policy will be used to deal with any violations. If you have any questions, please read the policy at http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/policydetails.cfm?custome1_datapageid_1976529=2037779 and/or ask.

Attendance: The university policy regarding attendance, 3-01.2 can be found at: <http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/administrative-policy-regarding-class-attendance-and-class-absence>

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement: Kent State University is committed to the creation and maintenance of equitable and inclusive learning spaces. This course is a learning environment where all will be treated with respect and dignity, and where all individuals will have an equitable opportunity to succeed. The diversity that each student brings to this course is viewed as a strength and a benefit. Dimensions of diversity and their intersections include but are not limited to: race, ethnicity, national origin, primary language, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, mental and physical abilities, socio-economic status, family/caregiver status, and veteran status.

Land Acknowledgment Statement: We acknowledge that the lands of Kent State University were the previous homes of people who were removed from this area without their consent by the colonial practices of the United States government. Before removal, these groups created networks that extended from Wyoming to the Florida Coast and Appalachia and to the northern reaches of Lake Superior. These societies included people of the Shawnee, Seneca-Cayuga, Delaware, Wyandots, Ottawa and Miami. We honor their lives – both past and present – and strive to move beyond remembrance toward reflection and responsibility through honest accounts of the past and the development of cultural knowledge and community.

Registration Deadlines: The official registration deadlines for this course can be found by doing a Detailed Class Search of the Schedule of Classes. University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Each student must confirm enrollment by checking his/her class schedule (using Student Tools in FlashLine) prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline.

Religion Accommodations Statement: The University welcomes individuals from all different faiths, philosophies, religious traditions, and other systems of belief, and supports their respective practices. In compliance with University policy and the Ohio Revised Code, the University permits students to request class absences for up to three (3) days, per term, in order to participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization. Students will not be penalized as a result of any of these excused absences.

The request for excusal must be made, in writing, during the first fourteen (14) days of the semester and include the date(s) of each proposed absence or request for alternative religious accommodation. The request must clearly state that the proposed absence is to participate in religious activities. The request must also provide the particular accommodation(s) you desire.

You will be notified by me if your request is approved, or, if it is approved with modification. I will work with you in an effort to arrange a mutually agreeable alternative arrangement. For more information regarding this Policy you may contact the Student Ombuds (ombuds@kent.edu).

Students with Disabilities: Kent State University is committed to inclusive and accessible education experiences for all students. University Policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to course content. Students with disabilities are encouraged to connect with Student Accessibility Services as early as possible to establish accommodations. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on a disability (including mental health, chronic medical conditions, or injuries), please let me know immediately. Student Accessibility Services (SAS) Contact Information: University Library, Suite 100; sas@kent.edu ; 330-672-3391; VP 330-968-0490; www.kent.edu/sas