

PHI 380¹
Philosophy & Literature

Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:00–2:20 p.m.
Hall

Professor Robert Harvey
office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:30–3:45 p.m.
241 Harriman Hall

Here is how *the generic, catalogue descriptor* for PHI 380 reads: “An intensive study of the methods and principles of the philosophical analysis of literature and the relations between literature and philosophy.”

And here is my approach to the problematic:

Just because it was the first of the two to be named, is philosophy an endeavor superior to that of literature? Can literature contribute to philosophical reflection? What is going on when philosophical discourse appeals overtly to literary methods in order to move forth? Does it make sense to cordon literature and philosophy off from each other? Might their projects be indistinguishable? These are a few of the questions which will concern us as we move through a necessary selection from the vast array of texts at the cusp of philosophy and literature.

Required Readings

N.B. These are listed in the order in which we'll read them. Indicated in parentheses is the number of sessions we'll spend discussing each. Titles with * need to be purchased and *only* in the edition specified by the ISBN number. All other readings will be provided as PDFs on BlackBoard.

- Friedrich Nietzsche, “Truth and Lying in the Non-Moral Sense” (2)
- René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* * (Oxford UP) ISBN 9780199540075 (2)
- Michel Foucault, “My Body, This Paper, This Fire” from *The History of Madness* (2)
- Herman Melville, “Bartleby the Scrivener” (2)
- Gilles Deleuze, “Bartleby, or the Formula” from *Essays Critical & Clinical* (1)
- Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis** (1915) * (Random House) ISBN 9780812985146 (2)
- Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny” (1919) (1)
- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea** (New Directions) ISBN 9780811220309 (3)
- Albert Camus, *The Plague** (Vintage) ISBN 9780679720218 (3)
- Vladimir Nabokov, *Despair* * (Vintage) ISBN 9780679723431 (3)
- Emily Dickinson, *Poems** (Everyman's Library) ISBN 9780679429074 (2)
- René Char, *Formal Share* from *Furor and Mystery and Other Writings* (2)

Recommended Reading

¹ DEC category G or SBC category HFA+.

Friedrich von Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795)
Gilles Deleuze, from *Kafka: For a Minor Literature*
J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*
James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*
Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*
Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet," "Shakespeare"
Wallace Stevens, from *Collected Poetry & Prose*
Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*
Fernando Pessoa, selected poems of Alberto Caeiro
Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*
——, *The Stranger*
Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*
Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*
——, *Waiting for Godot*
Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*" and "The Aleph"
Julia Kristeva, "Prolegomena" from *The Revolution of Poetic Language*
Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (1925)
——, *In the Penal Colony*
Marguerite Duras, "Construction Sites" (1954)
Michel Foucault, "Representing" from *The Order of Things*
Robert Harvey, *Sharing Common Ground: A Space for Ethics* (2017)
Cioran, *On the Heights of Despair*
Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death* (1849)

Course Requirements

Beyond assiduous attendance, **active participation in classroom discussion** requires preparation and a certain assertiveness to get one's thoughts heard by the community of peers.

Two **medium-length essays** (6-8 pages) to which two peers will respond with **critical analysis**. Full credit for each student will be comprised of 30 points for the first draft, 20 + 20 points for constructive criticism of peers' work, and 30 points for the final draft.

A **final essay** (10-12 pages) based on a topic driven by one work selected from the recommended reading list.

Official University Statements²

Responsibilities in the Classroom

Students are expected to attend class regularly unless other arrangements are made; arrive for class on time and leave the classroom only at the end of class; engage in class discussions and activities when appropriate; exhibit classroom behavior that is not disruptive of the learning environment; secure and turn off all electronic communications and entertainment

² for further information, see

https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/provost/faculty/handbook/academic_policies/minimal_instructional_and_student_responsibilities.php

devices during class time unless otherwise directed by the course instructor. Any use of a cell phone or other unauthorized electronic device during an examination may lead to an accusation of academic dishonesty.

Absentee Policy

Students are expected to report for their examinations and major graded coursework as scheduled. If a student is unable to report for any examination or to complete major graded coursework on time, the student must contact the faculty member immediately. If the student cannot reach the faculty member, then s/he should contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

Academic Integrity

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>

Disability Support Services (DSS)

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, Room 128 (631-632-6748). They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Semester Program

N.B. I shall endeavor to keep to the following schedule of readings and discussions. However, I reserve the possibility of modifications in order to favor critical thinking over the compulsion to complete.

27 August — introductions

29 August — Nietzsche

3 September — Nietzsche

5 September — Descartes

10 September — Descartes

12 September — Foucault

17 September — Foucault

19 September (RH @ UC Berkeley)

24 September — Melville

26 September — Melville

1 October — Deleuze

3 October — Kafka

8 October — Kafka

10 October — Freud

15 October (Fall Break)

17 October — Sartre

22 October — Sartre

24 October — Sartre

29 October — Camus

31 October — Camus

5 November — Camus

7 November — Nabokov

12 November — Nabokov

14 November — Nabokov

over the weekend viewing of Rainer Maria Fassbinder's 1978 film adaptation of *Despair*

19 November — Dickinson

21 November — Dickinson

26 November — Char

3 December — Char

5 December — conclusions

TBA — final paper due

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