10.05 Philosophical Issues in Literature
3 hours; 3 credits

Philosophical issues in major literary works and related classical and contemporary philosophical literature. Such issues as appearance and reality, personal identity, truth, freedom, evil, justice, and ideal government.

Prerequisite: Junior standing and satisfaction of all lower-tier requirements in Arts and Literatures.

Common Goals Addressed by Core course:
1. To improve the ability to think critically and creatively, to reason logically, and to express one’s thoughts orally and in writing with clarity and precision. (9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 21).
2. To understand the arts and cultures of the past as a foundation for those of the present. (3, 4).
3. To be capable of integrating knowledge from diverse sources (28).

Objectives of Core Course:
1 Students develop skills of conceptual analysis and argumentation. (9)
2 Students will be able to express ideas clearly in writing. (10)
3 Students will be able to communicate thought orally. (12)
4 Students will be able to develop a basis for evaluating texts. (13)
5 Students will understand literatures of the past, and their relationship to the shaping of the modern world. (3)
6 Students will understand philosophical literature (in works of fiction and non-fiction), past and present, and will acquire a critical appreciation of their contribution to the life of the individual and society. (4)
7 Students will be able to demonstrate that issues may be regarded from different viewpoints. (28)

Outcomes for Core Course:
1 Students can analyze, critically examine and engage with philosophical concepts and issues found in literary works. (9)
2 Students can use writing to reflect on, to explain, and to critically examine concepts and issues that are presented in literature. (10)
3 Students can orally explain, and critically examine concepts and theories presented in literary works. (12)
4 Students can analyze and interpret philosophical themes of literary works. (13)
5 Students can identify, discuss, and evaluate important works of fictional and philosophical literature. (3)
6 Students can reflect upon and critically examine fundamental themes and issues of important literary works, and can assess their significance in contemporary human life. (4)
7 Students can identify, explain, critically examine and evaluate different interpretations of and different perspectives on philosophical issues raised in literary works. (28)
Course Outline (Sample bibliography from which readings can be selected):

Weeks 1-2: Appearance and Reality
Plato, The Republic; Rainer Maria Rilke, The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge
George Berkeley, Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous; Stephen Crane, “The Open Boat”

Week 3: Truth
Ryunosuke Akutagawa, “Rashomon”; Aristotle, Metaphysics; Charles Sanders Peirce, “Truth”

Weeks 4-5: Personal Identity

Weeks 6-7: Freedom
Sophocles, Oedipus the King; Richard Taylor, “Fate;” William James, “The Dilemma of Determinism”

Week 8: Religious Belief: Why is there evil?

Week 9: The Meaning of Life
Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Humanism of Existentialism”; Leo Tolstoy, “The Death of Ivan Ilyitch”

Week 10: Ethics: Right and Wrong
Frank O’Connor, “Guests of the Nation;” Robert C. Mortimer, “Moral Authority”

Week 11: Ethics: The Problem of Relativism
Ursula LeGuin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas;” Mary Midgley, “Trying Out One’s New Sword”

Weeks 12-13: Justice
Rawls, A Theory of Justice

Week 14: The Ideal State
Aldous Huxley, Brave New World; Plato, The Republic; Aristotle, Politics

Methods of Evaluation: Midterm (20%), Final (45%), Research Paper (20%), Writing Assignments (10%), Class Participation (5%).

Methods of Assessment:
1 Students are asked to explain philosophical concepts found in literary works and explore alternative analyses of and alternative perspectives on some concepts. (9)
2 Students are asked to write an explanation of the role and significance of a philosophical issue in a literary work. (10)
3 Students are asked to orally explain philosophical views presented in a literary work. (12)
4 Students are asked to analyze a philosophical theme of a literary work. (13)
5 Students are asked to identify and discuss passages from works of fictional and philosophical literature. (3)
6 Students are asked to explain and respond to philosophical issues of important literary works, and to assess their significance in contemporary human life. (4)
7 Students are asked to explain conflicting philosophical views found in literary works, and conflicting perspectives on philosophical issues raised in literary works. (28)

Assessment Tools: Diagnostic and end-of-term writing assignments, Class participation and presentation, Essay examination questions that require explanation and critical examination of philosophical ideas and issues that occur in literary works.
Bibliography

E. A. Abbott, Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions (Dover, 1992)

Aristotle, The Politics (Clarendon, 1926)

Ryunosuke Akutagawa, “Rashomon”, in Kleiman and Lewis eds.

Jean Anouilh, Antigone (Methuen, 2001)

Aristotle, Metaphysics, trans. David Ross (OUP, 1979)

Margaret Atwood, The Edible Woman (Anchor, 1998)

Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot (Grove, 1997)

George Berkeley, Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous (Hackett, 1979)

Jorge Luis Borges, Labyrinths (New Directions Publishing, 1964)

F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality (OUP, 1969)


Albert Camus, The Rebel (Vintage, 1992)

Stephen Crane, “An Experiment in Misery”, in Kleiman and Lewis eds.

John Dos Passos, “The House of Morgan”, in Kleiman and Lewis eds.

Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002)

Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment (Bantam, 1984)

Fyodor Dostoevsky, Notes from the Underground (Vintage, 1994)


David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature (OUP, 1978)

Aldous Huxley, Brave New World (Harper, 1998)

William James, “The Dilemma of Determinism”, in Kleiman and Lewis eds.

James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Penguin, 2003)

James Joyce, Ulysses (Vintage, 1990)
Franz Kafka, The Castle (Schocken, 1998)

Franz Kafka, The Metamorphosis (Bantam, 1972)

Franz Kafka, The Trial (Schocken, 1995)

Lowell Kleiman & Stephen Lewis (eds.), Philosophy: An Introduction through Literature (Paragon, 1992)


C. S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain (Harper, 2001)

John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (Prometheus, 1994)

Mary Midgley, “Trying Out One’s New Sword”, in Porter ed.

Robert C. Mortimer, “Moral Authority”, in Kleiman and Lewis eds.

Frank O’Connor, “Guests of the Nation”, in Kleiman and Lewis eds.

George Orwell, Animal Farm (Signet, 1996)

George Orwell, 1984 (Signet, 1990)

Derek Parfit, Reasons and Persons (OUP, 1986)

Plato, The Republic (Hackett, 1992)

Burton Porter (ed.), Philosophy through Fiction and Film (Prentice Hall, 2004)

John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Belknap, 1999)

Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness (Washington Square Press, 1993)

Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism (Eyre Methuen, 1973)

Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea (New Directions Publishing, 1969)


Sophocles, Oedipus the King, trans. Stephen Berg and Diskin Clay (OUP, 1988)

E. Victoria Spelman, “Woman as Body”, in Kleiman and Lewis eds.
William Styron, Sophie’s Choice (Vintage, 1992)

Richard Taylor, “Fate”, in Klieman and Lewis eds.

Leo Tolstoy, Confession (Norton, 1996)

Leo Tolstoy, “The Death of Ivan Ilyitch”, in Porter ed.

Mark Twain, “Little Bessie”, in Kleiman and Lewis eds.

Voltaire, Candide (Penguin, 1990)

Mary Anne Warren, The Nature of Woman (Edgepress, 1980)

Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray (Bantam, 1983)