10.09 The Self and Society
3 hours; 3 credits

Critical examination of issues of the self and society in works by such authors as Thoreau, Kafka, Duerrenmatt, Orwell, Dostoyevsky, Sartre, Camus, Ellison. Topics include reflections on the self and personal integrity, justice and responsibility, alienation.

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

Common Goals Addressed by Core course:
1. To understand the literature and cultures of the past as a foundation for those of the present. (3, 4).
2. To develop 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).
3. To develop the ability to make sound moral judgments (1, 20, 26).

Objectives of Core Course:
1. Students will become acquainted with literatures of the past and present, and with significant ideas and real life issues presented in these literary works. (3)
2. Students will understand philosophical literature, past and present, and will acquire a critical appreciation of their contribution to the life of the individual and society. (4)
3. Students will develop skills of conceptual analysis and argumentation. (9)
4. Students will be able to express ideas clearly in writing. (10)
5. Students will be able to communicate thought orally. (12)
6. Students will be able to develop a basis for evaluating texts. (13)
7. Students will become acquainted with ethical theories presumed and moral issues presented in literary works. (1)
8. Students will acquire an understanding of their own identity and of personal integrity. (20)
9. Students will confront ethical issues that arise in real life situations in the context of interpreting literary works and they will develop skills of using reasoning to construct possible solutions to ethical problems and to construct personal standards of responsibility. (26)

Outcomes for Core Course:
1. Students can identify, engage with, and discuss important literary works and significant issues presented in these works. (3)
2. Students can reflect upon and critically examine fundamental themes and issues of important literary works, and can assess their significance to past and to contemporary human life. (4)
3. Students will be able to analyze and critically examine philosophical issues of self and society found in literary works. (9)
4. Students can use writing to reflect on, to explain, and to critically examine concepts and issues relating to self and society that are presented in literature. (10)
5. Students can orally explain, and critically examine concepts and theories relating to self and society presented in literary works. (12)
6. Students can analyze and interpret themes of literary works, focusing especially on the self and personal integrity, issues of justice and responsibility, and alienation. (13)
7. Students can explain and critically examine some moral issues that arise in literary works. (1)
8. Students can reflect upon their own identity, personal integrity, values, and moral responsibility. (20)
9. Students can explain and engage with concrete real life moral and values problems that are presented in literary works and can develop reasoned solutions and arguments that respond to such problems. (26)

Course Outline:
Weeks 1 - 3: Reflections on the Self and Personal Integrity
Augustine, Confessions (selection)
Thoreau, Walden

Weeks 4 - 9: Justice and Responsibility
Kafka, The Trial
Duerrenmatt, The Judge and the Hangman
Orwell, 1984

Weeks 10 - 14: Alienation
At least two of the following works:
Dostoyevski: Notes from the Underground
Sartre: Nausea
Camus: The Stranger
Ralph Ellison: Invisible Man

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

Methods of Assessment:
1. Students are asked to summarize an important literary work and to explain some significant issues presented in these works. (3)
2. Students are asked to explain a theme or issue of an influential literary work, and to assess its significance to past and to contemporary human life. (4)
3. Students are asked to explain and examine alternative viewpoints found in literary works of the philosophical issues of self and society. (9)
4. Students are asked to discuss and critically examine in writing concepts and issues relating to self and society that are presented in literary works. (10)
5. Students are asked to present orally an explanation and critical examination of a viewpoint on self and society presented in a particular literary work. (12)
6. Students are asked to identify and discuss such themes of literary works as the self and personal integrity, justice and responsibility, and alienation. (13)
7. Students are asked to explain and critically examine some moral issues that arise in literary works. (1)
8. Students are asked to relate views of self and society found in literature to their view of their own identity, personal integrity, values, and moral responsibility. (20)
9. Students are asked explain a moral or values problem presented in a literary work and to provide a response to this problem and arguments in support of and/or in opposition to this response. (26)
Assessment tools: Diagnostic and end-of-term writing assignments, Class participation and presentation. Homework and in class essay questions interpreting texts and analyzing issues.

Bibliography

Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot (Grove, 1997)

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


Albert Camus, The Rebel (Vintage, 1992)

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)

Aldous Huxley, Brave New World (Harper, 1998)

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

Franz Kafka, The Castle (Schocken, 1998)

Franz Kafka, The Metamorphosis (Bantam, 1972)

Franz Kafka, The Trial (Schocken, 1995)

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

George Orwell, Animal Farm (Signet, 1996)

George Orwell, 1984 (Signet, 1990)

Derek Parfit, Reasons and Persons (OUP, 1986)

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

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)

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)

Bernard Williams, Problems of the Self (Cambridge U. P., 1976)