

Religion 220: Theology and Literature
M, W, F, 11-11:50 Fall 2004
Prof. Stephen Haynes
Clough 403; 843-3583/272-9266
Office Hours: TBA

Introduction

This course is an introductory survey of the religious, theological and biblical themes expressed in various types of modern and contemporary literature. In class we will read, discuss and analyze literature representing many different genres, cultures, and religious points of view. Students will be expected to demonstrate their own abilities to analyze and interpret religious and religious themes in literature by means of class discussions, papers, and a final project.

Goals

According to Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson, good practice in undergraduate education:

1. encourages contact between students and faculty
2. develops reciprocity and cooperation among students
3. encourages active learning
4. gives prompt feedback
5. emphasizes time on task
6. communicates high expectations, and
7. respects diverse talents and ways of learning

I have kept these principles in mind in designing this course, the ultimate goal of which is student transformation. This sort of learning, as Paul Ramsden writes, “should be seen as a qualitative change in a person’s way of seeing, experiencing, understanding, conceptualizing something in the real world—rather than as a quantitative change in the amount of knowledge someone possesses.” Transformative learning does not simply happen; but it can be facilitated by an environment where students are encouraged to develop a sense of agency and take responsibility for their education.

In this class, as in liberal arts education generally, the primary means toward student transformation is the development of critical thinking. Critical thinking focuses not on acquiring facts but on understanding their significance and interrelationships, and reflecting on their significance for society in general, for our lives for and the lives of others. The content covered in this class will not only inform us and develop our learning skills, but will enhance our awareness of the learning process and the ethical and institutional contexts in which it takes place.

The methods used to encourage critical thinking in the liberal arts emphasize the movement from “surface” to “deep” cognitive learning described in “Bloom’s Taxonomy”:

Knowledge-- recall of specific information(lecture/reading)

Comprehension--understanding of what was read (discussion)

Application--converting of abstract content to concrete situations (discussion/papers)

Analysis--comparison and contrast of content to personal experiences (papers)

Synthesis--organization of thoughts, ideas, and information from content (papers/project)

Evaluation--judgment and evaluation of characters, actions, outcome, etc., for personal reflection and understanding(papers/project)

Students in this class will be required to engage in and demonstrate each of these types of learning, as well as the ability to ask thoughtful and penetrating questions, to listen and enter into dialogue, to write and speak with clarity and style, to appreciate the perspectives of others, and to respond empathetically.

Tasks

Students enrolled in this course shall:

- 1) *attend and participate* in class sessions, having actively read assigned material
- 2) write *three short papers*, due on the dates noted in the syllabus
- 3) regularly participate in *class discussions*
- 4) make a brief presentation related to one of our authors
- 5) make a *class presentation* related to 5)
- 6) complete a *final project*

Required Texts:

*Readings Book (to be purchased in the bookstore)

Albert Camus, *The Plague*

Julian Barnes, *A History of the World in 9 1/2 Chapters*

Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God*

Shusaku Endo, *Silence*

Ron Hansen, *Atticus*

Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*

Frederick Buechner, *The Sacred Journey*

Zora Neale Hurston, *Man of the Mountain*

James Weldon Johnson, *God's Trombones*

Explanations

Attendance, Preparation and Participation

Attendance, preparation and participation are crucial aspects of a student's involvement in

a course such as this. *Attendance* means being present in class on time and remaining until class is concluded. *Preparation* means coming to class having actively read the assignment and noted questions or learnings to be shared on request. *Participation* means contributing regularly to discussions in a critical, searching and honest way.

N.B.: *Students may miss class three classes during the semester for any reason. Three or more absences will negatively affect a student's A & P grade.*

Discussions will be most fruitful if each of us respects others' opinions, is careful not to dominate, allows the full and free expression of divergent views, and resists the pressure to reach premature or artificial solutions to problems. Above all, our classroom needs to be a safe place where we can discuss things we care about.

Tips for Successful Class Participation

If you are not accustomed to my expectations for class participation, you may need to prepare comments before coming to class. Meaningful class participation results from active reading. Active reading requires a dictionary and a pencil or highlighter. Use the latter to emphasize important points, make marginal notes, or record questions. *Bring your own copy of the readings to each class session.* I will expect them to be "marked up" in ways that reflect your active reading.

Papers

Students will write three short papers (4-6 pages) with due dates noted on the schedule of topics and readings. These papers should demonstrate integration of and thoughtful responses to course material. They represent opportunities to demonstrate that you have assimilated and analyzed course material, while forming and communicating your own responses.

Papers will be graded on content, style and mechanics and should conform to Kate L. Turabian, *Student's Guide for Writing College Papers* or some other standard writing manual. Papers do not require a bibliography unless they refer to texts not used in the course. Stay within the page parameters of the assignment, and use regular fonts and margins. Papers that are significantly too long or too short will be graded down.

N.B. *Writing well is necessary for success in this class, no matter what your major or background, or your level of success in other aspects of the course. Be aware that "good writing" means good ideas, expressed well and communicated elegantly. Students are often surprised at how carefully I analyze the mechanics of writing in grading papers. You should not assume that other aspects of your paper can compensate for flawed prose.*

Writing errors that commonly mar student papers include run-on sentences or paragraphs, tense disagreement within sentences or paragraphs, failure to distinguish between transitive and intransitive verbs, poor word choice, and lack of clarity. For advice on writing papers in Religious Studies and a copy of the department's inclusive language

policy, see the department's web-site (http://www.rhodes.edu/public/2_0-Academics/2_1_7-Religion/2_1_7_6-News/2_1_7_6_1-Paper.shtml).

Paper One Compare and contrast two class readings with a focus on religious themes and images.

Paper Two Analyze the theological themes in one or two of the works we have read.

Paper Three Analyze the biblical themes in one or two of the works we have read.

Final Project Each student will complete a final project that will include a class presentation and an 8-10 page paper. The project will be an extended religious analysis of a reading or collection of readings chosen by the student in consultation with the professor. Class presentations are scheduled for after Thanksgiving recess. Final papers will be due two class days after a student's presentation.

Paper Grades:

F: No paper is turned in.

D: Paper would receive a "C," but instructions were not followed.

C: Paper is plagued by poor grammar, incomprehensible prose, a weak or unclear argument, and/or reflects little insight or original thought.

B: Paper has a clear argument, proper grammar, and clear prose, and reflects good insight and original thought.

A: Paper is elegantly written and shows considerable insight and original thought.

Quizzes

Unannounced quizzes may be given at the beginning of class. Quiz questions will be designed to judge student's preparation for class and quiz grades will be factored into Attendance and Participation.

Other Activities

Periodically, students will be asked to participate in small group discussions or to complete in-class writings assignments. Both activities will help form the instructor's impression of students' preparation for class.

Late Work

Without an explicit extension from the professor, papers, journals, and exams will not be accepted after the due date. Missed quizzes may not be made up.

Percentages for Tabulating Grades:

Attendance, Preparation and Participation 20%
Final Project 20%
Papers 60% (20% each)

Grading Scale:

93-100	A
90-92.9	A-
88-89.9	B+
83-87.9	B
80-89.9	B-
78-79.9	C+
73-77.9	C
70-72.9	C-
68-69.9	D+
63-67.9	D
60-62.9	D-
0-60	F

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Wed Aug 25	Introduction to the Course	
Fri Aug 27	No Class	
Mon Aug 30	Protest	*Dostoevsky, <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i> , Book V, chapters 4, 5 (http://www.ccel.org/d/dostoevsky/karamozov/karamozov.html)
Wed Sep 1	Protest	Camus, <i>The Plague</i> , 3-77
Fri Sep 3	Protest	Camus, <i>The Plague</i> , 77-139
Mon Sep 6	Labor Day	
Wed Sep 8	Protest	Camus, <i>The Plague</i> , 139-219
Fri Sep 10	Protest	Camus, <i>The Plague</i> , 220-308
Mon Sep 13	Satire	*Twain, <i>Letters from the Earth</i> , 3-55
Wed Sep 15	Satire	*Morrow, <i>Bible Stories for Adults</i> , 163-186

Fri Sep 17 (Paper One Due)	Satire	Barnes, <i>History of the World</i> , 3-80
Mon Sep 20	Satire	Barnes, <i>History of the World</i> , 83-168
Wed Sep 22	Satire	Barnes, <i>History of the World</i> , 171-244
Fri Sep 24	Satire	Barnes, <i>History of the World</i> , 247-307
Mon Sep 27	Drama	Wiesel, <i>The Trial of God</i> , 1-80
Wed Sep 29	Drama	Wiesel, <i>History of the World</i> , 81-161
Fri Oct 1	Drama	*Simon, <i>God's Favorite</i> , 500-577.
Mon Oct 4	Historical fiction	Endo, <i>Silence</i> , 3-78
Wed Oct 6	Historical fiction	Endo, <i>Silence</i> , 79-153
Fri Oct 8	Historical fiction	Endo, <i>Silence</i> , 155-191
Mon Oct 11 (Paper Two Due)	Parable	*Kierkegaard, <i>Parables of Kierkegaard</i> , 3, 11-16; 21; 23-24; 36; 40-5; 53-5; 67; 76-7; 86-7; 90-1; 119-23
Wed Oct 13	Parable	*Kafka, <i>Parables and Paradoxes</i> , 10-15; 24-33; 41-79; 119
Fri Oct 15 (Paper Two Due)	Parable	Hansen, <i>Atticus</i> , 3-65
Mon Oct 18	Fall Break	
Wed Oct 20	Parable	Hansen, <i>Atticus</i> , 67-141
Fri Oct 22	Parable	Hansen, <i>Atticus</i> , 143-247
Mon Oct 25	Memoir	*Weil, <i>Waiting for God</i> , 3-60
Wed Oct 27	Memoir	*Weil, <i>Waiting for God</i> , 61-85; 105-136
Fri Oct 29	Memoir	Buechner, <i>The Sacred Journey</i> , 1-65
Mon Nov 1	Memoir	Buechner, <i>The Sacred Journey</i> , 65-112
Wed Nov 3	Bible tale	Hurston, <i>Moses, Man of the Mountain</i> , 1-74

Fri Nov 5	Bible tale	Hurston, <i>Moses, Man of the Mountain</i> , 75-145
Mon Nov 8	Bible tale	Hurston, <i>Moses, Man of the Mountain</i> , 146-211
Wed Nov 10	Bible tale	Hurston, <i>Moses, Man of the Mountain</i> , 212-288
Fri Nov 12 (Paper Three Due)	Poetry	*Erdrich, <i>Baptism of Desire</i> , 3-16
Mon Nov 15	Poetry	Johnson, <i>God's Trombones</i>
Wed Nov 17	Short story	*O'Connor, <i>The Complete Stories</i> , 117-33; 271-291
Fri Nov 19	Short story	*Updike, <i>The Music School</i> , 127-163.
Mon Nov 22	NO CLASS	
Nov 24, 26	Thanksgiving Break	
Mon Nov 29	Short story	*Borges, <i>Doctor Brodie's Report</i> , 15-22; *Atwood, <i>Dancing Girls</i> , 213-224
Wed Dec 1	Student Presentations	
Fri Dec 3	Student Presentations	
Mon Dec 6	Student Presentations	
Wed Dec 8	Student Presentations	
All final projects due 10 am Saturday, Dec 11		