

SYLLABUS
PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE 253 - 004
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
SPRING 2008
T/R 10.30 – 11.45 AM **WEST # 104**

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Office hours: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This class will examine the relation between literature/poetry and philosophy, in particular – the influence of the philosophical ideas and philosophical schools on literature. We will also discuss and critically analyze the literary and philosophical works in their historical context. The readings and discussions will include the ideas of Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, St. Augustine, Pascal, Descartes, Voltaire, Emerson, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson, Freud, Sartre, Camus, Milosz and many others.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Plato: *The Republic*
2. Aristotle: *Poetics*
3. Sophocles: *Oedipus*
4. Sophocles: *Antigone*
5. Voltaire: *Candide*
6. Milosz: *The Captive Mind*
7. B. Magee: *The Story of Philosophy*

OPTIONAL TEXTS:

1. A Dictionary of Philosophy (any)
2. Any Short History of Philosophy

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

Students will be expected to read and make an effort to comprehend all assignments. We will be reading and interpreting the original philosophical/literary texts. Please be warned that the reading assignments will often have to be read several times to be fully comprehended. This course will combine the elements of lecture, class discussions, seminar, question and answers as well as students oral presentations.

There will be three in class tests/exams – each worth 10 points. These tests will be a combination of multiple choice, true/ false questions and short answer questions based on our readings, class lectures and on understanding of various philosophers along with understanding philosophical/literary terms.

Each student (in a group of three/four) will choose one topic (from the list provided) for a class presentation. The format and the dates of the presentation will be discussed in class (20 points).

Each student will write two analytical and critical papers (1800 words each) exploring correlations between philosophical/literary text and its cultural/historical context (20 points each)

Regular attendance is strongly encouraged. Excessive absences will influence your grade in a negative way. I will check attendance several times per semester. I will randomly select, however, only seven attendance lists and you will get one point for each time your name appears on the list (up to seven points). Please, be on time and do not leave class earlier. The remaining points will be distributed between short take home (up to one page long) projects or in-class quizzes.

Regardless of the reason of the absence, students are still responsible for submitting any work due on that day. If you miss a class, please arrange with your colleagues for topics and information missed during your absence.

FINAL GRADES:

91 – 100	A
81 - 90	B
71 - 80	C
61 - 70	D
Less than 61	F

Exams/Tests:	3 x 10 = 30 points
Two Papers:	40 points (20 points each)
Presentation:	20 points
Attendance, quizzes:	10 points

	100 Points Total

COLLEGE POLICIES (and mine):

Smoking, food, and drinks are not permitted in the classroom.

GMU complies with the American with Disabilities Act. If any student needs special accommodations, please speak to me or the campus ADA representative in the Counseling Office.

While in this course, students are expected to display behavior consistent with professional etiquette and accepted common practices of courtesy and respect. Disruption and rudeness will not be tolerated. Please turn off your cellular phones, i-Pods and other electronic devices.

Plagiarism: All exams must follow the guidelines of the GMU Honor Code. I understand plagiarism as the use of a meaningful ideas/quotations from someone else's work without adequate acknowledgement.

Changes in Syllabus and class cancellation: The time table and the list of the topics for each class are tentative. The amount of time we will spend on each topic may vary. Please, be aware that, depending on your questions and our discussions, we will address many philosophical issues not listed in the syllabus or discussed in your books. Therefore, please, never ask questions "Why are we discussing this material?" or "Is this going to be on the test?"

If I have to cancel class, I will notify you. If I am late (traffic), please, wait 15 minutes. If you are absent, please, find out what you missed.

When you contact me through email, please do not write: "Hi, I missed last class. Can you tell me what we covered?" Instead, please, identify yourself by full name, class, and the day/time of class. I teach many classes in many places and am not a clairvoyant to guess your name.

STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

This is an approximate time frame. The amount of time we will spend on each topic may vary. In addition to listed readings, occasionally, I will ask you to read more from other sources.

Segment I

Jan 22 – Feb 12	Introduction. Building philosophical vocabulary: Branches of Philosophy. Importance of Liberal arts. Aesthetics – short history. A few literary terms. Read: Magee: 1-23 (Greeks), 32-39 (Aristotle), 44-47 (Epicureanism, Stoicism), 138-145 (Schopenhauer), 172-179 (Nietzsche),
Feb 14 – Feb 26	Plato: "The Republic" (Role of poetry in the society Censorship. Allegory of the Cave, Gyges Ring (interpretations). Cognitive character of poetry/literature? Read: selections from "The Republic" 357-440, 502-528, 595-620, Magee: 24-31 (Plato). Overview for the test
Feb 12	Paper # 1 (Abstract/draft) due 250 – 300 words
Feb 26	TEST / EXAM # 1

Segment II

Feb 28 - Mar 26	Aristotle and his contribution to literary criticism. Sophocles: Individual and the state. Freedom. Read: "Poetics", " Oedipus", " Antigone". Overview for the test.
Mar 4	First paper due (1800 words)
Mar 11 & 13	No classes - Spring Break
Mar 25	TEST / EXAM # 2

Segment III

Mar 27 – May 1	Presentations: (Antiquity, Medieval world, Renaissance, Romanticism, Enlightenment, Existentialism, Modernism, Hermeneutics, Utopianism, Social realism). Read: Voltaire: "Candide" , Magee: 84-109, 121-145, 156-179, 208-219, Milosz: "The Captive Mind". Overview for the test
May 1 (Thursday):	Second paper due (last regular class)
May 8 (Thursday):	10.30 – 1.15.pm. TEST / EXAM # 3

Last day to drop with no tuition penalty: Feb. 5

Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty: Feb. 12

Last day to drop with a 67% tuition penalty: Feb. 22
