

PHIL 323—Philosophy in Literature

Chapman University
Course Syllabus

Fall 2022
2:30-3:30 MW
Wilkinson Hall 220

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Office Hours: 1:00-2:30 MW and by appointment
Wilkinson Hall 210

Course Description

In this class we will focus on philosophy and tragedy. While there are many ways to think about “tragedy” and many ways it has appeared in literature, we will focus on classic Greek tragedy, Shakespearean tragedy, and some later related developments in drama and contemporary film. Tragedy, as we know it, first appears in the 6th Century BC, over 2,500 years ago. Its artistic zenith coincided with the flourishing of Greek philosophy in the 5th Century BC in Athens. Plato develops his philosophy, in some sense, in opposition to the tragic poets and Aristotle’s discussion of tragedy in his *Poetics* is still influential today. Other philosophers have put tragedy at the center of their philosophical visions, most notably G.W.F Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche. Shakespeare developed a new form of tragedy in his works, which, like the Greek plays, have explicitly philosophical themes made vivid in the drama of his work. We will follow these thinkers and see what insights we can draw from a close study of a selection of tragic drama, pairing them with commentary and illuminating texts of philosophers along the way. In addition to the classics from Greece and Shakespeare, we will also look at Mary Shelley’s great work *Frankenstein*, which is, at once, a ground-breaking work of early science fiction, as well as a modern tragedy. We conclude by looking at one of the most evocative tragic stories for our time, the story of Faust. We will do first by reading Christopher Marlowe’s tragic play *Doctor Faustus* and then by reading Goethe’s classic. Along the way we will also engage with films related to these works; sometimes adaptations, sometimes films that are not direct adaptations but that add something to our understanding of the original work.

Course Catalog Description

A study of intriguing philosophical ideas and themes as dealt with by novelists, poets, and dramatists. The unifying theme of the course varies. 3 credits.

Class Communications

Most classroom communications will take place through email (typically via the dedicated course Canvas site). YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING SURE THAT YOU RECEIVE THESE COMMUNICATIONS.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

- **Values and Ethics Inquiry Learning Outcome**—Students articulate how values and ethics inform human understanding, structures, and behavior.
- **Artistic Inquiry Learning Outcome**—Composes critical or creative works that embody or analyze conceptually an artistic form at a baccalaureate / pre-professional level.

Program Learning Outcomes

1. Writing—Ability to state and support a thesis, apply knowledge of critical reasoning, accurately interpret philosophic sources, and clearly communicate a balanced account in writing.
2. Critical Reasoning—Ability to construct and analyze complex arguments and distinguish good reasoning from bad.
3. Ethical Reasoning—Ability to reason logically, effectively, and respectfully about ethical matters.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Identify and understand the nature of conflicts among differing and often opposing visions of society, morality, and human nature.
2. Comprehend the underlying social, moral, and political ideas conveyed by literary texts and films, as well as by philosophical and historical works, and engage with those ideas critically.
3. Formulate clear, incisive, thought-provoking questions about ideas presented in literary and academic texts as well as films.
4. Develop skill in constructing and presenting arguments.
5. The student critically analyzes and communicates complex issues and ideas.

Required Texts & Films

Texts (Bring the text each day to class)

1. Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*
2. Sophocles, *Antigone*
3. Euripides, *Bacchae*
4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*
5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals*
6. Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*
7. Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*
8. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*
9. Shakespeare, *King Lear*
10. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
11. Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*
12. Goethe, *Faust*

Films

1. The Godfather (1972)
2. Ran (1985)
3. Coriolanus (2011)
4. Caesar Must Die (2012)
5. Hamlet (2009)
6. Mephisto (1981)

Excerpts

1. Aristotle, excerpts from the *Poetics*
2. GWF Hegel, excerpts from several works
3. Alexandre Kojeve, excerpts from *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*

Students are expected to bring the relevant text to each discussion. Some of the texts will be made available as PDFs on Canvas. We recommend getting the versions of the texts listed above to make it easier to follow the discussion in class.

Students are expected to watch the films **before** we talk about them in class and are encouraged to watch them twice. All of the films we will be discussing are available for rental or purchase on various streaming services and all can be streamed directly from either Amazon or Kanopy. Given that we will continue to discuss and compare the films during the entire fall semester, we recommend to all students that they *purchase* (rather than rent) digital/streaming versions of the films.

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Instructional Methods

This course uses a combination of lectures, Socratic roundtable discussions of readings, small group discussion, engagement with films, creative projects, and writing exercises.

Assessment

There are five components to your grade. All assessment will use a 100-point scale. These are distributed as follows:

Class Participation	20%
Class Questions/Comments	25%
Philosophical Essay	20%
Critical Project	20%
Take-Home Exam	15%

Class Participation (20%)

Participation in this course offers the opportunity to experiment with and practice formulating questions and responding to other students. Students will develop skill in articulating their ideas, developing support for their positions, and submitting their views to rational scrutiny. The seminar-style conversation in the (real or virtual) classroom will facilitate constant engagement and practice. *Students are expected to enter discussion in each and every meeting of the class.* Comments and questions are expected to be about or grounded in the texts we are reading together and the films we are discussing.

Questions/Comments (25%)

Each student will submit one question *and* one comment about the material under discussion that day to an assigned site on Canvas before each class. These questions and comments will be used in the class and will be evaluated according to how well they reflect the student's engagement with the material. The question/comment will be due at 10am (PST) the day of class. No late material will be accepted.

Expository & Creative Projects (20% each, total of 40%)

Students will complete two major projects in the course, one expository/critical and one creative in nature. These projects will provide opportunities for students to explore ideas and use texts to add to the ongoing discourse.

Expository Project: Students will produce one essay of 2,500 words (maximum) answering a question prompt provided to the class by the instructors. The question will pertain to the topic of progress as we have been analyzing it conceptually and via social scientific methods in our discussions and readings. Critical projects will be evaluated for their rigor, concision, and structure in building their analysis.

Creative Project: Students will produce one work of art or criticism in answer to a question prompt provided to the class by the instructors. The aim of this project is to utilize the question as a vehicle for exploring one of the art forms that we have been engaging with in our discussions, readings, and encounters with visual art. Students are invited to choose the form they wish to explore among painting, sculpture, film, poetry, monologue, screenplay, theatrical play or tragedy, dance, photography, music, or short story. This list is not intended to exhaust possibilities, and students are welcome to

consult with the instructors in their ideas of forms to explore. Demonstration of an understanding of the skills involved in the creative process will be evaluated, as will the final product.

Final Exam (15%)

A final take-home exam will cover material from the class as a whole. More details will be given towards the end of the class.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory, without a valid exemption. Four absences will result in the reduction of one letter grade in the final grade, six absences will result in a fail.

Chapman University's Students with Disabilities Policy

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to contact the [Office of Disability Services](#). If you will need to utilize your approved accommodations in this class, please follow the proper notification procedure for informing your professor(s). This notification process must occur more than a week before any accommodation can be utilized. Please contact Disability Services at (714) 516-4520 if you have questions regarding this procedure, or for information and to make an appointment to discuss and/or request potential accommodations based on documentation of your disability. Once formal approval of your need for an accommodation has been granted, you are encouraged to talk with your professor(s) about your accommodation options. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy

Chapman University is a community of scholars that emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work and academic dishonesty of any kind will be subject to sanction by the instructor/administrator and referral to the University Academic Integrity Committee, which may impose additional sanctions including expulsion. Please see the full description of Chapman University's policy on Academic Integrity at www.chapman.edu/academics/academic-integrity/index.aspx

Equity and Diversity

Chapman University is committed to ensuring equality and valuing diversity. Students and professors are reminded to show respect at all times as outlined in [Chapman's Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#). Any violations of this policy should be discussed with the professor, the [Dean of Students](#) and/or otherwise reported in accordance with this policy.

Student Support at Chapman University

Over the course of the semester, you may experience a range of challenges that interfere with your learning, such as problems with friend, family, and or significant other relationships; substance use; concerns about personal adequacy; feeling overwhelmed; or feeling sad or anxious without knowing why. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. You can

learn more about the resources available through Chapman University's Student Psychological Counseling Services here: <https://www.chapman.edu/students/health-and-safety/psychological-counseling/>.

Fostering a community of care that supports the success of students is essential to the values of Chapman University. Occasionally, you may come across a student whose personal behavior concerns or worries you, either for the student's well-being or yours. In these instances, you are encouraged to contact the Chapman University Student Concern Intervention Team who can respond to these concerns and offer assistance: <https://www.chapman.edu/students/health-and-safety/student-concern/index.aspx>. While it is preferred that you include your contact information so this team can follow up with you, you can submit a report anonymously. 24-hour emergency help is also available through Public Safety at 714-997-6763

Safety Protocol

Course format may be subject to change with little to no notice, depending upon state, local, and University guidelines

In response to the current COVID-19 pandemic, Chapman University has developed the [CU Safely Back program \(CUSBP\)](#) and mandatory safety measures. The University's mandatory safety measures may be stricter than local, state or federal guidelines and may be subject to change at any time. Students are expected to adhere to the University's safety measures while attending classes, including when entering and exiting classrooms, laboratories, or other instructional areas. Refusal to abide by the University's mandatory safety measures or to the safety requirements specific to this course will result in your being asked to leave the area immediately, and may result in an administrative dismissal from this course.

The COVID-19 pandemic requires all of us to accept the possibility that changes in how this course is taught may be required and that some changes may occur with little or no notice. For example, some or all of the in-person aspects of a course may be shifted to remote instruction. If this occurs, you will be given clear instructions as to how to proceed. The uncertainty of the situation is not ideal for any of us. We must all try to approach this situation with good-will, flexibility, and mutual understanding.

Class Schedule and Readings

	Reading / Film	Assessment
Week 1		
8/29 A	Intro to Tragedy	Question/Comments
8/31 B	The Godfather (1972)	Question/Comments
Week 2		
9/5 A	Labor Day—No Class	Question/Comments
9/7 B	Sophocles- <i>Oedipus Rex</i> , Aristotle-Excerpts from <i>Poetics</i>	Question/Comments
Week 3		
9/12 A	Nietzsche- <i>Birth of Tragedy</i> 1-6	Question/Comments
9/14 B	Nietzsche- <i>Birth of Tragedy</i> 7-11	Question/Comments
Week 4		
9/19 A	Sophocles- <i>Antigone</i>	Question/Comments
9/21 B	Excerpts from Hegel and Kojeve	Question/Comments
Week 5		
9/26 A	Euripides- <i>Bacchae</i>	Question/Comments
9/28 B	Euripides- <i>Bacchae</i>	Question/Comments
Week 6		
10/3 A	Shakespeare— <i>Coriolanus</i>	Question/Comments
10/5 B	<i>Coriolanus</i> (2011)	Question/Comments
Week 7		
10/10 A	Shakespeare— <i>Julius Caesar</i>	Question/Comments
10/12 B	<i>Caesar Must Die</i> (2012)	Question/Comments
Week 8		
10/17 A	Shakespeare— <i>Hamlet</i>	Question/Comments
10/19 B	<i>Hamlet</i> (2009)	Question/Comments
		Expository Project Due
Week 9		
10/24 A	Shakespeare— <i>King Lear</i>	Question/Comments
10/26 B	<i>Ran</i>	Question/Comments
Week 10		
10/31 A	Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> Volume 1	Question/Comments
11/2 B	Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> Volume 2	Question/Comments
Week 11		
11/7 A	Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> Volume 3	Question/Comments
11/9 B	Nietzsche— <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> I	Question/Comments

Week 12		
11/14 A	Nietzsche— <i>On the Genealogy of Morals II</i>	Question/Comments
11/16 B	Marlowe <i>Faust</i>	Question/Comments
	11/21-11/25 Thanksgiving Break	
Week 13		
11/28 A	Goethe-Faust Part 1	Questions/Comments
11/30 B	Goethe-Faust Part 1	Questions/Comments
		Creative Project Due
Week 14		
12/5 A	Goethe-Faust Part2	Questions/Comments
12/7 B	Goethe-Faust Part2	Questions/Comments
12/12 M	Final Exam 1:30-4:00	