

## PHIL 323—Philosophy in Literature

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Spring 2019                      Thursdays 4:00 – 6:45pm    Beckman 205

Instructor:                      Dr. John Thrasher  
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   T, R     3–4pm, and by appointment

### 1. Overview

#### *GE Area(s)*

- 7VI/Values/Ethics Inquiry—Articulates how values and ethics inform human understanding, structures, and behavior

#### *Prerequisite(s)*

None

#### *Course Objectives / Student Learning Outcomes*

1. To introduce students to philosophical methods of argument and analysis.
2. PLO1: 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.
3. PLO2: Critical Reasoning—Ability to construct and analyze complex arguments, and distinguish good reasoning from bad.
4. PLO 4: Ethical Reasoning—Ability to reason logically, effectively, and respectfully about ethical matters.

#### *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.

### 2. Required Texts

1. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*
2. Virgil, *The Aeneid*
3. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
4. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
5. J.M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*
6. Joan Didion, *We Tell Ourselves Stories in Order to Live*

Students are expected to bring the relevant text to each discussion. Additional readings will be made available via Blackboard and are listed on the class schedule.

## **Instructional Methods**

This course uses a combination of Socratic discussions of readings, short-essay writing exercises, a mid-term and final written examination, an essay plan, and a final essay. Students are required to bring the readings with them to each meeting.

## **Students with Disabilities**

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's Academic Integrity Committee, which may impose additional sanctions up to and including expulsion. Please see the full description of Chapman University's policy on Academic Integrity at [www.chapman.edu/academics/academic-integrity](http://www.chapman.edu/academics/academic-integrity).

## **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.

## **Attendance Policy**

Because of the interactive nature of the class, attendance is an essential component. Excessive tardiness constitutes an absence; six absences may result in failure (Undergraduate Catalog 2018-2019 "[Academic Policies and Procedures](#)"). Please keep this in mind.

## Assessment

There are six components to your grade. These are distributed as follows:

Class Participation	15%
Response Papers	15%
Midterm	20%
Term Paper	20%
Final Exam	30%

Grades will be assigned on a numerical scale from 0 – 100, with grades rounded up to the nearest tenth and corresponding to letter grades in the usual way.

94 – 100	A	73 – 76	C
90 – 93	A-	70 – 72	C-
87 – 89	B+	67 – 69	D+
83 – 86	B	63 – 66	D
80 – 82	B-	60 – 62	D-
77 – 79	C+	0 – 59	F

Over the course of the semester there will also be several opportunities to earn extra credit or improve your grade. I encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities. Because I will offer several such opportunities, though, no additional opportunities will be provided. Please don't ask.

### Class Participation (15%)

Participation in this class offers you the opportunity to experiment with and practice formulating questions and responding to other students. You will develop skill in articulating your ideas, developing support for your positions, and submitting your views to rational scrutiny. For this approach to be successful, however, each student is expected to participate actively in each session. This means doing the reading thoroughly before class and coming to class with questions and thoughts from the reading.

You will be graded in part on the basis of your participation in class discussions, simply showing up will get you no credit. To make expectations for participation clear and fair I will utilize what I call the “Present and Prepared” system. The system works as follows:

Most days I will pass around a class roster. When you come to class, if you are prepared to participate in the class discussion for that day, you can sign the box next to your name. If you do so, you are subject to being called upon in order to help get discussion going, answer a question I have posed for the class, or whatever.

If you do not check the roster for that day, I will not call on you. The roster will be available for the first 5 minutes of class. If you forget to sign the roster or show up late to class you will not get credit for the day. Note, however, that whether or not you sign the roster you are always free to ask questions or participate in class discussions.

In order to get the full 15 points available for participation you must sign the Present and Prepared roster at least 9 times (that's about 3/4's of our meetings). In order to get 10 points, you must sign the roster at least 6 times (about 1/2 of our meetings), and in order to get 5 points you must sign the roster at least 3 times. No other participation grades are possible and, if (for whatever reason) you fail to sign the roster at least 5 times, then you will get no participation points.

You will also be responsible for bringing 3 thoughts or questions about the reading to class each meeting. If you have signed the form, I may ask you to share your questions or thoughts with the class.

### *Abuse*

In order to prevent abuse of the system, if you have signed the roster, I call on you, and you are clearly unprepared, you will immediately lose 5 participation points. This rarely happens, but if it does I will discuss the issue with you immediately after class. Note that the point of this policy is not to trick you. The questions I will ask will merely require that you have done the reading or assignment and are prepared to offer thoughtful answers. Whether you get the answer correct does not matter.

### *Exceptions*

On rare occasions I will not put out the present and prepared roster. Mostly these will be exam review days, or days when we are beginning a new part of the course. I can't say in advance how many of these days there will be, but there will be ample opportunities for you to sign the present and prepared roster. Plan accordingly! Don't leave things until the end of the semester.

Finally, in rare circumstances I may provide a 5-point participation bonus to individuals whose contributions to class discussions are, in my estimation, particularly valuable to the class. Don't count on getting these points, but know that if you consistently benefit your fellow classmates by offering high value contributions to discussion I may reward you.

## **Short Response Papers (15%)**

Most days a short response paper will be due before class. These will be based on questions about the reading and will be relatively short (~300 words). You will be graded on these papers, but they will be about intelligent engagement with the material and anyone who has done the reading should be fine. They will be graded out of 5 points and your scores will be weighted slightly higher as the semester goes on. This means that attendance will be more valuable—from the point of view of the response paper—as the semester goes on.

## **Exams (20% & 30%)**

At the mid-semester point in the course and during the final exam period, all students will sit an in-class examination consisting of several short questions. Detailed instructions will be presented closer to the time of the exam. The exam will cover only the material we have studied in the first

half of the semester. Questions posed to the students will pertain to the subject matter of the course. Students are expected to demonstrate the following abilities:

- Critically analyze and communicate complex issues and ideas.
- Utilize examples and positions in the texts to support your interpretations.
- Demonstrate developed skill in articulating positions and constructing relevant, concise arguments that are well-supported.

### **Term Paper (20%)**

Each student will submit a final paper of  $\leq 2,00$  words at the end of the semester, due at the final meeting of class. These papers are your opportunity to demonstrate the skills that you have acquired writing efficiently and constructing well-supported, well-articulated arguments in relation to the topics we have covered in class. You will develop these skills through writing your short-response papers and discussion.

Before you will be allowed to submit your final paper, you will be required to submit an essay plan and to briefly meet with the professor to discuss your essay plan. Details on the final essay and the essay plan will be available after the mid-term.

## Class Schedule and Readings\*

	<b>Readings &amp; Assignments</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	Lucretius, Books I
1/31	
<b>Week 2</b>	Lucretius Books II-III
2/7	
<b>Week 3</b>	The Aeneid, Books IV-VI
2/14	
<b>Week 4</b>	The Aeneid, Books I-III
2/21	
<b>Week 5</b>	<i>The Aeneid</i> , Books IV-VI
2/28	
<b>Week 6</b>	<i>The Aeneid</i> , Books VII-IX
3/7	
<b>Week 7</b>	<i>The Aeneid</i> , Books X-XII Mid-Term
3/14	
<b>Spring Break!</b>	
<b>Week 8</b>	<i>Heart of Darkness</i>
3/28	
<b>Week 9</b>	<i>Heart of Darkness</i> (with Chinua Achebe's essay "An Image of Africa: Conrad's Racism in <i>Heart of Darkness</i> ")
4/4	
<b>Week 10</b>	<i>Things Fall Apart</i>
4/11	
<b>Week 11</b>	<i>Things Fall Apart</i>
4/18	
<b>Week 12</b>	<i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i>
4/25	
<b>Week 13</b>	Joan Didion Essays
5/2	
<b>Week 14</b>	Joan Didion and Conclusion
5/9	

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\* N.B., there may be slight changes to this schedule throughout the semester. An updated version will be kept on Blackboard and any changes will be communicated clearly.