

SYLLABUS: PHILOSOPHY & RELIGION IN LITERATURE

REL 2540 Spring 2011 TTH 12:00-1:15 ADM 312

Dr. Seth Holtzman

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hours: MWF 3-5; TTh 10-11, 11-12 if no meeting; & by appt.

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Course summary:

This course examines a wide range of important philosophical and religious concepts and issues within literature, broadly interpreted to include novels, short stories, plays and poetry. Topics that will emerge from the readings include personal identity, the nature of selfhood, the relationship between self and culture, morality, social and political thought, the nature of knowledge, the metaphysical structure of the world, the nature of the Divine, the relationship of the Divine to the world, our grasp of the Divine, and our relationship to the Divine. We will also find connections between topics and between readings.

Class format will often be lectures, but class discussion will be frequent and will constitute a part of your grade. The course topics are often quite abstract; be prepared to read and think on that level. No prior courses are required, and no prior knowledge is assumed.

<u>Expected learning outcome</u> <i>Successful students will demonstrate:</i>	<u>Means of Assessment</u> <i>By being successful on:</i>
an understanding of some philosophical ideas	Short essays, midterm, and final exam
an understanding of some religious ideas	Short essays, midterm, and final exam
an awareness that literature (broadly interpreted) contains philosophical and religious ideas	Short essays, midterm, long paper, & final exam
an understanding of some examples of religious and philosophical problems affecting modern Western thought	Midterm and final exam

Requirements and grading:

1) Attendance is required; you cannot learn the course on your own. As part of lecture or for purposes of Socratic questioning, I will elicit some material from you in class, such as your grasp of the readings, lecture, and course. Also, your participation by questions and in discussion is important. You need to be present, mentally active and prepared. You will also have a 20-minute presentation/question-and-answer class session in which you explicate ideas from some reading(s), counting **10% of your grade**. Class participation can raise your final grade by 1/3 of a grade.

2) Occasional essays on the readings, usually one page. These help you wrestle with a reading, usually before we cover it, and help me gauge your understanding. You may work on readings with classmates; but for written assignments, separate and come to your own thoughts before any writing. Your lowest essay grade will not count; late ones are not accepted. Together, they will count **10% of your grade**.

3) A take-home essay midterm testing your grasp of the readings, issues, and problems covered. Handed out on Thursday, Mar. 3rd and due on Tuesday, Mar. 15th. **20% of your grade**.

4) A film on Sunday, April 17th from 3-6pm, we will watch together, you will participate in a discussion immediately afterwards, and write a 3-page essay analyzing the film using course ideas. **15% of your grade**.

5) An 8-10 page analytical paper, on a topic relevant to the course. I will meet with you both to help you plan and rewrite it. The draft is due on Thursday, April 14th, with the rewrite due on Thursday, April 28th, our last class. Late papers will have their grades lowered. **20% of your grade**.

6) A final exam, testing your conceptual grasp of the course, not your memory of facts. Exam date: Thursday, May 5th, 8:00–11:00am. Bring blue book; write in pen. **25% of your grade**.

Criteria for Evaluating Writing Ability:

1. Content: Writing should reflect a sufficient understanding of the relevant subject. It should make good use of the relevant concepts, distinctions, positions, and reasons included in course readings or brought out in lecture or discussion. Writing should use precise words and well-constructed sentences that clearly represent the writer's reasoning. Your work should be clearly written, its claims precise, its structure clear, with an explicit overall direction. It should be intelligible to an interested student.

2. Argumentation: It should be organized so ideas are arranged logically and clearly. Main points should be backed by substantial and relevant details. Your work should be backed by good reasons. Your claims and reasons should be consistent with each other. Anticipate and respond to any reasonable objections.

3. Mechanics & Style: It should adhere to conventions of grammar, capitalization, spelling, and usage. Writing style should be appropriate to the academy.

4. Citations and Documentation: Writers must clearly differentiate their own material from source material. When writers use material that is not their own or not common knowledge, they must document the source of the information using a standardized (i.e., either MLA or APA) method.

Complete assignments on time. Other expectations about your writing: typed, paginated, tidy (bound if needed), standard margins/fonts, & dark print. Failure to meet these will hurt your assignment grades. Your paper (not the essays) should have a cover page with name, course name/number, date, my name, and a title.

The Catawba College Writing Center offers free, one-on-one consultations to all students. Tutors have been intensely trained; while they won't rewrite your papers for you, they will give you feedback and encouragement at all stages of the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, revising, polishing). Be prepared to discuss your assignment and to begin making revisions, with the tutor's guidance, during your session. The Writing Center is open afternoons (in ADM 211) and evenings (in the Library, Study Room #5). Walk-ins are welcome, but we honor appointments first. For more info or to make an appointment, call 704-645-4819 or stop by ADM 211.

Criteria for Evaluating Oral Presentation Communication Ability:

- 1. Content:** Mastery of relevant subject matter
 - 2. Structure:** Clear and meaningful order within the assigned time frame
 - 3. Style:** Clear and appropriate; good use of language
 - 4. Delivery:** Speed; Diction; Volume; Expressions; Eye Contact
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Criteria for Evaluating Discussion Facilitation Communication Ability:

- 1. Knowledge:** Your level of understanding of material & resources is enough to prompt class with meaningful discussion questions.
 - 2. Structure:** Discussion should proceed on topic in organized fashion.
 - 3. Participation:** Encourage & value everyone's contribution.
 - 4. Time:** Discussion should stay within allotted time & neither rush nor drag.
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Criteria for Evaluating Analytical Reading Ability:

- 1. Clear understanding of the author's thesis**
- 2. Clear understanding of the author's argumentation**
- 3. Determination of the author's bias**

"A"	Superior mastery	A+ 97-100	A 93-96	A- 90-92
"B"	Good mastery	B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82
"C"	Satisfactory achievement	C+ 77-79	C 73-76	C- 70-72
"D"	Less than satisfactory achievement	D+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62
"F"	Unsatisfactory achievement			

I use +/- grades, though A+ is not a possible final course grade. Grades can and should measure achievement only, not effort.

Texts:

- 1) Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley
- 2) A Canticle for Leibowitz, by Walter M. Miller, Jr.
- 3) Being There, by Jerzy Kosinski
- 4) "Antigone", by Sophocles
- 5) "The Madwoman of Chaillot", by Jean Giraudoux
- 6) Four Plays, by Eugene Ionesco
- 7) a coursepack at the bookstore

Reading and taking notes:

There is much reading in this course. I expect you to do all of it; to do well in the course you will need to. Some material is easy and so accessible on your first attempt. Other assignments are quite taxing and will probably require multiple readings.

Lectures will sometimes track the readings but may also range far afield. Come to class having done the readings. You will be responsible for all of it, and the final exam will be frightening if you have not read it all. Since lectures can cover material not in the readings, this is another reason to attend each class. You cannot get by with noting only key terms and definitions. Your notes are an invaluable resource for understanding the course and for the final exam. This course focuses on understanding concepts and ideas, not on memorizing facts; your notes should reflect that.

Absences and violations:

To keep attendance--and to learn names--I will institute a seating chart in the first few classes. Choose a permanent seat; see me to change it. I check attendance promptly at the start of class. If late, you might be counted absent; if late enough, you are absent. Avoid tardiness; if you are often late (without legitimate reason), I will choose to count you as absent. Sleeping and other forms of mental disconnect in class count as an absence. When absent, you are responsible for missed assignments and classroom material. Get notes from a classmate. If you still have questions, you may contact me.

No absences are excused. After 2 penalty-free absences, further absences lower your final grade: 3-4 total subtracts 1/3 grade, 5-6 total subtracts 2/3 grade, 7 total subtracts 1 grade. Over 7 absences (if no emergency) is grounds for an "F" (or "I" sometimes), regardless of your grades. Missing class just before/after vacation counts double.

Respect the people and ideas in our class. It is usually illegitimate to attack a person; instead, challenge the person's ideas. I don't care if you bring food or drink, sport a hat, or wear rags. I care that you pay attention to me and others (no cell phones or activated pagers/beepers), that you are on time and ready to work, that you have a positive attitude, and that you make a positive contribution to the class.

Cheating, working with another student to complete individual assignments (unless specifically allowed), as well as falsifying an emergency to skip class or an assignment, all violate the Honor Code. So does plagiarism, employing a writer's ideas (and even words) without giving the writer due credit. See me if you have any question about borrowing someone's ideas or words for your use. No electronic devices are allowed during an exam, except for simple watches, computers (if specifically allowed), and any needed medical devices. Specifically, cell phones and any devices that allow for texting are prohibited. Violation of this electronic device policy can result in an "F" for that exam.

Order of Readings:

Novels: underlined. Poems: in *italics*. Short stories: in **bold**. Plays: in "quotes".

Shelley: Frankenstein

Psalm 8

Coleridge: Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Donne: excerpt from An Anatomy of the World

Yeats: The Second Coming

Jewett: A White Heron

Bishop: The Fish

Sophocles: "Antigone"

Silverberg: The Sixth Palace

Blake: Auguries of Innocence

Whitman: When I heard the learn'd astronomer

Miller: A Canticle for Leibowitz

Roetke: In a Dark Time

Tao Te Ching

Hopkins: Pied Beauty

Singer: Gimpel the Fool

Cummings: you shall above all things be glad and young

Giraudoux: "The Madwoman of Chaillot"

Samuel: And Even Beyond

Cummings: I thank you, God, for most this amazing

Lawrence: The Song of a Man Who Has Come Through

Dostoevsky: The Grand Inquisitor

Graves: In Broken Images

Ammons: Corsons Inlet

Kosinski: Being There

Stevens: Less and Less Human, O Savage Spirit

Jeffers: The Great Explosion

Dugan: Love Song: I and Thou

Teasdale: Mastery

Rukeyser: This Morning

Tan: Half and Half

Arnold: Dover Beach

Eliot: The Hollow Men

Coleridge: Human Life

Silverberg: Passengers

Clough: The Latest Decalogue

Auden: The Unknown Citizen

Ionesco: "The Bald Soprano"

Olds: Last Night

Larkin: High Windows