About the Course

Contact Information

Professor Jennifer Truschka (she/her)

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Course Description

Among its many attributes, literature is great because it helps us gain a better understanding of human nature and the social institutions. Literature can be an excellent companion to any area of study because it takes abstract ideas and weaves them into a human narrative.

This course will be discussion oriented. You are welcome to attend via Zoom or in the classroom. Because it is discussion oriented, it's difficult to give an exact timeline for the course. Here is my best shot:

- **Political Theory**: For this course, our main theme is justice. For the first six weeks, or so, of the course we are going to focus on political theory. We need to develop frameworks and context in order to analyze the four novels in this course. The history of political theory is vast. I have chosen specific philosophers and movements to focus on. I have chosen a specific theme, justice, to focus on. Other philosophers and themes are sure to come up in the course, but hopefully we can create some semblance of order.

- **Africa & Colonization**: Our first two novels take place in Africa during colonization. The first novel was published by the Western (Polish) author, Joseph Conrad, in 1899. It is *Heart of Darkness*, a classic novel that you have heard of and possibly read. The second novel was written by Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong’o in 1965. It is entitled, *The River Between*. Discussion of these novels should take us roughly a month.

- **Internal Perspective of Justice**: Our next two novels take on justice as a more personal exploration. The first novel is by the Algerian author, Albert Camus. It is his classic novel *The Stranger*. It was published in 1942. Although Algerian, Camus will supply us with a Western perspective. Again, this is a novel you have probably heard of and even read. The second novel is by Pakistani author Mohsin Hamid. It is a novel you may not have heard of, *Moth Smoke*. It was published in 2000. Discussion of these novels should take us roughly a month.
Reading

The following are the novels we will be using in class. These are the editions I will be using but you can use any edition. I prefer a print copy when I am studying a novel or essay but that is personal preference. You can use a Kindle or audio edition.


Graded Assignments

**Discussion** (150 points or 30%): The best way to learn is through discussion. You will be given 150 attendance points at the start of class. No points will be deducted for your first two absences. After that five points will be deducted for each class missed. I plan to make a Zoom option available. If possible, have your camera on during class.

**Essay Exams** (Approximately 250 points or 50%): This course is divided into three parts. Each part will have 3-4 essay questions worth 20 to 40 points each. As we go through each part, the essay questions will be gradually introduced. In other words, you will not have a big essay exam presented to you at the end of each section. Essay questions will be added, approximately, every 7-10 days.

Because you have extra time to work on the questions, and our class size is small, I will accept revisions. You may complete a question. I will grade it with a tentative score. You may keep that score, or use the suggestions I provide and resubmit your answer. When you receive a tentative score, this means that the score you receive will not be lower. It may actually increase by a couple of points upon final grading. I will need at least five days to provide tentative scores and suggestions.

**Final Project** (100 points or 20%): There is a final project due at the end of the course on Sunday December 17th. You have a choice on what you would like to do. There is a detailed explanation of the final project found below.

Final Project

You have two options for the final project.

**Option #1**: We will spend the first six weeks exploring the themes found within political philosophy, focusing on the theme of justice. After exploring various frameworks of justice, we will analyze four different novels. For this first option, choose a novel not discussed in class. Analyze the theme(s) of justice within your chosen novel using the
frameworks discussed in class. Your paper will be graded on: 1) how clearly you identified the understanding of justice portrayed by the characters in the novel, 2) how well you demonstrate your understanding of the various frameworks and concepts discussed in class. Your paper should be 5-8 pages long. You do not need to use any sources other than the novel you chose. Please let me know which novel you plan to focus on ASAP. I would like to read it before grading your paper.

Option #2: For this option you will be focusing on the information and novels discussed in class. You do not need to read an additional novel. You will need to decide on a thesis and explore it in a 5-8 page paper. Your paper will be graded on 1) a well defined and supported thesis statement, and 2) how well you demonstrate your understanding of the various frameworks and concepts discussed in class.

If you chose option #1 let me know which novel you plan to focus on ASAP. I would like to read it before grading your paper. Please let me know before November 01. If you chose option #2 I recommend you discuss your thesis with me before Thanksgiving.

Grading Scale

Here is the grade scale for this course:

93-100% = A; 90-92% = A-
87-89%=B+; 83-86%=B; 80-82%=B-
77-79%=C+; 73-76=C; 70-72%=C-
67-69%=D+; 63-66%=D; 62%>=F

Notice that you need at least a 63% to pass the class. Anyone who is .5 or higher will automatically have their grade rounded up to the next higher grade. For example, a final grade of 86.5% or 86.6% will be entered as an 87% B+. As the professor, I reserve the right to round a grade up by .5% for effort shown. For example, let's say a student has a final grade of 86.3%. This student's grade could be entered as an 87% B+. I do this for students who have shown continued progress in their exam grades, turned in all of their exams and assignments, sought to increase their grade by taking advantage of the extra credit, had reasonable attendance, and/or sought help outside of class. Under no circumstances will I raise a grade more than .5%.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will result in 1) a written form submitted to Logan's ethics board, 2) an failing grade on the assignment for which the plagiarism occurred. If plagiarism occurs again, this will result in 1) a second notification to Logan's ethics board which may result in a dismissal from the university, 2) a failing grade in the course.

ADA Information
Classroom Accommodation For Students With Disabilities: USU welcomes students with disabilities. If you have, or suspect you may have, a physical, mental health, or learning disability that may require accommodations in this course, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) as early in the semester as possible (435-797-2444, drc@usu.edu). All disability related accommodations must be approved by the DRC. Once approved, the DRC will coordinate with faculty to provide accommodations.

Tentative Course Schedule

The following schedule will help you anticipate what is coming next in the course. It is tentative, which means it may change. Be sure to pay attention for changes or assignments. They will be announced in class or in an announcement. Although the first six weeks of the class involve lecture and discussion, it is important you start reading the novels for the second part of the course.

**Political Theory: Justice and Morality**

Week One: Intro to Course Structure

Week Two: Aristotle’s Concepts of Justice and Virtue
- Monday September 06: No Class

Week Three: Augustine and Christianity

Week Four: Social Contract Theory
- Friday September 24: No Class

Week Five: Moral Theory of Kant and Mill

Week Six: Post-Modern Concepts of Power and Self

Questions for the Political Theory Section due October 17

**Colonization and Africa**

Colonial Literature: Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* & Thiong’o’s *The River Between*

Week Seven: Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* & Thiong’o’s *The River Between*
- Friday October 15: No Class

Week Eight: Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* & Thiong’o’s *The River Between*

Questions for Conrad and Thiong’o due Sunday October 31

**Post-Modern Concepts of Justice and Self**

Week Nine: Camus’ *The Stranger* & Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*


**Week Ten:** Camus’ *The Stranger* & Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*

**Week Eleven:** Camus’ *The Stranger* & Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*

**Week Twelve:** Camus’ *The Stranger* & Hamid’s *Moth Smoke*

**Essay Questions for Camus and Hamid due Sunday November 29th**

**Week Thirteen:** Thanksgiving

- Wednesday November 24 & Friday November 26th: No Class

**Week Fourteen:** Final Project Due Thursday December 16th

**Week Fifteen:** Final Project Due Thursday December 16th