

Comparative Literature 210: Literature, Philosophy, and the Arts

Course Instructor: Michael Subialka (msubialka@ucdavis.edu)
Office Hours: TBD

Course Description:

This graduate seminar will focus on the rich intersection of literature, philosophy, and the arts, with attention to aesthetic forms including performance (theater and film) and the visual arts. Comparative literature as a field has long been a space where literary production and philosophical theory overlap in fruitful ways, and in recent years there has been growing attention to the specific intersection of (literary or artistic) form and (philosophical) argument coming from a number of disciplines. The seminar will focus on several theoretical approaches to this intersection, foregrounding work by contemporary scholars who ask what it means to think through (literary or artistic) form and how attention to that form changes our understanding of philosophical thought. In the second half of the seminar, participants will draw on their own field of expertise to present on and lead class discussions of specific (literary, philosophical, filmic, theatrical, visual, etc.) texts that relate to the conceptual problems addressed in the readings from the first half. These texts will be chosen by the seminar participants (in consultation with the instructor) based on their own areas of specialization and integrated into the course syllabus.

Objectives:

The seminar will provide participants with a theoretical framework to address aesthetic questions that are important to contemporary critical debates about the relationship between literature, philosophy, and the arts. These theoretical tools will then be applied to participants' specific areas of focus. We will address questions about the relationship between literature/the arts and, among other areas: ethics, cognition and self-formation, situated materiality, metaphysics, political consciousness, and historical self-understanding.

Requirements and Grading:

The seminar is structured around student-led discussion. The grade will be determined by a combination of three elements: (1) 50% a seminar paper (on a topic to be discussed with the instructor in week 5); (2) 30% two course presentations; and (3) 20% seminar participation. For (2), each participant will be responsible for two presentation/discussion-leader sessions. One will be when the seminar participant leads discussion of a text (theoretical/critical or literary/artistic). These presentations will be on the main text we read in any given week and will include texts selected by participants from within their own field of research expertise. The other type of presentation will be when the participant acts as a respondent and should involve the participant

drawing on secondary readings to situate, criticize, or illuminate the primary text we are considering in that week.

Primary Course Readings:

- De Sanctis, Francesco. "Leopardi e Schopenhauer. Dialogo tra A e D." [Translation to be provided.]
- Eliot, TS. *Four Quartets*. New York & London: Harcourt, 1971.
- Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- Landy, Joshua. "Formative Fictions: Imaginative Literature and the Training of the Capacities." *Poetics Today*, 33:2 (Summer 2012); pp. 167-214.
- . "Introduction: Philosophy and Fiction (Nobody's Madeleine)." In *Philosophy as Fiction: Self, Deception, and Knowledge in Proust* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; pp.
- Leopardi, Giacomo. *Canti*. Trans. Jonathan Galassi. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2010.
- Nussbaum, Martha. "Introduction: Form and Content, Philosophy and Literature." In *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990; pp. 3-53.

(Potential) Supplementary Course Readings:

- Cavell, Stanley. "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy." In *Must We Mean What We Say?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; pp. 73-96.
- . "Music Discomposed." In *Must We Mean What We Say?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; pp. 180-212.
- Cox, Virginia. Chapter from *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts, Castiglione to Galileo*.
- Danto, Arthur. *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*. Updated Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.
- Diamond, Cora. "Martha Nussbaum and the Need for Novels." In *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy, and Theory*. Eds. Jane Adamson, Richard Freadman, and David Parker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; pp. 39-64.
- Dienstag, Joshua Foa. "The Anatomy of Pessimism." In *Pessimism: Philosophy, Ethic, Spirit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006; pp. 3-48.
- Gentz, Joachim and Dirk Meyer (eds.). *Literary forms of Argument in Early China*. London: BRILL, 2015.
- Goehr, Lydia. "For the Birds / Against the Birds: Modernist Narratives on the End of Art." In *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory* New York: Columbia University Press, 2008; pp. 79-107.
- Haines, Simon. "Deepening the Self: The Language of Ethics and the Language of Literature." In *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy, and Theory*. Eds. Jane Adamson, Richard Freadman, and David Parker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; pp. 21-38.
- Jacquette, Dale, ed. 1996. *Schopenhauer, Philosophy, and the Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mohagheh, Jason Bahbak. *New Literature and Philosophy in the Middle East: The Chaotic Imagination*. Palgrave, 2010.

- Murdoch, Iris. "Literature and Philosophy: A Conversation with Bryan Magee" (interview available on YouTube, transcript in Bryan Magee, *Talking Philosophy: Dialogues with Fifteen Leading Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and "Against Dryness."
- Pippin, Robert. "What Was Abstract Art? (From the Point of View of Hegel)." In *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Rosen, Stanley. *Plato's Republic: A Study*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2005.
- Sartre, Jean Paul. "What is Literature?" In *What is Literature and Other Essays*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Schiller, Friedrich. "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man." In *Essays*. Eds. Walter Hinderer and Daniel O. Dahlstrom. New York: Continuum, 1993.
- Schlegel, Friedrich. "Letter about the Novel." In *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*. Ed. J.M. Bernstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Wellbery, David. "Schopenhauer." In *The Routledge Companion to Nineteenth Century Philosophy*. Ed. Moyar, Dean. London & New York: Routledge; pp. 327-346.

Schedule:

In general, each week will focus on one main text and also introduce a second (or more) text(s) that can be used to refine our insights into the main text. The text of primary focus is listed first in each week. In weeks 1 and 2 we will use a literary test case to think through some of the questions and issues raised by the theoretical texts, TS Eliot's *Four Quartets*. The specific texts we focus on in the second half of the seminar will be determined by seminar participants in consultation with the instructor during the first two weeks of the seminar (hence the syllabus will be "filled-in" then).

Week 1a: Nussbaum; Eliot

Week 1b: Nussbaum – Diamond – Haines; Eliot

Week 2a: Landy; Eliot

Week 2b: Landy – Gumbrecht; Eliot

Week 3a: Schopenhauer

Week 3b: Schopenhauer – Wellbery

Week 4a: Leopardi

Week 4b: Leopardi

Week 5a: De Sanctis

Week 5b: De Sanctis

Week 6a: Student-Led Text and Discussion

Week 6b: Student-Led Text and Discussion

Week 7a: Student-Led Text and Discussion

Week 7b: Student-Led Text and Discussion

Week 8a: Student-Led Text and Discussion

Week 8b: Student-Led Text and Discussion

Week 9a: Student-Led Text and Discussion

Week 9b: Student-Led Text and Discussion

Week 10a: Student-Led Text and Discussion
Week 10b: Student-Led Text and Discussion