

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

English 607.04-01: Literary Ethics *Winter 2014*

Dr. Jon Kertzer Social Sciences Tower 1028; tel. 220-4675, English Office: 220-5470
Office hours: Tues & Thurs 9:30-10:45, or by appointment
Email: jkertzer@ucalgary.ca
Course webpage: <http://people.ucalgary.ca/~jkertzer/Ethics.html>

"The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing" (Samuel Johnson)

This course explores the ethical dimension of literary studies: the ethics of writing, reading and interpretation.

Dulce et utile. Writers have always assumed that literature is profoundly ethical in its materials, methods, aims and rewards. Literature is valuable because it studies values and because it engages us in a process of evaluation, including self-evaluation. They have also worried that the delights of literature are so sweet that they may perversely corrupt judgment. Consequently, literature has always been policed by a special kind of reader - the critic - who is a moral guide as well as an explicator or historian. The relations between ethical, cultural and aesthetic judgments have been complicated by two major shifts in modern critical theory: the romantic isolation of aesthetic experience from practical conduct; and the post-structuralist dispersal of "values" into verbal texture and ideology. Both shifts challenge Dr. Johnson's assumption that good literature is good for you, and good for us all.

A notable complication of contemporary theory is that it has strongly reaffirmed the importance of literary ethics even as it has subverted conventional means of evaluation. It insists that we judge literature while denying us the autonomy of independent or secure judgment. Postcolonial, feminist and cultural theorists of have all accorded literature a power of moral discernment. Like Dr. Johnson, they see literature as a means of asserting freedom and justice; unlike him, they are not certain that they know exactly what freedom and justice are. At its worst, contemporary theory can be moralistic and accusatory; at its best, it can cultivate sensitivity and serve as a vehicle of ethical discovery.

This course begins by surveying the traditional link between literature and ethics. Using a course pack of essays, it then focuses on the romantic discovery of the "aesthetic" and its implications for the morality or immorality of art, and on the modernist/postmodernist discovery of the "problematic" and its implications for a liberatory literature. Concurrently we will read literary texts so that we can put the theories to the test of practical criticism and personal experience.

Texts

André Gide, *The Immoralist* Vintage
Jean Rhys, *Good Morning Midnight* Penguin
Bruno Schultz, *Street of Crocodiles* Penguin
Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* Vintage
Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* Penguin
Elmore Leonard, *Get Shorty* Dell
Toni Morrison, *Beloved* Vintage

Assignments

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| commentary | 15% |
| in-class report | 25% |
| seminar | 25% |
| essay | 35% |

There will be no Registrar-scheduled exam in this course.

Course Pack (from Bookstore)

1. Buell, Lawrence, "Introduction. In Pursuit of Ethics." *PMLA*, 114:1 (Jan 1999): 7-16.
2. Tobin Siebers, "Ethical Criticism: From Plato to Pluralism." *The Ethics of Criticism*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988. 14-43.
3. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* chapter 1 "Free Particulars" & 366-75
4. Elaine Scarry, from *On Beauty*
<http://www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/documents/scarry00.pdf>
5. Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Ethics: Projects, Problems, Prospects." *Feminist Ethics*. Ed. Claudia Card. Lawrence: U of Kansas P, 1991. 78-103.
6. Michel Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. And trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977. 29-52.
7. Jonathan Dollimore, "Those who Love Art the Most also Censor it the Most" *Sex, Literature and Censorship*. Cambridge: Polity, 2001. 95-106
8. Judith Butler, "Precarious Life" 128-151
http://butlerphile.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/butler_judith_-_precarious_lif.pdf
9. Marjorie Stone, "Between Ethics and Anguish: Feminist Ethics, Feminist Aesthetics, and Representations of Infanticide in "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" and *Beloved*." *Between Ethics and Aesthetics: Crossing the Boundaries*. Ed. Dorota Blowacka & Stephen Boos. Albany: State U of New York P, 2002. 131-158.
10. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" (online)

Grading system:

Grades are calculated according to the 4 point scale used in the *Graduate Calendar*:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-e-1.html>

| Grade | Grade Point Value | Graduate Description |
|-------|-------------------|--|
| A+ | 4.00 | Outstanding |
| A | 4.00 | Excellent-superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter |
| A- | 3.70 | Very good performance |
| B+ | 3.30 | Good performance |
| B | 3.00 | Satisfactory performance |
| B- | 2.70 | Minimum pass for students in Faculty of Graduate Studies |
| C+ | 2.30 | All grades below B- are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted towards Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements. |
| C | 2.00 | |
| C- | 1.70 | |
| D+ | 1.30 | |
| D | 1.00 | |

| | | |
|---|------|--|
| F | 0.00 | |
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Split grades on assignments are also calculated according to the *Graduate Calendar* grading system, e.g., an A/A- is a 3.85; a B/B- is a 2.85. Also note that the *University Calendar* states that the instructor has the "discretion to round off either upward or downward to determine a final grade when the average . . . is between two letter grades."

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.

Plagiarism:

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

English Department Website:

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <http://english.ucalgary.ca/graduate>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

Writing support:

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:



Academic regulations and schedules:

Consult the Department of English's graduate website for courses, departmental deadlines, and other related program information at <http://english.ucalgary.ca/node/245>. Consult the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar for university and faculty regulations, dates, deadline, fees, and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar is <http://grad.ucalgary.ca>.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Barbara Howe at 403 220 5484 or visit her in Social Sciences Tower 1148 in the first instance.

For program planning and advice, contact Barbara Howe at howe@ucalgary.ca to make an appointment with Dr. Jacqueline Jenkins, Graduate Program Director.

Guidelines on e-mail Etiquette:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/it/help/articles/email/etiquette>

Grade appeals:

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Deferral of term work and final examinations:

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an Application of Deferment of Term Work form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>.

Academic Accommodation:

It is the students’ responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodations and have not registered with Student Accessibility Services, please contact them at 403-220-6019. Students who have not registered with Student Accessibility Services are not eligible for formal academic accommodations. More information about academic accommodations can be found at www.ucalgary.ca/access.

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>;

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>

“Safewalk” Program:

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night: call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

Contact for the Graduate Student Association: <http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/>

Contact for Students Ombudsman’s Office: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):

"At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses (www.ucalgary.ca/usri). Your responses make a difference - please participate in USRI Surveys."

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- (a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- (b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- (c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- (d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

According to the University Calendar, (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/j.html>) "The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, . . . , to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community". The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a "positive and productive learning and working environment." This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that "seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff". Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.