

Fall 2015: GLIB 6112-A and GPHI 6112-A

**The Fate of the Novel**

New School for Social Research

T 4-5:50pm, 6 E. 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Rm. 609

Professor: Alice Crary

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**Fate of the Novel: Syllabus**

**Course description**

The novel is dead, having sustained mortal wounds in the aftermath of World War II. That, at least, is what some prominent literary critics and theorists would have us believe, despite in some general sense granting the novel an important role in the intellectual and moral formation of individuals. The death sentence is sometimes formulated in purely aesthetic terms, so that it becomes a worry about the exhaustion of the space for formal experimentation demanded by artistic modernism. Alternately, theorists claim that the horrors of the twentieth century oblige us to abandon the image of moral development that the novel was presumed to serve. Thus stated, the point is plausibly connected with the influence of various still widely accepted strains of deconstructivist thought and moral skepticism. A further arguably related thesis is that the novel has collapsed in the aftermath of the loss of the authority of the category “human” (or “man”), which is itself credited with a necessary role in underwriting all compelling narrative. Our aim will be to explore the different suggestions about the fate of the novel that are at play here. Course readings will include selections from the writings of philosophers as well as literary theorists and critics whose work has been central to these conversations. Philosophical and theoretical readings will be complemented by a small selection of post-World War II novels.

**Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this course, you should be able to: (1) Demonstrate a graduate-level mastery of some major contributions theory of the novel, (2) Demonstrate a graduate-level mastery of some major contributions to debates about philosophy and literature (3) Demonstrate the ability to write a thoughtful, graduate-level seminar paper on conversations that address issues in the theory of the novel and/or philosophy and literature, (4) Demonstrate a verbal ability to assess and (5) produce textually well-grounded criticisms of particular novels, and (6) Demonstrate the ability to, at a graduate level, whether orally or in writing, explain and defend your views about particular novels and theories both effectively and rationally.

**Required texts and other resources**

You should purchase David Foster Wallace, *Broom of the System*, J.M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *The Childhood of Jesus* and Thomas McCarthy, *Remainder*, all of which have been ordered for our course at the Barnes and Noble at Union Square (33 East 17<sup>th</sup> Street) and are also widely available elsewhere.

All other required and recommended course readings will be made available either in class or on our class Canvas site. If you are an *official* auditor in this class, you will have access to our course Canvas site. If you are an *unofficial* auditor, you will not have access to it. It should be possible to give unofficial auditors electronic access to course materials. If this is your situation, we can discuss arrangements after our first course meeting.

### **Course requirements**

There are two requirements for enrolled students:

- (1) You must do a very brief class presentation, and submit a corresponding 1-2 page response paper, at **three** separate class meetings. The class will be divided into four groups during our first meeting of the term, and your group assignment will determine when you do your presentations. Your response papers are worth 15% of your grade. As long as you do them, you will receive full credit. They will not be graded but you will receive comments on them. The comments are intended to be helpful and, where relevant, to give you guidance in composing your final seminar paper.
- (2) You must write one 15-18 page seminar paper, which will be due on our last day of class, Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup>. Your paper will be graded, and it will be worth 85% of your grade.

### **Contacting me**

My contact information is at the top of the first page of this syllabus. My regular office hours are in my office, room 1115 at 6 East 16<sup>th</sup> St. (11<sup>th</sup> floor), T 2:30-3:30 and Th 4:30-5:30. You can sign up for an appointment with me through Starfish. If my regular times are impossible for you, I can make an arrangement to meet at a time that works better. You should feel free to email me about any course-related issue, no matter how small. I am on email regularly and will respond quickly to logistical as well as smaller substantive queries. I will ordinarily schedule appointments to discuss larger issues. This is the best way to reach me. Please only use my phone for emergencies.

### **On fairness and the methods of this course**

There is good evidence to suggest that implicit or unconscious bias is a serious issue in academic settings, and that it puts women and members of other underrepresented groups at a substantial disadvantage. One recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is to do anonymous assessment. This is not possible in a small seminar in which I will be in close conversation with you about your individual writing projects. Another recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is to attend carefully to how one interacts with students (e.g., what form of address is used, how often speaking time is granted and to whom, and how much time individual students spend speaking). Throughout the semester, I will monitor my own practice with an eye to being fair to all.

### **Grading disputes**

If you believe that there is something amiss with the evaluation of an assignment of yours, I urge you to let me know. I am open to discussion and happy to re-read assignments. I am also happy to read drafts, if you have them ready at least a week before the end of term.

### **Course policies**

This course will adhere to New School academic policies. These include the following:

1. Policy on attendance and lateness

- \* Absences may justify some grade reduction and a total of four unexcused absences mandate a reduction of one letter grade for the course.
- \* More than four absences mandate a failing grade for the course, unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as the following:
  - an extended illness requiring hospitalization or visit to a physician (with documentation)
  - a family emergency, e.g. serious illness (with written explanation)
  - observance of a religious holiday

The attendance and lateness policies are enforced as of the first day of classes for all registered students. If registered during the first week of the add/drop period, the student is responsible for any missed assignments and coursework.

For significant lateness, the instructor may consider the tardiness as an absence for the day. Students failing a course due to attendance should consult with an academic advisor to discuss options.

2. Policy on academic honesty and integrity. For details, you should consult <http://www.newschool.edu/leadership/provost/policies/academic-honesty/>. Of particular importance is the policy on plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's work as one's own in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, etc), intentional or unintentional. Plagiarized material may be derived from a variety of sources, such as books, journals, internet postings, student or faculty papers, etc. This includes the purchase or “outsourcing” of written assignments for a course. A detailed definition of plagiarism in research and writing can be found in the fourth edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, pages 26-29. For further information on plagiarism, you should consult the Learning Center’s website: <http://www.newschool.edu/learning-center/virtual-handout-drawer/>

### **Academic resources for students**

Important resources include the *Writing Center* (71 Fifth Ave, 9<sup>th</sup> floor) and the office for *Student Disability Services*. In keeping with the university’s policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with us privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to contact Student Disability Service (SDS). SDS will conduct an intake and, if appropriate, the Director will provide an academic accommodation notification letter for you to bring to us. At that point, we will review the letter with you and discuss these accommodations in relation to this course. Student Disability Services is located at 6 East 16<sup>th</sup> Street - 5th Floor. The phone number is (212) 229-5626. Students and faculty are expected to review the Student Disability Services webpage. The webpage can be found at <http://www.newschool.edu/student-services/disability-services/> and the office is available to answer any questions or concerns.

### Comment on course readings

The list of readings (below) is relatively heavy. As we proceed, I will make recommendations about where to focus attention. *I will identify an easily manageable reading or set of readings before every class meeting.* The syllabus will then direct anyone interested in exploring a particular topic more deeply to additional resources. You should feel free to contact me with any questions about the course requirements or materials.

### Schedule of classes and assignments

#### Course Introduction

Week 1. T, September 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### **No required reading. Available resources.**

E. M. Forster, “Introductory,” “The Story” and “Conclusion,” in *Aspects of the Novel*  
 Georg Lukacs, “The Epic and the Novel” and “The Inner Form of the Novel,” in *Theory of the Novel*

#### An Initial Glance at the Theory of the Novel

Week 2. T, September 8<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Required reading.**

Mikhail Bakhtin, excerpts from *Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* as published in Michael McKeon, ed., *Theory of the Novel*, esp. the first 15 pages.

Georg Lukacs, “The Historico-philosophical Conditioning of the Novel and its Significance,” in *Theory of the Novel*

#### **Group I presents**

#### **Additional resources.**

Erich Auerbach, “Odysseus’ Scar” from *Mimesis*.

Marthe Robert, excerpts from *Origins of the Novel* as published in McKeon, ed., *Theory of the Novel*

#### Excursus on Philosophy and Literature

Week 3. Date and time TBA.

#### **Required reading.**

Jürgen Habermas, “Excursus on Leveling the Genre Distinction Between Philosophy and Literature” in *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*

Onora O’Neill, “The Power of Example”

#### **Group II presents**

#### **Additional resources.**

Joshua Landy, “A Nation of Madame Bovarys: On the Possibility and Desirability of Moral Improvement through Fiction,” in Gary L. Hagberg, ed., *Art and Ethical Criticism*

Richard Posner, “Against Ethical Criticism” (I and II) in *Philosophy and Literature*

Peter Lamarque, “Art” and “Literature” in *The Philosophy of Literature*

PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE WILL BE NO CLASS TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15<sup>th</sup>. WEEK 3 WILL BE SCHEDULED AS A MAKEUP CLASS.

Week 4. T, September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Required reading.**

Cora Diamond, "Anything But Argument?" in *The Realistic Spirit*.

Stanley Fish, "Is There a Text in this Class?" in *Is There a Text in This Class?*

**Group III presents**

**Additional resources.**

Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology" in *Margins of Philosophy*

Martha Nussbaum, "Introduction: Form and Content, Philosophy and Literature" in *Love's Knowledge*

Zadie Smith, "Re-reading Barthe and Nabakov" in *Changing my Mind*

Also read 100 pages of J.M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* in preparation for week 5.

Case study #1:

Week 5. T, September 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Required reading.** J.M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

**Group IV presents**

**Additional resources.**

Derek Attridge, "Against Allegory" in *The Ethics of Reading*

Lydia Davis, "The Fish" (a very brief additional case study)

Everyone and Their Elegy: A Historical Sequence

Week 6. T, October 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Required reading.**

Walter Benjamin, "The Crisis of the Novel" (1929)

Ortega y Gasset, "Notes on the Novel" (1925) in *The Dehumanization of Art*

**Group I presents**

**Additional resources.**

Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller" (1936)

Jose Ortega Y Gasset, "Meditations on Quixote," reprinted in McKeon, ed. *Theory of the Novel*

Also read approximately 100 pages of David Foster Wallace's *The Broom of the System* in preparation for Week 8.

Week 7. T, October 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Required reading.**

Lionel Trilling, “Manners, Morals and the Novel” (1948) in O’Conner, ed., *Forms of Fiction* and “Art and Fortune” (1948) in *Partisan Review*

**Group II presents**

**Additional reading.**

Mark Greif, “Universal Philosophy and Antihumanist Theory” in *The Age of the Crisis of Man*.

Gore Vidal, “Notes on the Novel” (1956) in *United States*

Also read approximately 100 pages of David Foster Wallace’s *The Broom of the System* in preparation for Week 8.

Week 8. T, October 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Required reading.**

David Foster Wallace, “E Unibus Pluram: Television and US Fiction” (1990) in *Review of Contemporary Fiction*.

**Group III presents**

**Additional resources.**

Jonathan Franzen, “Perchance to Dream: In the Age of Images, a Reason to Read Novels” (1996) in *Harper’s Magazine*

Philip Roth, “Writing American Fiction” (1961) in *Commentary*

James Wood, “Hysterical Realism” (1999-2003) in *The Irresponsible Self* (this last piece focuses on Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*).

Also read approximately 100 pages of David Foster Wallace’s *The Broom of the System* in preparation for Week 8.

Case Study #2

Week 9. T, October 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Required reading.**

David Foster Wallace, *Broom of the System*

**Group IV presents**

**Additional resources.**

Stephen Mulhall, “Gamma’s Disappearance” in *The Self and Its Shadows*.

Realism and Modernism in the Novel

Week 10. T, November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Required reading.**

Terry Eagleton, "What is a Novel?" in *The English Novel: An Introduction*

Ian Watt, "Realism and the Novel Form," in *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*.

**Group I presents**

**Additional resources.**

Jonathan Culler, "Toward a Theory of Non-Genre Literature" in McKeon, ed., *Theory of the Novel*

Terry Eagleton, "After the Wake," in *The English Novel*

Bernard Harrison, "Realism" in Richard Eldridge, ed., *The Oxford Handbook to Philosophy and Literature*.

Rene Wellek, "The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship" in *Concepts of Criticisms*

Week 11. T, November 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Required reading.**

Cora Diamond, "Realism and the Realistic Spirit" in *The Realistic Spirit*

Michael Fried, "Approaching Courbet," in *Courbet's Realism*  
*Group II presents*

**Additional resources.**

Stanley Cavell, "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," in *Must We Mean What We Say?*

Cora Diamond, "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy," in Alice Crary, ed., *Reading Cavell*

Michael Fried, "The Primacy of Absorption" in *Absorption and Theatricality*

Also, read approximately 80 pages of J.M. Coetzee, *The Childhood of Jesus* in preparation for Week 13.

Week 12. T, November 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Required reading.**

Stephen Mulhall, "Realism, Modernism and the Novel," in *The Wounded Animal*.

**Group III presents**

**Additional resources.**

Henry James, "Preface" to the *Golden Bowl*

Georg Lukacs, "The Ideology of Modernism," and "Franz Kafka or Thomas Mann" in *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*

Stephen Mulhall, "Costello's Realist Modernism and Coetzee's" in *The Wounded Animal*

Philip Weinstein, "Modernism" in Richard Eldridge, ed., *The Oxford Handbook to Philosophy and Literature*  
 Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction" and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," in *The Captain's Deathbed and Other Essays*

Also, read approximately 80 pages of J.M. Coetzee, *The Childhood of Jesus* in preparation for Week 13.

### Case Study #3

Week 13. T, November 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Required reading.**

J.M. Coetzee, *The Childhood of Jesus*

***Group IV presents***

#### **Additional resources.**

Paul Auster and J.M. Coetzee, an excerpt from *Here and Now: Letters, 2008-2011* by Paul Auster and J.M. Coetzee.

Alice Cary, "Religion in Coetzee's Quest for Reality"

Czeslaw Milosz, "A Quarrel with Classicism" in *The Witness of Poetry*

James Wood, "Realism" and "Modernism" in *How Fiction Works*

Also, get started on McCarthy, *Remainder* in preparation for Week 14.

### Case Study #4

Week 14. T, December 8<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Required reading.**

Thomas McCarthy, *Remainder*

***Make up presentations***

#### **Additional resources.**

Simona Bertacco, "Postcolonialism" in Richard Eldridge, ed., *The Oxford Handbook to Philosophy and Literature*

Linda Hutchenson, "Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and the Intertextuality of History"

Walter Benn Michaels, "Posthistoricism" in *The Shape of the Signifier*

Zadie Smith, "Two Paths for the Novel," in *Changing My Mind*

### Conclusions

Week 15. T, December 15<sup>th</sup>.

Summary discussion and course reception.

**Papers due**