

**Department of Political Science
Rutgers University, Newark
Politics and Literature
Fall 2018**

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11.15am-2.15pm; and by appointment

This course examines the intersections between literature and politics by looking at how literary works offer representations and figurations of political life. Our inquiry would be framed from the perspective of political theory and how it invites the critical study of political thought. Usually, courses on the intersections of literature and politics tend to emphasize the politics of reading writing, or writing and reading as political acts. Students, accordingly, are expected to explore the textual politics of literary works. Likewise, students are invited to critically explore depictions of cultural practices and ideologies as imagined and represented by a literary work: say, representations of the nation and national identity, peace and war); or how particular texts are cast as interventions at once invoking and claiming the idea of a public (sphere/s); and how a literary work frames questions of community or division (including race and ethnicity). Finally, literary approaches to the intersection between literature and politics focus their analytical beam on the cultural repercussions of *politics as such*: party, interest group and faction, polemic and censorship; the sponsorship or suppression of literary work by government (or opposition); and actual political participation by writers, as politicians or government officials.

While sharing some of the concerns associated with the aforementioned approaches, our course would be sharply focused on how some of the main concepts, themes and figures, that are constitutive of political life are represented and problematized in literary works. This approach is not only consistent with what is known as the western tradition of political theory – which is constituted by different genres of reflection and writing, as a figure like Niccoló Machiavelli, the archetypical political theorist, reflected on the political by means of different literary genres, say, comedies, rhetoric and poetry – but also seeks to think politically about the way literary works re-present political life. Among the themes to be explored are how power and authority, imperialism and violence, war and revolution, political ethics and responsibility, equality and collective life, are formulated in a variety of works, which include poetry, short stories, plays, and novels.

Course Schedule:

9/4	Introduction
9/11	T. Eagleton, <i>How to Read Literature</i> , 1-116

- 9/18 T. Eagleton, *How to Read Literature*, 117-206
- 9/25 C. Wolf, *Eulogy for the Living*
- 10/2 A. Kluge, *Air Raid*
- 10/9 B. Brecht, *St. Joan of the Stockyards*
- 10/16 Selections from B. Brecht, *Collected Stories* (PDF)
- 10/23 Selections from B. Brecht's Poems (PDF)
- 10/30 J. L. Borges, "Utopia of a Tired Man" (PDF)
- 11/6 A. Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*
- 11/13 Cont. A. Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*
- 11/20 **NO CLASS (Thursday Schedule)**
- 11/22-11/25 **THANKSGIVING RECESS**
- 11/27 T. Morrison, *Home*
- 12/4 R. Bolaño, *By Night in Chile*
- 12/11 F. Kafka, "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk" (PDF) & R. Bolaño, "Rat Police" (PDF)

FINAL ESSAY due on 12/20

Required Texts

- B. Brecht, *St Joan of the Stockyards* (Bloomsbury Methuen Drama)
- R. Bolaño, *By Night in Chile* (New Directions)
- T. Eagleton, *How to Read Literature* (Yale University Press)
- A. Kluge, *Air Raid* (Seagull)
- T. Morrison, *Home* (Vintage)
- A. Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (Penguin)
- C. Wolf, *Eulogy for the Living* (Seagull)

The required texts are available for purchase at the University Bookstore (<http://newark-rutgers.bncollege.com>). Please read the texts in the assigned translations/editions, otherwise it will be difficult to follow the lectures and discussions. Translations/editions often vary significantly. **This is an electronic free classroom. So, please, no phones,**

laptops, or electronic books are allowed; you must bring a hard copy of the assigned reading to class. You'd lose 2% of your final grade every time you show up to class without the reading in hand. Make sure that you show me the reading when I call your name at the beginning of each class.

Course Requirements

All students are responsible for the required readings and for participation in class discussions. Your written work consists of four 1-page response papers; and a final 3-5-page essay. Each response paper comprises 15% of your final grade (four response papers = 60% of your grade); and the final 30% of your grade. The remaining 10% of your final grade will consist of participation/attendance. This is how the 10% for participation/attendance works: if you participate, your grade will be raised (5 points overall); if you violate the attendance policy, your grade will be lowered (5 points overall). Namely, you get 5 points for attending, and an additional 5 for participating. You are permitted three absences for the semester. Any additional absences will result in the aforementioned penalty. A pattern of unexcused absences will result in the student failing the course (you will get an "F" as your final grade). **I reserve the right to conduct oral examinations on your written work.**

Response Papers

The structure of your response papers is simple enough: each response paper consists of a short reflection on one of the literary works considered in class. Since this course is writing intensive, students would get a chance to rewrite the response paper after I offer comments on both the substance and the structure of your response. We are going to spend time discussing the structure of an adequate response paper

Analytical Essays

Make sure that your papers are well organized, clearly and carefully argued, as well as textually supported. Please avoid randomly collecting unanalyzed quotes. Again, we are going to spend some time discussing the structure of an adequate political theory essay.

Cautionary Note/Important Advice

There are several things that you should keep in mind to avoid unpleasant surprises. I expect students to critically ponder the arguments each thinker presents and to make an effort to understand these arguments with the goal of developing a rigorous and informed critique. Second, the texts under scrutiny are sometimes dry, difficult, and dense, therefore, it is important that you have your thoughts together when you work your way through these texts. As a piece of advice, I encourage you to do the readings when you are awake and in an environment conducive to study, otherwise it will be difficult for you to keep up with the class.

Academic Integrity

All work you submit for the course is expected to be your own. Cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will lead to failing the course and action from the University. Whenever you quotes, closely paraphrase, refer to or make use of arguments or examples from other sources in your written work, you must

cite the appropriate source in a footnote, endnote, or in parentheses at the end of the sentence, depending of what citation style you are using. Please see the university's guidelines on student conduct:

<http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/university-code-of-student-conduct>

Disability Accommodations

Students requiring special accommodations for disabilities are welcome and should provide reasonable prior notice so we can make needed arrangements.

Miscellaneous

Our classroom discussions are open, frank, and casual. Please respect the perspectives and inquiries of your peers and instructor. Do not interrupt someone who is speaking and refrain from deliberately demeaning language or intimidating behavior. Do not read newspapers or other unrelated materials during class. **Students found doing so will be dismissed. Please make sure that cell-phones are turned off. If your cell-phone rings during class you will be dismissed. There are No exceptions to this rule. All written work is to be typed and double-spaced. Incomplete grades will NOT be automatically given; these will be granted only in reference to particular situations and at the instructor's discretion.**