

Philosophy and Literature

W. Froman (Office Hours: Tuesdays/1:30-3:30 or by appointment; Robinson Hall,  
B455; telephone extension/1298)

Spring 2011

This course is a study of philosophical themes in literature. The literary works come from the opening age of the European and the Western traditions up through very recent times. These works include plays, novels, short stories, poetry and sacred literature. The topics addressed in the course include: fate, evil, the implications of the transition from the pre-modern to the modern age, the question as to whether the human being is basically distinct from the other animals or not (and if so, how), the role that asking such questions can play in our lives, the question of meaning in life, and the status and the role of imagination in literature and in life.

**Texts:** *Antigone* by Sophocles

*The Book of Job* from the Bible

*Galileo* by Berthold Brecht

*Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad

*The Beast in the Jungle* by Henry James

*Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka

*Tonio Kroeger* by Thomas Mann

*The Stranger* by Albert Camus

*Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett

Selected poems by Emily Dickenson and by Wallace Stevens.

**Student Written Work:** There will be two sets of essay questions distributed in class to which students will respond in writing outside of class. The questions will address ideas in the course readings that will have been discussed in class. There will be a choice of questions in each set. The grade for the semester will be an average of the two grades for the two sets of essays. In writing the essays, students are permitted to make use of the actual texts that we will have studied, and students are permitted to make use of their notes in class. But use of any other source, printed or on-line, is not permitted and each student must work entirely by herself or by himself. (The Honor Code is in effect in this course.)

## SAMPLE SYLLABUS LANGUAGE

(for further ideas on syllabus design, visit

[http://cte.gmu.edu/Teaching/getting\\_started.html#syllabus](http://cte.gmu.edu/Teaching/getting_started.html#syllabus))

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

## MASON EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must use their MasonLIVE email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

## OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

## OTHER USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES:

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200;  
<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES "Ask a Librarian"  
<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;  
<http://caps.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY POLICIES The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.