

Instructor: Dr. Rob Luzecky

Email: rluzecky@gmu.edu

Office: #####

Office Hours: W, 01:30-02:30pm

Class Modality: online; synchronous; lectures will be through Zoom, TR 10:30 - 11:45 a.m.

Final Paper Due: 11 May 2022 by 11:59 p.m. (Papers must be submitted to Blackboard).

Course Description:

Throughout the course, students will hone their abilities to present valid logical arguments, improve their skills in writing philosophy papers, and improve their abilities to critically assess texts. Students will also have a great deal of fun reading some of the most exciting philosophical literature of the past two hundred years.

This course will provide students with a detailed elaboration of the main themes of contemporary philosophy of literature, with particular emphasis of existentialist, post structuralist, and Marxian approaches to Black novels of the twentieth century. The course is divided into two broad sections: 1) a cluster of readings designed to give students a detailed understanding of the philosophical issues associated with literary expression; 2) a series of group presentations on some of the most important novels of Black fiction—Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*; Richard Wright’s *Black Boy*, *The Outsider*, and *The Man Who Lived Underground*.

Required Readings:

You will require six texts for this course (which should be available for purchase through the campus bookstore), and course pack (which is available on Blackboard). The texts required for this course are:

- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage, 1995), ISBN: 978-0-679-73276-1.
- Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historical Essay on the Form of Great Epic Literature*, Anna Bostock (tr.), (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1971), ISBN: 978-0-262-62027-7.
- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Carol Macomber (tr.), (New York: Yale UP, 2007) ISBN: 978-0300115468.
- Richard Wright, *Black Boy*, (New York: HarperCollins Perennial Modern Classics, 2020), ISBN: 978-0-06-296413-7.
- Richard Wright, *The Outsider*, (New York: HarperCollins Perennial Modern Classics, 2008), ISBN: 978-0061450174.
- Richard Wright, *The Man Who Lived Underground*, (New York; Penguin Random House, 2021), ISBN: 978-1-598853-676-8.

- A course pack, which will be available on Blackboard.

Course Structure:

Class meetings will be via Zoom, at the times specified (above), on the dates specified in the course schedule (below). It is expected that all students enrolled in the course will attend all Zoom lectures associated with this course—i.e., attend the Zoom class.

In addition, the instructor will hold office hours on Zoom at least once a week for the duration of the term. Each of these meetings will be 1 hour long. Students are *required* to attend at least two of these meetings over the course of the term. (Of course, students are encouraged to attend as many additional office hours as they want).

The first half of the course—up to spring recess—will consist of lectures by the professor. During the last half of the course—after spring recess—class meetings will consist of lectures by the professor and student presentations.

In addition, there will be an online discussion board where students can converse amongst themselves and with the instructor about any aspect of the course or readings. Students are encouraged to contribute to the discussion board regularly and often, but no marks will be associated with the discussion board. Each week, two students will moderate the discussion board. By the end of term, each student will have moderated the discussion board at least once.

Methods of Assessment:

There will be three means of assessing student progress: 1) four short critical responses to the readings; 2) a group presentation on one of novels associated with the course—*Invisible Man*, *Blackboy*, *The Outsider*, and *The Man Who Lived Underground*; 3) a final paper.

Each response should be a between one to two pages long. Each will be graded on a scale of one to ten. All responses, when taken together, will constitute 40% of the final grade. Students are expected to submit two critical responses before midterm, and two critical responses in the second half of the term.

The script for your presentation should be between five to seven pages in length. The temporal length of your presentation should be 15 to 20 minutes. The aim of the presentation will be to develop an original thesis that summarizes a novel and elaborates on some of its philosophical aspects. Students will develop the topic of the presentation through consultation with the instructor. The presentation will constitute 25% of the final grade.

The final paper should be seven to ten pages in length. Students are encouraged to further develop their presentations into a final paper. To be clear, the presentation should be the basis of your final paper—your final paper should borrow from and further develop themes of your presentation. The final paper will constitute 35% of the final grade.

Grade Values:

A+: 97-100	A: 94-96	A-: 90-93
B+: 87-89	B: 84-86	B-: 80-83
C+: 77-79	C: 74-76	C-: 70-73

D+: 67-69 **D:** 64-66 **D-:** 60-63

F: 59 and below.

Learning Outcomes:

Through taking this course, students will satisfy each of the following learning outcomes:

1. Students will be able to read for comprehension, detail, and nuance.
2. Identify the specific literary qualities of language as employed in the texts they read.
3. Analyze the ways specific literary devices contribute to the meaning of a text.
4. Identify and evaluate the contribution of the social, political, historical, and cultural contexts in which a literary text is produced.
5. Evaluate a critical argument in others' writing as well as one's own.

Course Policies:

Course Communication:

The primary mode of written communication about any aspect of this course will be email. In compliance with state law, all email correspondence should be done through the George Mason email system—i.e., originating from a gmu.edu address. The instructor should get back to students within 3 days of receipt of any email. Again, the instructor's email is rluzecky@gmu.edu.

Submission of Work and Extensions:

All required work shall be submitted on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to ensure that you can access a computer with internet in time to submit your assignments. Students are encouraged work at their own pace for the short critical summaries, as long as two short responses are submitted prior to spring recess (with the two remaining responses submitted after the spring recess). Students will pick the day of their presentation. Final papers are due at the end of the term—papers must be submitted to Blackboard by 11:59 p.m. on 11 May 2022. If a student is having difficulty meeting any deadline, they should contact the instructor to get accommodation. Extensions are possible.

Two things must be made explicit:

- (1) All course work must be submitted to Blackboard
- (2) *No work will be accepted after final grades have been submitted.*

Academic Misconduct:

Students are expected to be familiar with the university's regulations concerning behaviour and academic integrity.

If a student is caught plagiarizing on any assignment, the student will receive a mark of zero on the assignment, and the incident will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

The take-away: research and cite, don't plagiarize.

Students should also conduct themselves in compliance with the George Mason University Honor Code. The document can be found here:

<https://oai.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/George-Mason-University-Honor-Code-2021-2022-final.pdf>

It should also be observed that some kinds of participation in online study sites violate the George Mason University Honor Code: these include accessing exam or quiz questions for this class; accessing exam, quiz, or assignment answers for this class; uploading of any of the instructor's materials or exams; and uploading any of your own answers or finished work. Always consult your syllabus and your professor before using these sites.

Attendance and Zoom Policies:

It is expected that students who are enrolled in the course will attend and participate in all Zoom lectures associated with this course. It must be observed that philosophy is non-reducible a soliloquy delivered to an empty room—virtual or otherwise. For this reason, students are encouraged to participate in the discussions (which will occur during every class meeting). If, in the unfortunate event that a student cannot attend a lecture, the student is responsible to become aware of all information presented.

As a matter of best practice, it is requested that when a student is raising a discussion point, that they turn on their camera. Also, it must be observed that the impersonal nature of online learning—and the alienation associated with Zoom in particular—tends to be diminished when participants have their cameras on when they are actively participating with the class. Further, the professor enjoys when students use the various Zoom “reactions” during lectures.

Commitment to Diversity:

It is essential that to recognize the fundamental value of diversity. In this course, we recognize the morally heinous effects of the fraught history of immiseration that has traumatized members of marginalized groups. Here, we welcome and celebrate individual difference. This include—but is not limited to—recognition of differences of race, ethnicity, religious belief, gender expression, indigenous and first nation status, socio-economic status, age, and ability.

In concrete terms, this means that we respect the views of others, refrain from behaviours that might stymie the expression of others, or otherwise diminish the quality of the lived experience of those with whom we share this space of learning.

Sexual and Interpersonal Forms of Violence:

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students and employees who believe that they have been sexually harassed, sexually assaulted or subjected to sexual or interpersonal misconduct to seek assistance and support. University Policy 1202: Sexual Harassment and Misconduct speaks to the specifics of Mason's process, the resources, and the options available to students and employees. The policy can be found here: (<https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/>).

Special Needs:

This instructor is committed to providing reasonable accommodation and access to programs and services to persons with disabilities. If you self-identify as perhaps desiring accommodation, then please contact the instructor at your convenience.

Further, this instructor recognizes that principles associated with equity are of great importance during these fraught times. Historical, intergenerational, and socio-economic immiseration of marginalized groups is an aspect of our shared reality. If a student self identifies as desiring accommodation, please reach out to the instructor to discuss remedies. If any aspect of this course is unduly stressing a student (for any reason whatsoever), please reach out to the instructor for accommodation.

It is important to observe that Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Further, Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University.

If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

Resources for Students:

George Mason University offers a plurality of resources to assist students. A complete list of these can be found here:

<https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/knowning-mason-students/student-support-resources-on-campus/>

Revisions to Syllabus:

The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus and reading schedule as the course progresses. Students will be made aware of any changes at least two weeks before they come into effect.

Reading Schedule:

Date	Reading	Important Details
January 25 th	Introduction to the class (no reading)	
January 27 th	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 2 (Course Readings)	

February 1 st	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 3 (Course Readings)	
February 3 rd	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 10 (Course Readings)	
February 8 th	Aristotle, Poetics, 1447a10-1454a15, (Course Readings)	
February 10 th	Aristotle, Poetics, 1454a15-1462b19, (Course Readings)	
February 15 th	Blyden Jackson, "The Negro's Image of the Universe as Reflected in His Fiction" (Course Readings)	
February 17 th	Charles Johnson, "Philosophy and Black Fiction (Course Readings)	
February 22 nd	Iris Murdoch, "The Novelist as Metaphysician", <i>Existentialists and Mystics</i> ; Iris Murdoch, "The Existentialist Hero", <i>Existentialists and Mystics</i> (Course Readings)	Sign-up for student presentations completed by February 22nd
February 24 th	Jean-Paul Sartre, <i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i> , pp. 17-36.	
March 1 st	Jean-Paul Sartre, <i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i> , pp. 36-54.	
March 3 rd	Simone de Beauvoir, "What Can Literature Do?"	
March 8 th	Gilles Deleuze, "Literature and Life"; Gilles Deleuze, "The Philosophy of Crime Novels" (Course Readings)	
March 10 th	Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Time and Description in Fiction 'Today'" (Course Readings)	Two short assignments due on Blackboard by 11:59 p.m., 10 March
March 15 th	No Reading	Spring Recess—No Class
March 17 th	No Reading	Spring Recess—No Class
March 22 nd	Georg Lukács, <i>The Theory of the Novel</i> , pp. 29-40.	Student Presentations Begin
March 24 th	Georg Lukács, <i>The Theory of the Novel</i> , pp. 40-56.	
March 29 th	Georg Lukács, <i>The Theory of the Novel</i> , pp. 56-70.	
March 31 st	Georg Lukács, <i>The Theory of the Novel</i> , pp. 70-84.	

April 5 th	Georg Lukács, <i>The Theory of the Novel</i> , pp. 84-97.	
April 7 th	Student Presentations	
April 12 th	Student Presentations	
April 14 th	Student Presentations	
April 19 th	Student Presentations	
April 21 st	Student Presentations	
April 26 th	Student Presentations	
April 28 th	Review	
May 3 rd	Review	
May 5 th	Review	<p>Last meeting of this class.</p> <p>Last day to submit class presentations and short responses. These must be submitted to Blackboard by 11:59 p.m. on 5 May 2022.</p>
May 11 th		<p>Final papers due on Blackboard by 11 May 2022 at 11:59 p.m.</p>