

CONF 757-001: CONFLICT AND LITERATURE

FALL 2014

PROF. RICHARD E. RUBENSTEIN

SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Purposes

Welcome to CONF 757, the course in Conflict and Literature. This course has several purposes:

- To study how to read/interpret written and oral texts (and oral statements)
- To learn some of what imaginative literature (mainly novels, but also poetry, film, and drama) can teach us about the causes, motives, dynamics, and possibilities of resolving violent social conflicts
- In particular, to deepen our understanding of the human dimensions of conflicts involving mass movements for social transformation
- To practice interpreting a range of imaginative works, including novels, plays, poetry, and films
- To practice creating imaginative works of our own

Instructor and Office Hours

This course is taught on Wednesdays at 4:30 p.m. in Founders Hall 308 by Richard Rubenstein, Metropolitan Bldg. 5070. The instructor can be reached at 703-993-1307 or at rubenstein.richard@gmail.com. In an emergency, call 703-400-7674. He is available to talk about the course or any other matters of interest by appointment.

Methods and Grading

The methods used to teach this course will be those of a graduate seminar, including lectures, guest lectures, discussions, and student presentations. Students are expected to attend each class thoroughly prepared to discuss the works assigned. Grades will be based on a midterm take-home paper (30%), an original story (20%), and a final exam or paper (50%). Please see the schedule below for relevant dates and deadlines. Students have the option to submit a term paper in lieu of the final examination, but the topic for the final paper must be approved by the instructor by

Week 11 (November 15) at the latest. So start planning early if you prefer to write a term paper.

In order to receive a passing grade, it is necessary to attend classes prepared to discuss the week's reading and to turn in all assignments on time. Please note that it is ICAR policy to refuse to grant grades of Incomplete for reasons other than documented medical or family emergencies.

University Requirements

These are listed immediately below in language suggested by the Provost's Office. We will take time in the first class to discuss any questions that you may have about this material, including questions about plagiarism.

Academic integrity

GMU 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.

GMU email accounts

Students must activate their GMU email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

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;

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<http://caps.gmu.edu>

The UNIVERSITY CATALOG, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.

Course Materials

The required readings in this course are novels, plays, poetry, and films listed immediately below, and available at the Arlington Campus Bookstore, as well as in the Arlington Library, on Amazon, and through on-line sources. Additional materials will be delivered to students via email or placed on reserve in the John Burton Library or on the ICAR Community Forum (<http://icarcommunity.ning.com/>). All students should join the Conflict and Literature Group on the Community Forum, which will also be used for extra-curricular discussion.

Required Readings

Herman Melville, *BENITO CERENO* (Create Space Ind. Pub. Platform, 2012)

Andre Malraux, *MAN'S FATE* (Vintage, 1990)

Margaret Atwood, *THE HANDMAID'S TALE* (Penguin, 1992)

Athol Fugard, *MASTER HAROLD AND THE BOYS*

Graham Greene, *OUR MAN IN HAVANA* (PENGUIN 2007)

Franz Kafka, *COMPLETE STORIES* (Shocken, 2009)

Naguib Mahfouz, *MIRAMAR* (Anchor 1992)

For general use: Terry Eagleton, *LITERARY THEORY: AN INTRODUCTION* (U. of Minnesota Press, 2008)

Course Structure

The course begins with A discussion of how to read/interpret texts, a topic that will recur throughout the course. We then read roughly one novel every two weeks, study some poetry, view a film, write an original story, and attend a play during the remainder of the term. The novels and other works represent various literary genres. They focus on the human dimensions of various types of struggle and transformation: viz., social revolutions; terrorism; race riots; gender conflicts; state repression; ethno-religious struggles; and imperial/anti-imperial conflicts.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Aug. 27 Intro to the course: ways of interpreting literature. For this class read W.B. Yeats, "Easter 1916," posted on SCAR Community Forum. Then read it again and think about how the poem develops. Begin reading materials from Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, which we will refer to throughout the term

Sep. 3 History Becomes Fiction: Discuss Herman Melville's novella, *Benito Cereno*
Read essays on Melville and the Benito Cereno situation posted on Community Forum.

Sep. 10 Allegory and Social Conflict: Discuss Franz Kafka's short story, "In the Penal Colony," in *Complete Stories*

Sep. 17 Allegory and the Human Condition: Discuss Kafka's story, "The Hunger Artist," in *Complete Stories*

Sep. 24 Utopian/Dystopian Fiction: Discuss first half of Margaret Atwood's fantasy, *The Handmaid's Tale*

Oct. 1 Discuss second half of *The Handmaid's Tale*. TOPICS FOR FIRST PAPER DISTRIBUTED

Oct. 8 RETURN FIRST PAPER VIA EMAIL BEFORE START OF CLASS. View film: "The Quiet American"

Oct. 15 Mass Movements in Epic Fiction: Discuss first half of Andre Malraux, *Man's Fate*

Oct. 22 Discuss second half of *Man's Fate*.

Oct. 29 Mass Movements in Drama: Discuss Athold Fugard's play, *Master Harold and the Boys*

Nov. 5 Humor and Political Fiction: Discuss first half of Graham Greene, *Our Man in Havana*. DISCUSS ORIGINAL SHORT STORY ASSIGNMENT.

Nov. 12 Discuss second half of Greene, *Our Man in Havana*.

Nov. 19 BRING STORIES TO CLASS FOR READINGS AND DISCUSSION. CLEAR

TOPICS FOR SELF-CHOSEN FINAL PAPERS BY THIS DATE

Nov. 26 Family and Politics in the Third World: Discuss first half of Naguib Mahfouz, *Miramar*

Dec. 3 Discuss second half of *Miramar* and course wrap up

Dec. 10. FINAL EXAM OR PAPER DUE VIA EMAIL BY 5:00 P.M.