

Topics in Literature

OPERA AND LITERATURE

University of Texas at Arlington, Fall 2013

ENGLISH 2303.010 Dr. Wayne Gay

Science Hall 333 Office: Preston 210

MW 4-5:30 pm office hours: MW 3-4 pm and by appointment

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OVERVIEW: This course will provide a critical examination of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction which has directly inspired specific operas and musicals, with a focus on operas and musicals to be presented in the Dallas-Fort Worth region during the course of the semester. This is a literature course and *not* a music appreciation course; however, the critical reading of specific works of literature will be followed up with analysis of the literary content of the operas as well. Students will write a number of short, informal responses to the works studied, based on a concurrent study of critical practice. Class time will include lectures, interactive discussion, reading aloud from dramatic works studied, and viewing of film versions of some of the works studied. Students will be expected to read a substantial amount of literature, and to respond with written papers and in classroom discussion. They will have the option of attending and reviewing live performances and Metropolitan Opera HD productions as part of the writing requirements of the course.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Mérimée, Prosper. *Carmen and Other Stories*. Trans. Nicholas Jotcham. New York: Oxford, 1989. ISBN 978-0-19-954044-0

Rodenbach, Georges. *Bruges-la-Morte*. Trans. Mike Mitchell and Will Stone. Sawtry, UK: Dedalus, 2005. ISBN 978 1 903517 82 6

Weintraub, Stanley. *Silent Night: The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce*. London: Penguin, 2002. ISBN 9780452283671

Heyward, DuBose. *Porgy*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.

ISBN 978-1-57806-356-7

Eliot, T.S. *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats*. Illustrated by Edward Gorey. Orlando: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1982. ISBN 0-15-668568-X (pbk.)

Electronic versions of any of these texts are acceptable; if you choose to use an e-book version, please use the same translation for optimal classroom participation.

You should also have a 2-inch 3-ring binder to store class notes and the numerous downloads that will be required in this course.

GRADING AND ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Attendance at all classes is mandatory, and, because attendance and participation in seminar-style discussion is part of the coursework, attendance will be factored into the final grade. Although students are advised not to attend class if seriously ill or contagious, they should be advised that illness is not an excused absence. More than four unexcused absences will result in lowering the final grade by one full letter, and by another full letter for every four absences thereafter.

Students who must be absent on official university business or for observance of religious holidays, both of which are considered excused, must notify the instructor through proper channels, and will still be responsible for submitting assignments on time and for completing all reading assignments. Students will do well not to expend unexcused absences thoughtlessly or frivolously early in the semester.

Roll will be taken either orally or by signing an attendance sheet at the beginning of class; students who are late should make every effort to arrive at class anyway and receive partial attendance credit at the instructor’s discretion.

Participation in classroom discussion by all students is expected. The instructor will call on students to respond to specific questions concerning the required readings.

This is a literature course, and students will read a substantial selection of literary works outside of class. The written work for the course will consist of the following:

1. Submission of eight required 300-word written responses to weekly reading assignments or other options as specified in the schedule. These will be graded on a pass-fail basis. All papers must be submitted on blackboard safe assign by 11:59 pm on the Saturday preceding the week during which the reading assignment will be discussed. All reasonable responses will receive a grade of pass.

2. Two exams, each consisting of essay answers totaling at least 750 words.

GRADES WILL BE ASSIGNED AS FOLLOWS:

A: submission of all 8 required short responses and satisfactory responses

on the exams

B: submission of at least 7 required short responses and satisfactory

responses on the exams

C: submission of at least 6 of the required short responses and satisfactory

responses on the exams

D: submission of at least 5 of the required short responses with satisfactory

responses on the exams.

Students who fail to submit at least 5 of the required short responses will fail.

GRADING AND ATTENDANCE POLICY (cont’d)

Students who fail to respond satisfactorily to the exam essay prompts on one

of the exams will receive a final grade one letter lower than otherwise (e.g., a student who submits 7 responses and fails one exam will receive a grade of C); students who fail to respond satisfactorily on both exams will receive a final grade two letters lower than otherwise

(e.g., a student who submits 7 responses and fails both exams will

receive a grade of D).

As noted previously, your final grade will fall by one full letter grade for every four absences. For example, a student who has submitted all nine responses and submitted two satisfactory exams, but who has five absences, will receive a grade of B for the course.

The result of this grading policy is that virtually any student who submits all of the required short responses, who responds reasonably well on the exams, and who has fewer than four unexcused absences will earn an A. You do not have to be a great literary scholar or naturally gifted writer to earn an A in this course; you have to do all of the required work.

ABOUT THE SHORT PAPERS:

The bulk of written work in this class will consist of eight 300-word response papers. These will cover the reading assignment for the upcoming week and will be submitted by 12 midnight on Sunday ahead of the week’s classes. (In some cases, I will accept a written response to cinema viewed in class during the previous week.)

The papers will be graded on a pass-fail basis. They should deal with at least one segment of the assigned reading. Possibilities for any given paper include:

1. Defend or criticize any one or more of the assigned works based on quality and/or value. Negative response is appreciated, accepted, and, if sincere, encouraged.

2. Apply one of the critical approaches explained in the essay “Critical Approaches to Literature” to any one or more of the assigned works.

3. Compare any segment of the assignment to any other creative work (including literature, other verbal artifacts, cinema, music, or visual art)

4. Relate any segment of the assignment to personal experience

The short papers must be turned in on time in order to receive credit. In other words, don’t wait until Saturday night to start thinking about the assignment.

Because of the linking of this course material to live and HD performances, students may at any time present, as one of the short written responses, a review-response to any live performance of an opera or musical play; in those cases, I will expect some brief oral summary to be presented to the class along with the written response. Reading assignments have been selected to correspond to live performances, though there are a number of live and HD theater presentations that are not covered in the assigned readings. Those events are still eligible for response of this sort, with advance approval of the instructor required. In some cases, the instructor may approve, in advance, a student proposal to review a live musical concert event or a recorded musical work.

**Official UTA Policies Drop Policy**: Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Academic Integrity:** It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. According to the UT System Regents’ Rule 50101, §2.2, "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts."

**Student Support Services Available**: The University of Texas at Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals to resources for any reason, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit www.uta.edu/resources for more information.

**Electronic Communication Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University “MavMail” address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. ***Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.*** Information about activating and using MavMailis available at http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/. There is no additional charge to students

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

WEEK I (Introduction) / Class sessions of August 26 & 28)

Before class on Wednesday, read “Critical Approaches to Literature,”

Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour,” and Scott’s “Long Time Gone”

(all posted on Blackboard)

WEEK II (Introduction, continued) / Class session of September 4

No Class on Labor Day

Before class on Wednesday, read “Two Sample Responses” (Blackboard)

WEEK III / Class sessions of September 9 & 11

Before Class: Read *Carmen* by Mérimée

Turn in Response No. 1 by 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 7

In class: discuss Mérimée’s *Carmen* in class

WEEK IV / Class sessions of September 16 & 18

No response due

In class: watch Bizet’s opera *Carmen*

WEEK V / Class sessions of September 23 & 25

Before class: Read Heyward’s *Porgy*

Turn in Response No. 2 by 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 21

WEEK VI / Class sessions of September 30 & October 2

No response due

In class: Watch Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*

WEEK VII / Class sessions of October 7 & 9

Before class: Read Rodenbach’s *Bruges-la-Morte*

Turn in Response No. 3 by 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 5

In class: Discuss Rodenbach’s *Bruges-la-Morte* in class

WEEK VIII / Class sessions of October 14 & 16

No response due

In class: Watch Korngold’s *Die tote Stadt* in class

WEEK IX / Class sessions of October 21 & 23

Before class: Read libretto of Todd Machover’s *Death and the Powers*

Turn in Response No. 4 by 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 19

Monday: Discuss the libretto of Todd Machover’s

*Death and the Powers*

Wednesday: Midterm exam

WEEK X / Class sessions of October 28 & 30

Before class: Read Weintraub’s *Silent Night*

Turn in Response No. 5 by 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 26

In class: watch Kevin Puts’ opera *Silent Night*

WEEK XI / Class sessions of November 4 & 6

Before class: Read Eliot’s *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats*

Turn in Response No. 6 by 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 2

In class: watch Lloyd Weber’s *Cats*

WEEK XII / Class sessions of November 11 & 13

Before class: Read libretto of Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*

Turn in Response No. 7 by 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 19

In class: discuss libretto of Mozart’s *Così fan tutte* in class, watch excerpts

WEEK XIII / Class sessions of November 18 & 20

No response due this week

In class: continue watching excerpts of *Così fan tutte*

WEEK XIV / Class sessions of November 25 & 27

Before class: Read Parable of Jesus (download from Blackboard) and

“Why I Live at the P.O.” by Welty (download from Blackboard)

Turn in Response No. 8 by 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 22

In class: discuss Parables of Jesus, “Why I Live at the P.O.”

WEEK XV / Class sessions of December 2 & 4

Monday: written portion of final exam

Wednesday: discussion portion of final exam, part I

WEEK XVI / Exam Week

Wednesday, December 11, 2-4:30 p.m.:

Discussion portion of final exam, part II