

Topics in Literature

OPERA AND LITERATURE

University of Texas at Arlington, Spring 2014

ENGLISH 2303.009 Dr. Wayne Gay

Geo-Science Hall 104 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 upcoming months. 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

Baum, L. Frank. The Annotated Wizard of Oz. Ed. Michael Patrick Hearne. New York: Norton, 2000. ISBN 978-0-393-04992-3

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

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 6 or 7 of the required short responses and satisfactory responses on the exams

C: submission of at least 5 of the required short responses and satisfactory

responses on the exams

D: submission of at least 4 of the required short responses with satisfactory

responses on the exams.

Students who fail to submit at least 4 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 eight 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 11:50 pm on Saturday before the week’s classes. Students may, with advance

approval, submit a newspaper-style review of a live opera or musical performance or

Metropolitan Opera HD presentation at a local movie theater.

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.

**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 (Jan. 13 & 15)

Introduction to course and syllabus

WEEK II (Jan. 22)

Before class: download and read Reading Assignment No. 1 and the file “Updike Story and Sample Responses”

Monday: MLK Holiday (no class)

Wednesday: Discussion of reading assignments

WEEK III (Jan 27 & 29)

Before class: download and read libretto (script) of *Death and the Powers*

Submit response no. 1 on Blackboard before 11:59 pm on Saturday, January 25.

In class: Discussion of *Death and the Powers*

WEEK IV (Feb 3 & 5)

Before class: download and read short selections from *The Old and New Testament*;

“Why I Live at the P.O.”

Submit response no. 2 on Blackboard before 11:59 pm on Sat., Feb. 1

In class: Discuss readings from *The Old and New Testament*

WEEK V (Feb 10 & 12)

No response due

In class: Watch *Godspell*

WEEK VI (Feb 17 & 19)

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

Submit response no. 3 on Blackboard before 11:59 pm on Sat., Feb. 16

In class: discuss *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats*;

Watch portions of *Cats*; discuss and watch portions of *The Magic Flute*

WEEK VII (Feb 24 & 26)

No response due

In class: watch *The Wizard of Oz* (1939 movie version)

WEEK VIII (Mar 3 & 5)

Before class: read *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Submit response no. 4 on Blackboard before 11:59 pm on Sat, Mar 1

Monday: discuss the novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Wednesday: Midterm exam: bring a laptop, a blue book, or a green book to class

\* \* \* \* SPRING BREAK \* \* \* \*

WEEK IX (Mar 17 & 19)

Before class: read *Bruges-la-Morte*

Submit response no. 5 on Blackboard before 11:59 pm on Sat, Mar 15

In class: discuss the novel *Bruges-la-Morte*

WEEK X (Mar 24 & 26)

No response due

In class: watch the opera *Die Tote Stadt*

WEEK XI (Mar 31 & Apr 2)

Before class: read *Silent Night*

Submit response no. 6 on Blackboard before 11:59 pm on Sat, Mar 29

In class: discuss the historical narrative *Silent Night*

WEEK XII (April 7 & 9)

No response due

In class: watch the movie *Joyeux Noël*

WEEK XIII ( April 14 & 16)

Before class: download and read “Beauty and the Beast”

Response no. 7 due before 11:59 pm on Sat, Apr 12

In class: discuss “Beauty and the Beast”; watch *La Belle et la Bête*

WEEK XIV (April 21 & 23)

Before class: download and read song lyrics by The Four Seasons and

Patsy Cline

Response no. 8 due before 11:59 pm on Sat, Apr 19

In class: discuss and listen to songs of Patsy Cline, the Four Seasons

WEEK XV (April 28 & 30)

Monday: written portion of final exam. Bring a laptop or a green book or blue book to class

Wednesday: discussion portion of final exam

EXAM WEEK

Final exam period is Wednesday, May 7, at 2-4:30 pm. This will be a continuation

of discussion begun on April 30.

ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY!