



TR 573 Ethical Themes in Literature
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities
Fall 2005, Tuesday 8:15 am

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 12-1:30 pm, sign up on door. Other times by appointment.

Course Description

This course introduces us to reading literature both as a form of ethical reflection as well as a form of ethical action. Ethics is both moral reasoning and the inculcation of virtue, and this reflects both in our responses to the moral dilemmas posed in novels and other fiction, and with friendships developed with the authors of the works. In this course we will read primarily novels, with an eye to the nature of the relationships formed between author and reader, and to the interplay of moral circumstance, moral character, and moral norms.

Course Objectives

1. To read literature with a sensitivity to theological and moral issues, moral norms and moral character, and to be able to critically reflect upon and evaluate and respond to such moral themes in literature.
2. To read literature with awareness of the relationships formed between author and reader.
3. To demonstrate critical skills with regard to 1) and 2) above.

Course Requirements

1. Regular and timely reading of assigned material.
2. Regular attendance in class.
3. Thoughtful participation in class discussions.
4. Shared leadership in three of the discussions over the course of the semester with paper prepared for class discussion. These papers are due at the end of the class session for which they were prepared. (20% of grade each):

- a. Sign up at the first day of class to co-lead three discussion sessions.
 - b. For those discussion sessions, prepare a 3-5 page paper for the assigned reading with an analysis of major and pertinent ethical themes, moral issues, character traits/virtues, or a discussion of the implied author's construction of ethical good/s, and a list of questions to start the discussion.
5. One 10-15 page written assignment, which you will share with the class (40% of grade). This is due at the end of the last class session, December 13, 2005:
- a. Either:
 - i. Select either one of the authors in the class, or another author (subject to instructor's approval), and begin exploration into the ways that author deals with ethical themes. You may include other works by that author in addition to the one read for class.
 - ii. Indicate why you selected this person.
 - iii. Provide some information about the author:
 1. a brief biographical introduction,
 2. a select list of other works
 3. major ethical themes the author deals with generally
 - iv. Using the framework offered in Booth, and/or working specifically with a selected theme (or themes) or character(s) in a specific book or story, discuss how the author draws out moral theme(s) and character(s), and/or a vision of a good life or society. Include a response to the following questions in your paper:
 1. What is the character of the friendships you have formed with the implied author(s)?
 2. What does the author do to highlight a moral issue, or describe a moral trait? Do several themes intersect? How do moral traits relate to moral themes? For example, reflect on how a specific character loves/loved. What did love demand of the lover? The loved? What are the different cultural or social expressions of love? Or, ask what characteristic enables a person to love or to act on a social justice issue?
 3. Relate the literary issue/theme/character to some issue pertinent to this society or community. How does the story make better persons of us? How might this speak to us today?
 - b. Or:
 - i. Write a short story dealing with the intersection of a moral trait/virtue and moral theme. Establish the time, place, character, society or social setting, and events (e.g. moral dilemma, justice concern, social concern).

General Class Structure

What you bring to this class will determine the experience you have in this class. We will have primarily a discussion format, with occasional use of video and lecture.

Course Texts:

1. Adams, Richard. *Watership Down*.
2. Booth, William. *The Company We Keep*.
3. Endo, Shusako. *Silence*.
4. Ha Jin. *Waiting*.
5. Jones, Edward P. *The Known World*.
6. Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Interpreter of Maladies*.
7. Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*.
8. Paton, Alan. *Ah, But Your Land is Beautiful*.
9. Steinbeck, John. *Grapes of Wrath*.

Course Policies

1. Please treat this course, your instructor, and your fellow students with respect by attending class and participating thoughtfully in the discussions. In fact, attendance and participation in class are required to pass this course. More than two unexcused absences will result in a penalty of one grade level per absence. Coming to class late or leaving early may count as an absence.
2. All papers are to be double-spaced, and typewritten, with appropriate citations. University of Chicago and Turabian (see Appendix 1) are acceptable formats. I will not accept emailed papers or exams, but you may fax papers to me at 651-633-4315.
3. Papers are due in class on the date indicated in the course syllabus and/or schedule. Any late papers will be penalized at one grade level per day late. I may not by policy accept late final papers, unless a formal request by extension is filed before the last day of class (See Appendix 2).
4. All work submitted must be your own, and done specifically for this course.
5. Please see the seminary-wide policies on academic integrity, inclusive language, and sexual harassment, articulated in the student handbooks.

Course Schedule:

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Reading/Assignment</i>
1	9.13.05	Introduction and Issues in Ethical Criticism	
2	9.20.05	Literature and ethical criticism	Booth, Part 1
3	9.27.05	Literature and ethical criticism	Booth, Part 2

4	10.4.05	Interpreter of Maladies	Jhumpa Lahiri
5	10.11.05	Waiting	Ha Jin
6	10.18.05	Beloved	Toni Morrison
	10.25.05	Reading Week	
7	11.1.05	The Known World	Edward P. Jones
8	11.8.05	Silence	Shusako Endo
9	11.15.05	Ah, But Your Land is Beautiful	Alan Paton
10	11.22.05	Watership Down	Richard Adams
11	11.29.05	Grapes of Wrath	John Steinbeck
12	12.6.05	Students' final projects	
13	12.13.05	Wrap Up * final written assignment due	

SAMPLE TURABIAN
Chapter 11 is your best guide

BOOKS: SINGLE AUTHOR

Footnote/Endnote Entry N

Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five: Or, the Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* (New York: Dell, 1969), 23. Do not use 'p.' 'pg.', or 'pp.' in front of page number.

Bibliographic Entry B

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five: Or, the Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death*. New York: Dell, 1969.

JOURNAL ARTICLE RETRIEVED IN FULL TEXT FROM AN ONLINE DATABASE

Follow Example 11.57 B and look at Rule 8:141.

Footnote/Endnote Entry N

Ronald L. Poulson, Marion A. Eppler, and Tammy N. Satterwhite, "Alcohol Consumption, Strength of Religious Beliefs, and Risky Sexual Behavior in College Students," *Journal of American College Health* 46 (March 1998): 227. Database on-line. available from Expanded Academic Index, Article A20485097.

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NON-PERIODICAL INTERNET DOCUMENTS OR IMAGE

Follow Example 11.57 B and look at Rule 8:141. Since Internet documents are not fixed in either content or location, you need to indicate the date you accessed the page.

Footnote/Endnote Entry N

John R. Henderson, *ICYouSee: T is for Thinking: A Guide to Critical Thinking About What You See on the Web* (Ithaca, NY: Ithaca College Library, 2002) [Database on-line] available from <http://www.ithaca.edu/library/Training/hott.html>. Accessed 1 May 2002.

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Appendix 2

The current UTS policy on extensions is as follows:

The work for a course is terminated at the end of the final class session. The performance in the course is evaluated on the basis of the work submitted by that time, unless an exception is made by the instructor, in which case an extension must be agreed to by the instructor by the end of the final class session and the student must complete a formal petition to be submitted in lieu of a grade. If the student is unable to negotiate the extension by the end of the final class session due to critical health issues, the student is responsible for seeing that the professor is notified as soon as possible, and then negotiating the extension promptly.