

LT300 Kafka's Outsider, Kafka's Politics

Seminar Leader: Jeffrey Champlin
Course Times: Fri 14:00-17:15,
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Office Hours: Fri 17:30-18:30 and by appointment

Course Description

Kafka famously depicts the alienated individual's frustrations in a disenchanted world of failing social bonds and bureaucratic overload. In this class, we study how the very pressures of modernity that contort his characters also narratively transform enduring problems of political representation. In addition to Kafka's novels, stories, and letters, we will study his Romantic predecessors, his Expressionist contemporaries, and the uniquely rich critical tradition that has responded to his work. (In addition to Kafka, authors include Hoffmann, Gogol, Trakl, Bataille, Benjamin, Bennett, Brod, Camus, Derrida, Foucault, and Hanssen.)

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

Requirements

We will make the most of the liberal arts seminar format by developing ideas and analysis through a process of discussion and writing. Toward that end, each student will contribute a short presentation and write a midterm and final paper. Overall class participation is also essential, and will be evaluated based on consistently preparing the readings and class engagement.

Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. Since the class meets once a week, more than one absence in the semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Please consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Assessment

Class presentations: Students will present on one text as per a sign-up sheet. Each presentation of about 15 minutes will examine key passages of your choice as guided by a commentary handout that I will provide. In turn, you will provide your own handout for the class that focuses your reading of the text. You are encouraged to write your **midterm or final papers** on the text that you present on. In this manner, your essay can expand on the insights and questions that arose from your class contribution and the discussion that follows your readings.

Writing Assignments: Students will write two papers. The first will be focused on one text and the second will develop a longer comparative analysis of two texts we have studied in the class. The midterm paper will be 2,000 words, the final will be 3,000 words.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

From the Student Handbook: *essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

Grade Breakdown

Class participation (quality and quantity): 25%

Presentation: 20%

Midterm essay (2000 words): 25%

Final essay (3000 words): 30%

Course Materials

The course will have a reader with secondary sources that all students should purchase. In addition, you will need the following books. You are also encouraged to read the German editions and bring them to class. In order to facilitate a seminar atmosphere, I ask that computers not be used in class without special exception.

Kafka, Franz. *The Complete Stories* (Schocken, 1995). ISBN-13: 978-0805210552 [Please buy this edition as our main text for the class so we can stay together on the translation.]

Kafka, Franz. *The Castle*.

Kafka, Franz. *The Trial*.

In the Reader:

Bataille, "Kafka" (From *Literature and Evil*)
Walter Benjamin, "Franz Kafka"
Bennett, "The Power of Kafka's Stories"
Camus, Myth of Sisyphus [Selection on Kafka]
Deleuze, "What Is a Minor Literature?" (Journal Article selection)
Derrida, "Before the Law"
Foucault, "The Subject and Power"
Hanssen, "Kafka and Arabs"

Schedule

February 1 "Before the Law"; "The Cares of A Family Man", "The Vulture"

February 8 "The Judgment"

February 15 "The Country Doctor"

February 22 *The Trial*, chapters 1-6

March 1 *The Trial*, chapters 7-10; Derrida, "Before the Law"

March 8 "Letter to the Father"

March 15 "The Great Wall of China"; "An Imperial Message"

Midterm Paper Due

March 22 Letters to Felice, selections
[Midterm Grades Due]

March 29 *The Castle*, chapters 1-13

April 5 *The Castle*, chapters 14-end

April 12 "In the Penal Colony"; "Jackals and Arabs"

April 19 SPRING BREAK

April 26 "The Hunger Artist"; "The Trapeze Artist"

May 3 "The Burrow"

May 10 “Josephine the Singer, or The Mouse Folk”
Final papers due for graduating students

May 17 Completion Week
Final papers due for non-graduating students