

**ENGL 376 LITERATURE AND THE POLITICAL IMAGINATION #13031****MWF 10:00-10:50 VON MORZE***English Major/Minor: Counts for Transnational (TN) requirement*

Wheatley W01-0062

**<http://www.wikispaces.umb.edu/> (website will contain the electronic course readings)**

Instructor: Len von Morzé

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**COURSE TEXTS**

Please buy the correct texts. The More and Stendhal are translations. Translations are interpretations, so other editions may give you a very different sense of the text.

**Required Books**

More	<u>Utopia</u> (Adams translation)	Norton	039393246X
Atwood	<u>The Handmaid's Tale</u>	Anchor	038549081X
Stendhal	<u>The Red and the Black</u> (Raffel translation)	Modern Library	0812972074
Delany	<u>Blake</u>	Beacon	080706419X

**Suggested Book\***

Brackenridge	<u>Modern Chivalry</u>	Hackett	0872209911
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\* The Brackenridge is a make-up for the *Lapham's Quarterly* issue on "Politics" (vol 5 issue 4) that I would have liked to use, but the bookstore was not able to get for us. I will suggest buying this text, but because we will be reading only small parts of the text over four class sessions, I will certainly make copies of the relevant pages available.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

"Politics and the Literary Imagination." A fine course could be offered on the implied relationship of "literature," which is traditionally seen as having certain aesthetic and ethical qualities, to a range of political questions. This is (mostly) not that course. This is because I take the controversial, disputable view that there is no aesthetic means of differentiating a literary text from a non-literary

one. Less grandiosely, I'd suggest that a political approach to a piece of writing involves different criteria than an aesthetic or ethical approach.

I do think, however, that there's such a thing as a literary approach to a piece of writing, and we will emphasize that approach even when we read political essays such as those by Marx or Weber.

So this course is more about politics *as* literature and politics *in* literature than the politics *of* literature. This topic has at least two dimensions:

- how are political writings "literary"?
- how has literature represented political life?

Both an understanding of genre and a passion for historical contextualization will inform my own approach to these materials. Since most of our texts are in the genre of the novel or essay, we will sometimes talk about generic conventions. We will try to understand why these authors wrote what they did at the time they were writing, instead of engaging in a knee-jerk evaluation of their work, though we don't give up the right to judge.

Our readings include some classics of political thought as well as narratives.

## COMPONENTS OF THE GRADE

### 1. ONE PRESENTATION 10%

You will give a 10-minute presentation on contextual materials surrounding More's Utopia. These will be assigned from the Norton Critical Edition I ordered for the class. You will have a partner.

This assignment fulfills various purposes: it helps all of you to feel that you have a "place" in this course, it helps me to remember your names and get a sense of your work, and it builds a collective spirit in the class.

### 2. QUIZZES 25%

On most Fridays, class will begin with a short 15-minute quiz on the reading for the whole week. Being in class on Monday and Wednesday will greatly help with this quiz. These are open-book quizzes and are not intended to trick you. Instead, the questions are intended to provoke inquiry.

There are 12 quizzes; you will be evaluated on your 8 highest quiz grades. This means that even if you skip 4 quizzes, a score of 100% is still possible. If you take fewer than 8, things get more difficult; the highest score attainable with just 7 quizzes will be an 88%. You cannot get over 100% on the quizzes by taking more than 8; I only count the highest 8.

Without exception, the quizzes will be collected at 10:15. Do not show up late to class just because you have decided not to take a quiz, because it disrupts the students who are taking the quiz.

### 3. THREE PAPERS 50%

You will be expected to write three papers of varying length, starting with 3 pages and ending with about 6, for the course. More information on these assignments will be distributed closer to the due dates.

### 4. CLASS PARTICIPATION 15%

Attendance is required and will be factored into your participation grade. Chronic absence will result in a drastically lowered participation grade. Students who miss 10 or more class meetings will fail the course.

Your active participation in our class discussions is essential. Active participation means many different things, all of which are necessary to the success of a discussion. Some participation is verbal: volunteering the insights you have developed from your reading, citing passages from the text relevant to an ongoing discussion, introducing new wrinkles on an argument, posing questions about the week's lectures and texts, reading a passage aloud when the instructor asks you to do so—these are just a few of the verbal forms of participation that contribute to an ongoing conversation.

Other forms of participation are no less indispensable to a successful discussion: listening intently to the instructor and to your classmates, quietly signaling your support for others as they speak, and looking actively engaged in the class are all valid forms of participation.

It is to be expected that participants in this class will, at different times, do all of these things: that those students who tend to be shy take the occasion to speak when asked to volunteer insights from your reading, to offer their answers when asked about a quiz question, or to read passages aloud when the instructor asks; and that those students who tend to be more loquacious also actively listen to others, and respect the uses of silence, which can be a time for others to gather their thoughts.

In other words, you do not have to speak in class frequently in order to do well in this part of the course. You do need, however, to refrain from doing things that hinder the success of class discussion: texting, listening to music, surfing the web, etc. If you are late for class, DO NOT walk between the professor and your classmates. Enter as quietly as possible. Cell phones should be muted. Refrain from reading newspapers or any texts that do not relate to this course during class time.

Please come to class with all necessary materials, especially the text. You must print out the texts from the wiki and bring them to class; please do not read them off a computer screen, though tablets and Kindles are ok. I would prefer that you not use a computer with a keyboard at all, but if you absolutely must do so for a learning-related reason such as a disability, then you should sit along the wall so that you do not distract other students.

If you engage in uncivil behavior, such as making inappropriate comments to your professor or fellow students in the classroom, out of the classroom, or via email or social networking sites, you can be referred to the Chair of the English Department for sanctions that can include the lowering of your course grade. You can also be referred to the Dean of Students.

One final note: In politics, debate is not only expected, but valuable in and of itself. This course calls for tolerance and patience with our writers as well as with another as we approach texts that are often designed to incite controversy and debate. The possibility of intellectual exchange depends on a respectful relationship with one another.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic integrity is central to the mission of this institution. Without honest effort, a learning community has no substance or validity. All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. No excuses will be accepted for plagiarism, cheating, or any other act that suggests that you have not fulfilled your academic responsibilities in this course. Any act of plagiarism or cheating may result in the student failing the class.

For more, including sanctions for academic dishonesty, see your Student Handbook sections on academic dishonesty, pp. 150-158.

### **DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS**

Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 offers guidelines for curriculum modifications and adaptations for students with documented disabilities. If applicable, students may obtain adaptation recommendations from the Ross Center for Disability Services, Campus Center UL 211 (617-287-7430). The student must present these recommendations and discuss them with each professor within a reasonable period, preferably by the end of Drop/Add period.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

All readings are listed on the date they will be discussed in class. Other than the four required course books, all texts will be made available electronically on the wiki.

### 1. The Great Potluck: Imagining a Virtuous Community

Wed Sept 3 – Introduction

Fri Sept 5 – Original draft of the Declaration of Independence

Mon Sept 8 – Utopia, Book 1 (3-38)

Wed Sept 10 – Utopia, Book 2 (38-73)

Fri Sept 12 – Utopia, Book 2 (73-99) **QUIZ 1**

Mon Sept 15 – Presentations on Utopia supplementary texts

Wed Sept 17 – Presentations on Utopia supplementary texts

Fri Sept 19 – Presentations on Utopia supplementary texts

Mon Sept 22 – US (1788) and Haitian (1801) Constitutions

### 2. Delimitation: Imagining a “Within” or a “Beyond” to Politics

Wed Sept 24 – Schmitt, Concept of the Political, selections

Fri Sept 26 – Rousseau; French Revolutionary theory (Sièyes); Žižek, “Robespierre or the ‘Divine Violence’ of Terror” **QUIZ 2**

Mon Sept 29 – Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” selections; Arendt on action

Wed Oct 1 – Marx, “On the Jewish Question”

Fri Oct 3 – Marx TBA **QUIZ 3**

Mon Oct 6 – Handmaid’s Tale chs 1-9 (3-53)

Wed Oct 8 – HT chs 10-18 (54-106)

Fri Oct 10 – HT chs 19-24 (109-147) **QUIZ 4**

Mon Oct 13 – No Class: Columbus Day

Wed Oct 15 – HT chs 25-39 (151-255)

Fri Oct 17 – HT 40-46 & “Historical Notes” (259-311) **QUIZ 5**

### 3. Politics and Action: Anti-Modern Leftism as a Challenge to Bourgeois Democracy

Mon Oct 20 – The Red and the Black, chs 1.1-1.8 (1-50)

Wed Oct 22 – R&B, 1.9-1.17 (50-91)  
 Fri Oct 24 – R&B, 1.18-1.23 (92-153) **QUIZ 6**

Oct 27 – R&B, 1.24-1.30 (153-216)  
 Wed Oct 29 – R&B, 2.1-2.9 (217-287)  
 Fri Oct 31 – R&B, 2.10-2.18 (287-339) **QUIZ 7**

Mon Nov 3 – R&B, 2.19-2.25 (340-387)  
 Wed Nov 5 – R&B, 2.26-2.36 (388-438)  
 Fri Nov 7 – R&B, 2.37-2.45 (438-485) **QUIZ 8**

Mon Nov 10 – Blake, chs 1-12 (3-50)  
 Wed Nov 12 – Blake, chs 13-22 (51-106)  
 Fri Nov 14 – Blake, chs 23-34 (107-160) **QUIZ 9**

Mon Nov 17 – Blake, chs 35-49 (163-217) **PAPER 2 DUE**  
 Wed Nov 19 – Blake, chs 50-61 (218-262)  
 Fri Nov 21 – Blake, chs 62-74 (263-314) **QUIZ 10**

Nov 24, 26 – TBA

#### **4. The Uses of Bitterness: Irony and Anti-Narrative**

Mon Dec 1 – Swift, “A Modest Proposal”  
 Wed Dec 3 – Adorno/Benjamin, TBA  
 Fri Dec 5 – Brackenridge, selections **QUIZ 11**

Mon Dec 8 – Brackenridge, selections  
 Wed Dec 10 – Brackenridge, selections  
 Fri Dec 12 – Brackenridge, selections **QUIZ 12; PAPER 3 DUE**