

*From the Age of Reason to the Age of the Absurd*

*Instructor:* Anna Schur  
*Office:* Parker 309  
*E-mail:* aschur@keene.edu  
*Phone:* 358-2911

**Office Hours:** T 1:15-2:45, W 12:00-1:30 and by appointment

The course introduces students to European literature from the 17th to the 20th century. With Descartes's *Discourse on Method* (1637) and Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) serving loosely as book-ends, it examines representations of reason and rationality in fiction within the broader context of European intellectual history.

**Required Texts**

- S. Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*
- Isaiah Berlin, "The Counter-Enlightenment" (available on Blackboard)
- Lord Byron, "Manfred" (on Blackboard)
- A. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Vintage)
- A. Camus, *The Stranger* (Vintage)
- D'Alembert, "The Human Mind Emerged from Barbarism" (on Blackboard)
- R. Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (Penguin)
- F. Dostoevsky, Feodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (Norton)
- S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Norton)
- M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (excerpt, on Blackboard)
- F. Kafka, *Basic Kafka*
- I. Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" (on Blackboard)
- K.L. Reinhold, "Thoughts on Enlightenment" (on Blackboard)
- R.L. Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Oxford)
- J. Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (Signet Classic)
- E. Zamyatin, *We* (Eos)

All books are available at the Keene State College Bookstore.

**Course Objectives**

This semester you will:

- Read and discuss a variety of literary texts (fiction, poetry, drama) and two non-literary (philosophical) works with attention to relevant literary elements (eg. themes, techniques, stylistic choices), as well as these works' historical, cultural, and intellectual contexts.
- Develop a better understanding of the relationship between literature and culture.
- Become more adept at constructing arguments about the texts you read both in discussion and in writing

## Course Outcomes

By the end of the semester you will be asked to demonstrate that you can:

- Discuss a literary work (both in discussion and in writing) at the appropriate level of complexity.
- Draw upon relevant cultural references to develop a more nuanced understanding of a text.
- Construct a viable argument about a text you analyze.
- Draw upon course materials to develop further questions about other literary and non-literary works and other areas of the humanities.

*This is a tentative schedule of our work. Some adjustments in timing and assignments may be necessary as we proceed.*

### Assignments are listed on their due dates

<i>January 19 Tuesday</i>	Introduction
<i>January 21 Thursday</i>	Descartes: pp.5-53. <b>Study Questions on Blackboard</b>
<i>January 26 Tuesday</i>	Descartes: discussion continues
<i>January 28 Thursday</i>	Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” (on Blackboard) Reinhold, “Thoughts on Enlightenment” (on Blackboard)
<i>February 2 Tuesday</i>	D’Alembert, “The Human Mind Emerged from Barbarism” (on Blackboard) <b>Slide lecture: The Newtonian Moment</b>
<i>February 4 Thursday</i>	Swift: Part 1, Part 2 (chapters 1-7), Part 4
<i>February 9 Tuesday</i>	Swift: discussion continues
<i>February 11 Thursday</i>	Isaiah Berlin: “The Counter-Enlightenment” (on Blackboard)
<i>February 16 Tuesday</i>	Byron, “Manfred” (on Blackboard)

<b>February 18</b> <b>Thursday</b>	Dostoevsky: <i>Crime and Punishment</i> (Part 1)
<b>February 23</b> <b>Tuesday</b>	Dostoevsky: <i>Crime and Punishment</i> (Part 2 and 3) <b>Paper 1 Draft 1 Due</b>
<b>February 25</b> <b>Thursday</b>	Dostoevsky: <i>Crime and Punishment</i> (Part 4)
<b>March 2</b> <b>Tuesday</b>	Dostoevsky: <i>Crime and Punishment</i> (Part 5 and the Epilogue)
<b>March 4</b> <b>Thursday</b>	Individual meeting with the instructor to discuss Draft 1 of Paper 1
<b>March 9</b> <b>Tuesday</b>	Catching up
<b>March 11</b> <b>Thursday</b>	<b>Midterm</b>
<b>March 16</b> <b>Tuesday</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
<b>March 18</b> <b>Thursday</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
<b>March 23</b> <b>Tuesday</b>	Stevenson: <i>The Strange Case</i> <b>Paper 1 Draft 2 Due</b>
<b>March 25</b> <b>Thursday</b>	Freud, <i>Civilization and Its Discontents</i>
<b>March 30</b> <b>Tuesday</b>	Kafka: "Metamorphosis," "A Report to an Academy"
<b>April 1</b> <b>Thursday</b>	Zamyatin, <i>We</i>

*April 6  
Tuesday*

Zamyatin, *We*

*April 8  
Thursday*

Camus: *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Part 1)  
*Study Questions on Blackboard*

*April 13  
Tuesday*

Camus: discussion continues

*April 15  
Thursday*

Camus: discussion continues  
**Paper 2 Draft 1 Due**

*April 20  
Tuesday*

Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

*April 22  
Thursday*

Camus: *The Stranger*

*April 27  
Tuesday*

Individual meeting with the instructor to discuss Draft 1 of Paper 2

*April 29  
Thursday*

M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (excerpt, on Blackboard)

**Paper 2 Draft 2 Due on the day of the Final exam**

**On the day of the Final (Tuesday, May 4, 8:00-10:00), you will present on your final paper to the class.**

*Grading:*

**Paper 1 Draft 1** (minimum 7 pages): 10%

**Paper 1 Draft 2** (minimum 10 pages): 15%

**Paper 2 Draft 1** (minimum 10 pages): 15%

**Paper 2 Draft 2** (minimum 15 pages): 20%

Late papers will be penalized according to the following formula: one half of a grade deduction for each class day the paper is late. For instance, a paper that may be worth an “A” on a Tuesday when it is due, will receive an “AB” on the Thursday of the same week.

**Midterm: 15%**

**Participation (including 1 presentation on a topic assigned by the instructor, quizzes, and in-class writing): 20%.**

Participation is an integral part of this course, since class discussion will contribute much to help you in formulating your own questions and constructing your own critical perspectives on the texts. Therefore, attendance and participation will be heavily weighted in determining your final grade. Failure to prepare for and attend class will seriously lower your grade.

**Presentation on the final paper: 5%**

#### ***Attendance Policy***

You are allowed two unexcused absences. Three or more unexcused absences will lower your final grade according to the following formula: one half of a grade deduction for each illegitimate absence. For example, if you have three unexcused absences, your final “A” will become an “AB.” Medical excuses are accepted, but you cannot pass this class if you have missed more than six sessions (regardless of the reason). If you happen to miss a class, you must come prepared to the next session.

#### ***A Note on the Use of Personal Electronics***

Cell phone use is not allowed in this class. This includes texting, emailing or any other form of electronic communication with people outside of the class. If I notice that you are using a cell phone or any other electronic equipment for this purpose, you will be dismissed from the class and lose that day’s attendance.

***If you are a student with a disability:*** The Office of Disability Services (ODS), Elliot Hall #358-2353, is available to discuss eligibility requirements and appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. So all arrangements can be made, requests for academic accommodations need to be completed during the first two weeks of the semester. Please note that you are responsible for making an appointment with ODS for disability verification and determination of reasonable academic accommodations.