

# PHIL 490: Honours Seminar

## Philosophy Through Literature

Syllabus  
W2 Spring 2023

This course takes place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x<sup>w</sup>mθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) People.

This seminar for philosophy Honours students investigates literary texts with philosophical significance. In particular, we will focus on contemporary poetry as a vehicle for philosophical work. Over the course of the term we will do a deep-dive study of three primary texts, using a selection of contextualizing and secondary materials to guide and support our studies. This course strongly emphasizes in-class discussion, especially student-led discussion, as a mode of learning. Students may choose to prepare either a final paper or a chapbook of poetry engaging philosophical questions covered during the course. There is no final exam.

### Textbooks

You will need (physical or electronic) copies of the following four books:

- Paisley Rekdal, *Appropriate: a Provocation* \*
- John Gibson (ed.), *The Philosophy of Poetry* \*
- Audre Lorde, *The Selected Works of Audre Lorde, edited with an Introduction by Roxane Gay*
- Jordan Abel, *Un/inhabited* and *Nishga*
- Joshua Whitehead, *Full-Metal Indigiqueer*

\* = e-book available through UBC library

### Instructor

Carrie Jenkins, [carrie.jenkins@ubc.ca](mailto:carrie.jenkins@ubc.ca), she/they

### Email policy

Please put "PHIL 490" in the subject line. I aim to reply to student emails within two working days (not including weekends and holidays) of receipt. Please note that emails sent outside of working hours (i.e. after 5pm or before 9am PST) aren't received until the next working day.

### Office hours

Tuesday and Thursday 2-3pm in [Carrie's Zoom office](#)

If you can't make these times or prefer an in-person meeting, contact [Carrie](#) for an appointment

## Canvas

<https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/109532>

## Classes

In person, Wed 2-5pm, IBLC 460

## Assessment

- **Participation: 10%**
  - Participate regularly and thoughtfully in class activities to earn this part of your grade
- **Eight short responses: 20%**
  - Length: 300-500 words (prose)
  - Due at the start of class (see syllabus for dates)
  - Graded pass/fail (i.e. a pass = 100%)
- **Presentations: 20%**
  - Each student will present twice during the semester (10% per presentation)
  - Introduce an aspect of the week's text(s) that interested you, and some questions to spark class discussion
  - Guide length: 20-30 minutes
- **Draft essay or chapbook: 10%**
  - Essays should be around 2500 words in length, including footnotes but excluding bibliography
  - Chapbooks are typically 15-30 pages, but please discuss with me if you'd like to do something unusual that would alter this expectation
  - **Due 1:59pm on March 29<sup>th</sup>**
- **Final essay or chapbook: 40%**
  - Grading rubric provided on Canvas (under "assignments")
  - **Due 11:59pm on April 13<sup>th</sup>**

## If you can't do the work on time

I get it. I am happy to grant extensions where needed; just ask. However, work submitted late *without* an extension cannot be accepted, unless exceptional circumstances made it impossible to request an extension in advance of the deadline. This policy is in place to ensure that I can manage my workload and fairly grade everyone's work.

## Note on academic integrity

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly

rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. A link about Academic misconduct is below:

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

### **Mandatory syllabus statement about UBC's values and policies**

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available [here](#).

### **Note on atmosphere**

The topics of this course will comprise sensitive material for many people. While we may be examining and questioning beliefs, including some deeply-held ones, everyone in the course—instructor and students—has a shared responsibility to ensure that we do so with care and respect, ensuring that our environment is supportive and conducive to learning. No offensive jokes or comments, or other harmful behaviors with respect to race, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, or anything else, will be acceptable. The aim of our discussions is not to “win” arguments or to prove how smart we are, but to learn collaboratively with others.

**Draft schedule (subject to change!)**

11 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<p>Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sherri Irwin, "Unreadable Poems and How They Mean," in <i>The Philosophy of Poetry</i></li> <li>- Paisley Rekdal, <i>Appropriate: a Provocation</i>, Letters 1-3</li> </ul>
18 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<p>Short response 1 due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Simon Blackburn, "Can an Analytic Philosopher Read Poetry?" in <i>The Philosophy of Poetry</i></li> <li>- Paisley Rekdal, <i>Appropriate: a Provocation</i>, Letters 4-6</li> </ul>
25 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<p>Short response 2 due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Roger Scruton, "Poetry and Truth," in <i>The Philosophy of Poetry</i></li> <li>- Audre Lorde <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Poetry is not a luxury"</li> <li>• "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action"</li> <li>• Coal</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1 <sup>st</sup> Feb	<p>Short response 3 due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Roxane Gay, "Introduction"</li> <li>- Audre Lorde <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism"</li> <li>• "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"</li> <li>• Who Said It Was Simple</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
8 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<p>Short response 4 due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Audre Lorde <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power"</li> <li>• The Politics of Addiction</li> <li>• To the Poet Who Happens to Be Black and the Black Poet Who Happens to be a Woman</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
15 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Students' suggested works! BYO!
22 <sup>nd</sup> Feb	MIDTERM BREAK
1 <sup>st</sup> March	<p>Short response 5 due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jordan Abel</li> </ul>
8 <sup>th</sup> March	<p>Short response 6 due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jordan Abel</li> </ul>
15 <sup>th</sup> March	<p>Short response 7 due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joshua Whitehead</li> </ul>

22 <sup>nd</sup> March	Short response 7 due - Joshua Whitehead
29 <sup>th</sup> March	<b>Drafts due 1:59pm</b> Students' suggested works! BYO!
5 <sup>th</sup> April	Workshopping chapbooks/essays
12 <sup>th</sup> April	Workshopping chapbooks/essays
13 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>Final chapbooks/essays due 11:59pm</b>