

PHIL 375: Philosophy and Literature
Summer Term 1
2024

DRAFT SYLLABUS

OVERVIEW

In this course, we will explore literature as a mode of philosophizing: that is to say, *a way of doing philosophy*. In many traditions of thought, novels, poetry, plays, comics, and other literary forms are used to explore and communicate philosophical theories and problems, to spark ideas and conversations, and to inspire change, both individual and social. In the first half of the semester, we will study and discuss a range of examples of philosophical literature, analysing their various techniques, strategies, strengths, and weaknesses. In the second half, students will create and workshop their own philosophical writing. Each student may choose their own preferred genre to write in.

Instructor:

Carrie Jenkins, carrie.jenkins@ubc.ca

Teaching Assistants:

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Jade Hadley, jade.hadley@ubc.ca

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Email enquiries: Please contact **TBA** in the first instance.

Office hours: TBA

If you can't make these times, contact **TBA** for an appointment.

Canvas: <https://canvas.ubc.ca/courses/141111>

Class times: Tu Th 4-7pm, ONLINE

The Zoom link can be found on Canvas.

This course is synchronous. Students are required to attend class regularly and to participate in class activities.

Texts: There are three required books of which you need to secure (hard or electronic) copies: *Nausea* by Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Nice and the Good* by Iris Murdoch, and *The Sovereignty of Good* by Iris Murdoch. All other required texts will be made available online.

Important note about this course: This is not a good course to choose if you don't like reading LOTS! We will be reading *two complete novels*, and other materials. If reading that much isn't your jam, this course isn't for you.

ASSESSMENT

- Participation: 10%
 - Participate regularly and thoughtfully in class activities to earn this part of your grade.
- Essay (critical analysis of philosophical literature studied during the first half of the course): 40%
 - Due: **TBA**
 - Length: Approximately **2000 words**
- Draft of philosophical creative writing: 10%
 - Due: **TBA**
 - Length: Approximately **2000 words**
 - Typically a short story.
 - If you want to write in a different genre, **alternative guidelines should be agreed with the instructor prior to submission.**
 - If you wish, you may include a short explanatory statement (up to 300 words) about the piece. This is advisable if there are elements of context that may not be evident to readers, but which are important for understanding the work.
- Final piece of philosophical creative writing, revised taking into account peer feedback: 40%
 - Due: **TBA**
 - Length: Approximately **2000 words**

COURSE POLICIES

Grading rubric:

1. Essays: Each essay should discuss one or more of the set texts covered in this course. Key factors for assessment will be: (a) depth of understanding of the text(s) discussed, (b) clarity and focus, (c) essay structure, and (d) quality of philosophical engagement with the text(s).

2. Creative writing: Specifics will depend on genre (poetry is a different creature from fiction, for example), but in all cases the main factors for assessment will be: (a) creativity and compellingness of the writing, (b) quality of philosophical content, and (c) success in using the chosen form to convey the philosophical ideas.

If you can't do the work on time:

I get it. I am happy 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 the course TAs are able to manage their workload and grade everyone's work fairly.

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: Some of the topics of this course may comprise sensitive material for many people. While we may be examining and questioning beliefs, including some deeply-held ones, everyone in the course—instructor, TAs, 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 online discussions is not to “win” arguments or to prove how smart we are, but to learn collaboratively with others.

<p>May 14</p>	<p><i>The relationship between philosophy and literature</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plato: Book X of <i>Republic</i> (any edition) • Lucretius: lines 418-482 of <i>De Rerum Natura</i> translated by William Ellery Leonard (alternative prose translation by W.H.D Rouse) • Iris Murdoch: Interview with Brian Magee for <i>Men of Ideas</i> • Carrie Jenkins: ‘Do gender norms enforce a divide between literature and philosophy?’
<p>May 16</p>	<p><i>What can stories do? Part I</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aesop: The Hare and the Tortoise • Lewis Carol: ‘What the Tortoise Said to Achilles’ • Gregory Currie: ‘Does Fiction Make Us Less Empathic?’
<p>May 21 and 23</p>	<p><i>Sartre, plus essay writing advice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jean-Paul Sartre: <i>Nausea</i> *NOVEL ALERT!* [content note: suicidal ideation, sexual assault, pedophilia, self-harm, ableism, racist language]
<p>May 28</p>	<p><i>Murdoch’s non-fiction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iris Murdoch: Selections from <i>The Sovereignty of Good</i>
<p>May 30 and April 4</p>	<p><i>Murdoch</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iris Murdoch: <i>The Nice and the Good</i> *NOVEL ALERT!* [content note: suicide, racist language, pedophilia] There is a helpful introduction by Catherine Bates in the 2000 Vintage edition, which I will post on Canvas for those who have other editions.
<p>April 6</p>	<p><i>What can stories do? Part II</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jorge Luis Borges: Selected short stories (pdfs on Canvas) • Graham Priest: “Sylvan’s Box: A Short Story and Ten Morals”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ken Liu: 'Excerpt from <i>Theuth, An Oral History of Work in the Age of Machine-Assisted Cognition</i>', plus 'Story Notes' (pdfs on Canvas)
April 11 and 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Creative philosophical writing: prompts and practice</i>
April 18 and 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Peer feedback: workshopping drafts in small groups</i>