



## UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK IN PRAGUE

**Course:** LIT206 LITERATURE AND POLITICS (3 semester credits/6 ECTS)  
**Semester:** Fall 2023  
**Prerequisites:** None  
**Instructor:**  
**Contact:**  
**Class meets:** TBA

### 1. Catalogue Description

This course explores the ways literary texts have engaged with questions of the politics of representation and questions of power, discrimination and ethics as they are revealed in cultural practice and discourse. The focus is on works of modern fiction and drama and the ways in which these texts approach political themes such as systems of government, social control, education, war, colonialism, censorship, gender, the environment and social responsibility.

### 2. Course Purpose

This course has several aims:

To examine real political events and conflicts through works of fiction, poetry and drama.

To explore the ways in which authors interpret and represent the political.

To assess how these representations might change or enrich our sense of particular events and power struggles in twentieth century history.

To promote deeper understanding of the role of literature and theatre as a means of remembering or constructing the past, as venues for dissent and social critique and as realms in which alternatives are imagined.

### 3. Required Readings:

All readings should be completed before that week's class meeting; they form the basis of that week's work in class.

**Students should have a copy of the week's reading at each class meeting.**

NB: Students will need to borrow, purchase or download the following texts:

#### Reading list (subject to small changes):

Atwood, Margaret *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985)  
Baraka, Amiri *Dutchman* (1964)  
Bulgakov, Mikhail *Heart of a Dog* (1923)  
Carter, Angela "The Bloody Chamber" (1979)  
Churchill, Caryl *Top Girls* (1982), *Far Away* (2000)  
Ellison, Ralph *Invisible Man* (1952)  
Fitzgerald, F. Scott *The Great Gatsby* (1925)  
Hamilton, Hugo *The Speckled People* (2003)  
Schlink, Bernhard *The Reader* (1995)

Hansberry, Lorraine *A Raisin in the Sun* (1958)  
Havel, Václav *The Power of the Powerless* (1979)  
Ionesco, Eugène *Rhinoceros* (1959)  
Kundera, Milan *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984)  
Kushner, Tony *Angels in America* (1991, 1992)  
Miller, Arthur *Death of a Salesman* (1949)  
O'Connor, Frank "Guests of the Nation" (1931)  
Procházková, Lenka "The Good New Times" (1995)

#### 4. Additional Readings

These will be specified on the course site. The main focus is on the primary texts listed above.

#### 5. Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- To critically reflect upon the politics of cultural practice.
- To explore real political events and conflicts through works of fiction, poetry and drama.
- To appreciate the ways in which authors interpret and represent the political.
- To assess how these representations might change or enrich our sense of particular events and power struggles in twentieth century history.
- To respond to these topics in writing and in discussion.

#### 6. Course Schedule

See end of document.

#### 7. Course Requirements and Grading – the course will be graded on the basis of:

##### Participation

Participation extends beyond mere attendance. Expect your instructor to keep track of how often you contribute to class discussion (as a whole), particularly during the class discussions of assigned readings. Each week students will be asked to prepare some response to the assigned reading. Responses may take various forms: verbal, written or quizzes. Details of participation tasks will be shared in the course of the semester.

Appropriate documentation for absences is necessary and should be submitted the class day directly before or after the one you miss. In general: this class is intensive and interactive. As a relatively large portion of your grade is based on participation missing class will seriously affect your grade. Failure to read course material will likewise directly affect your grade.

##### Exams

There will be a midterm exam and a final exam. The date and the exam format will be announced during the course of the semester.

##### Major Written Assignments

- One major research project on one of the course topics and groups of assigned readings. Guidelines will be issued during the semester.
- MLA style and accurate citations are expected. The final essay may not deal with the same topics covered in the midterm or final exam. A handout with guidelines for essays will be provided.

##### Students with disabilities

I encourage students with disabilities to contact me as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodations.

##### Criteria for Determination of Grade

Participation (inclusive of presentations, quizzes, class discussions) to be finalised	25%
Midterm Exam	20%

<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Final Project</b>	<b>35%</b>

### Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percent (%)	Generally Accepted Meaning
A	95-100	Outstanding work
A-	90-94	
B+	87-89	Good work, distinctly above the average
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

## 8. Key UNYP Policies

### Attendance:

It is your responsibility to show up to class on time. If you are late you will be marked as absent for that hour. **Absences will affect your grade. If you miss more than 12 hours of class, for any reason, you will automatically fail the entire course. Pay strict attention to this. The class policy is standard UNYP policy.**

### Academic Honesty

- The University's rules on academic dishonesty (e.g. cheating, plagiarism, submitting false information) will be strictly enforced. Please familiarize yourself with the STUDENT HONOUR CODE or ask your instructor for clarification.
- For examinations: copying from your neighbor, speaking to another student, using a phone or anything similar will result in you failing the test or quiz. On written papers properly note your sources with academic citations. Cutting and pasting from the internet may be considered plagiarism. If you have questions about this, please consult the instructor.

## 9. General Requirements

- All course work is governed by the UNYP Honor Code, and students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work. All students are expected to be familiar with the UNYP Honor Code.
- Mobile phones should be on silent; no calling or texting during class meetings (wait for the breaks).
- Use of media and communication devices, including computers, may not be used in ways that distract you or other students from our work during class meetings.
- Papers/essays are due ON PAPER on the day specified in the assignment.
- Papers/assignments more than a week late will not be accepted.
- Missed quizzes or in-class work will not be made up.
- Students should consult the course site regularly. This is where readings, essay topics and guidelines, weekly tasks, exam information and additional course materials will be shared.

**ALL written homework must be**

- typed
- font size 12pt. Times New Roman
- be double spaced
- use standard margins
- have numbered pages
- be spell and grammar checked
- use MLA format and citation style

**10. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS):**

The students that complete the course will receive 6 ECTS credits or 3 American credits. One ECTS credit corresponds to 25-30 hours of work. For comparison, 1 American credit hour equals approximately 2 ECTS credits.

For this course, students are expected to spend time in the following course-related activities:

Class Lectures and exams	48 hours
Reading class related material	85 hours
Exam preparations	10 hours
Final Essay preparation	30 hours
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>173 hours</b>

**11. Technology Expectations**

Assignments are to be word-processed.

Revised March 2023

## **Provisional schedule 2023**

### **Week 1 Introduction**

#### **Week 2 Cruel Optimism**

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925) (Novel: Extracts)

Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949) (Play: Read full text)

#### **Week 3 Deconstructing Invisibility**

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952) (Novel: Read Prologue and online summary)

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1958) (Play: Read full text)

Amiri Baraka, *Dutchman* (1964) (Play: Read full text)

#### **Week 4 Trauma, Ethics, Memory**

Bernhard Schlink, *The Reader* (1995) (Novel: Extracts)

#### **Week 5 Trauma, Ethics, Memory contd.**

Hugo Hamilton, *The Speckled People* (2003) (Novel: Extracts)

#### **Week 6 Metaphors for Absurd Times**

Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog* (1923) (Novel: Read full text)

Eugène Ionesco, *Rhinoceros* (1959) (Play: Read full text)

### **Week 7 Midterm**

#### **Week 8 Living in Truth? Laughter and Forgetting in Czechoslovakia**

Václav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless* (1978) (Prose: pp.1-25)

Lenka Procházková, "The Good New Times" (1995) (Short story: Read full text)

Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984) (Novel: Extracts)

#### **Week 9 Crossed lines: Intersectionality on Stage and Screen**

Caryl Churchill, *Top Girls* (1982) (Play: Read full text)

Frank O'Connor, "Guests of the Nation" (1931) (Short story: Read full text)

Neil Jordan, *The Crying Game* (1992) (Film: Clips will be shown in class)

#### **Week 10 The Female Form: Feminism and Genre**

Angela Carter "The Bloody Chamber" (1979) (Short story: Read full text)

Margaret Atwood *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) (Novel: Extracts)

#### **Week 11 Crossed lines: Intersectionality on Stage and Screen contd.**

Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (1991, 1992) (Play: Extracts)

#### **Week 12 Apocalypse now? Feeling uneasy**

Caryl Churchill, *Far Away* (2000) (Play: Read full text)

Lucy Kirkwood, *The Children* (2016) (Play: Read full text)

### **Week 13 Workshop / excursion**

### **Week 14 Conclusion and presentations of final research projects**

### **Week 15 Exam**