



## Philosophy and Literature

Spring, 2004

### Syllabus

#### 1. Course Information

Course Number: Phil 3033, Section 1  
Meeting Times: M,W,F, 1:30-2:20  
Meeting Place: 103 Gould Hall  
Instructor: Dr. Zev Trachtenberg  
Office: 610 Dale Hall Tower  
Phone: 325-6324  
E-Mail: ztrachtenberg@ou.edu  
Office Hours: T, R, 10:00-11:00

#### 2. Course website

The website for this course will include the class schedule, many of the assigned readings (including all supplementary readings), lecture notes, descriptions of writing assignments, and links to other useful sites. The course website can be accessed via iThink (<http://ithink.ou.edu>) – enter your id and password, select this course, and look for the link at the bottom of the page. Or, you can access it directly at:

**<http://www.ou.edu/ztclasses/phil3033>**

#### 3. Course Goals

This course will explore the ancient idea that life is like theater. We will call this idea the “theatrical metaphor,” and we will call the aspect of life that suggests the comparison “theatricality.” Thus, this course is about theatricality. We will study theatricality by reading philosophical works and plays; a premise of the course is that philosophy and literature can illuminate each other, and mutually shed light on important themes. In particular, we shall see how certain philosophers and playwrights have used the theatrical metaphor as a device to highlight and critically examine theatricality in human life, specifically in the broad areas of politics and interpersonal relations. We will work toward the following four goals:

1. Understanding the theatrical metaphor, in order to grasp precise ways in which life is seen as being like theater, and to grasp in detail the significance of the comparison—i.e. what we come to understand about life by comparing it to theater.
2. Understanding how Plato’s attack on theater can be interpreted as reflecting a concern for theatricality in political life.
3. Understanding how Shakespeare uses the theatrical metaphor to reflect on politics.
4. Understanding how Rousseau uses the theatrical metaphor in his theory of human social life, in particular to characterize interpersonal relations.

The written work for this course is designed to help you attain these goals, and to allow me to measure your progress toward them, as explained below.

#### 4. Required texts

The main texts for the course are: Plato, *Republic*; Rousseau, selections from *First and Second Discourses*, *Letter to d’Alembert*; Shakespeare, *Richard III*, *Othello*, *Twelfth Night*; Pirandello, *Henry IV*; and Molière, *The Misanthrope*, *Tartuffe*. Additional readings will be assigned during the semester, and will be available on the course website.

#### 4. Course work

Work	Weight
1 Term Paper (6-8 pp.)	40%
1 Final Exam	25%
13 out of 15 Exercises (9 out of 10 P/F = 15%; 4 out of 5 graded = 10%)	25%
13 out of 15 Lecture Responses	10%

Term Paper The Term Paper will test you on Goals 2 and 3. You will choose a passage from Plato’s *Republic*, and explain how it presents the idea of theatricality in political life. Then you will choose a scene from a play by Shakespeare that represents some aspect of politics (I will give you a list of plays from which you may choose), and interpret it in terms of the idea of theatricality you have taken from Plato. A draft of your paper is due in class on March 1; at that class you will work with other students to review your paper. I will make extensive comments on your draft, but will grade it based on my evaluation of your effort. I will return your draft March 22. Your final version is due one week later, on March 29; I will grade this version on my evaluation of its quality, but will not make extensive comments on it.

Final Exam The Final will test you on Goals 1 and 4. It will be held May 4, at 8:00 AM. It will have two parts: one will cover Rousseau’s *Letter to d’Alembert*; the other will ask you to use readings from the semester to discuss theatricality within interpersonal relations. You must take the Final to pass the course.

Exercises The Exercises will help you reach all 4 goals. At one class each week (typically Monday), you will write a very short (100-150 word) essay on a topic related to the reading for the week. In some cases, the Exercises will involve supplementary reading assignments. Typically you will write your exercise at the beginning of class, then do further work on it with one or more other students. *You must be present at the beginning of class to submit your Exercise for that day.* I will grade most of your Exercises on the basis of my judgment of your effort, and the quality of your writing. Most of your Exercises (10) will be graded pass/fail. I will assign a letter grade to the rest (5), chosen at random during the semester (you will not know in advance which Exercises will be given a letter grade). At the end of the semester I will drop 2 Exercises (1 P/F and the lowest of the 5 that are letter graded).

Lecture Responses The Lecture Responses will help you reach all 4 goals. At one class each week (typically Wednesday) I will give a lecture on the reading for the week. At the end of class I will give you 5 minutes to write a brief response to the lecture. Your response will have two parts:

1. a question, in which you ask for clarification of a point I make,
2. and a comment, in which you offer your own opinion on the lecture topic.

I will use the Lecture Responses to help structure the following class (typically Friday), which will be primarily devoted to a discussion of the ideas from the lecture. I will post the lecture notes on the class website immediately after class; if you miss the lecture you may read it on the web, and bring a Lecture Response to the following class for half credit. I will grade your Lecture Responses pass/fail, on the basis of my judgment of your effort (you must do both parts of the response to get full credit). At the end of the semester I will drop 2 Lecture Responses.

## 5. Various Policies

Attendance Full attendance is expected, and you will be unable to do well without attending class. Attendance here includes paying attention. Your mere physical presence is not enough--I expect you to take part in the activities of the class. It also includes arriving to class on time; I will not accept work from students who arrive late. I will use my evaluation of attendance to decide whether or not to round up your final grade if your average is on a borderline.

Cell phones You must set your cell phone to silent during class. If you must take a call, you may excuse yourself to the hallway. After one warning, if your cell phone rings during class I will not accept any from you that day.

Religious observances It is the policy of the University to excuse the absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required classwork that may fall on religious holidays. If any assignment in this class conflicts with your religious observance, or if you have any questions on this matter, please contact me.

Re-writes No re-writes of final versions of your Term paper will be permitted.

Late work I will not accept late Exercises or Lecture Responses (with the exception noted above). I will accept late Term Papers only at my discretion, and with a substantial grade penalty. Exceptions to this policy will be granted only on the basis of a substantial and demonstrable hardship (e.g. a verified medical, family, or job-related conflict), arranged in advance (unless in case of emergency).

## 6. Academic Conduct

I will rigorously enforce the University's policies on academic conduct, as set forth in the Student Handbook. In written work you must cite all the sources you consult. However, respect for academic honesty is consistent with discussing the ideas of the course with others. I urge you to discuss the issues of the course outside of class--but you must do your written work on your own, and must cite any assistance you receive from others. Please ask me if you have any questions about academic honesty in general, or about specific situations that might arise during this course.

## 7. Reasonable accommodation

If you have a disability that may prevent you from fully demonstrating your understanding of the material in this course you should contact me personally as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure your full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunities.

## 8. Note to Philosophy Majors

In order to aid in the assessment of its program, the Philosophy Department has a specific requirement for majors in Philosophy and in Ethics and Religion. Majors will be required to assemble a portfolio of written philosophical work--typically papers or exams written for philosophy classes--produced over several semesters. Majors will NOT be graded on their portfolios. Instead, portfolios will be sent, anonymously, to outside readers, to help them evaluate the quality of the Philosophy Department's teaching. Majors will discuss the progress of their portfolios with their advisors.

You should submit the Term Paper for this course for your portfolio. To do so, simply turn in two copies of your paper, one of which must include a title page that lists: the paper title; the course name and number; this semester and year; and the date the paper is turned in. This portfolio copy must not show your name anywhere except on the title page.

## 9. Course schedule

This Schedule shows topics and readings (in parentheses) through Spring Break; the schedule for the balance of the course will be distributed during the term. References to the *Republic* are to the Part.section numbers in the Penguin edition (tr. Lee); if you use a different edition please see me for the assignments. Each play should be read in full by the first day it will be covered; the Schedule shows the scenes that will be the focus for the given class. Additional readings are indicated by the authors' names; they will be available on the course website.

1/12 Exercise: The theatrical metaphor	1/14 Lecture: The theatrical metaphor	1/16 Discussion: theatricality
1/19 No class	1/21 Exercise: Pseudo-events (Boorstin)	1/23 Lecture: The Image
1/26 Exercise: Gyge's Ring ( <i>Republic</i> , I.4)	1/28 Lecture: Educating the Guardians ( <i>Rep.</i> , II.1-2, III.1a-c)	1/30 Discussion: <i>Republic</i>
2/2 Exercise: Defining justice ( <i>Rep.</i> , V.1)	2/4 Lecture: Plato's metaphysics ( <i>Rep.</i> , VII.3-5)	2/6 Discussion: <i>Republic</i>
2/19 Exercise: The Cave ( <i>Rep.</i> , VII.7)	2/11 Discussion: Plato and pseudo-events ( <i>Rep.</i> , X)	2/13 Lecture: Reading plays
2/16 Exercise: The wooing of Anne ( <i>Richard III</i> , I.2)	2/18 Lecture: Richard as actor ( <i>RIII</i> , III.5-7)	2/20 Discussion: <i>Richard III</i>
2/23 Exercise: The effects of acting ( <i>RIII</i> , V.3)	2/25 Lecture: Iago as deceiver ( <i>Othello</i> , III.3, IV.1)	2/27 Discussion: <i>Othello</i>
3/1 draft Term Paper due	3/3 Exercise: Scepticism (Descartes)	3/5 Lecture: <i>Twelfth Night</i> ( <i>Twelfth Night</i> , I.5, II.2, II.5)
3/8 Exercise: "Bad faith" (Sartre)	3/10 Lecture: Role-playing ( <i>Henry IV</i> )	3/12 Discussion: <i>Henry IV</i>
Spring Break		
3/22 Exercise: Religious hypocrisy Term Paper drafts returned	3/24 Lecture: <i>Tartuffe</i>	3/26 Discussion: <i>Tartuffe</i>
3/29 Exercise: <i>Tartuffe</i> final Term Paper due	3/31 <i>Misanthrope</i>	4/2 <i>Misanthrope</i>
4/5 <i>Misanthrope</i>	4/7 <i>Misanthrope</i>	4/9 <i>First Discourse</i>
4/12 <i>Second Discourse</i>	4/14 <i>Second Discourse</i>	4/16 <i>Second Discourse</i>
4/19 <i>Letter to d'Alembert</i>	4/21 <i>Letter to d'Alembert</i>	4/23 <i>Letter to d'Alembert</i>

4/26 <i>Letter to d'Alembert</i>	4/28 <i>Letter to d'Alembert</i>	4/30 Semester Review
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