

Syllabus

PH 881 – TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY – Fall 2008
Wednesday 6:00-9:00, room STH 541

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Office: room 624, School of Theology
Office hours: Tuesday 12:30-1:30; W. 1-2; Thursday 4:00-5:00; and by appointment

Our questions will include these: what are the principles of sound (textual) interpretation? What do those principles assume about the nature of a well composed account? Is the principle of "authorial intent" defensible? Why would a philosopher write in literary form? What is narrative, how does it unify, how does it explain (if at all), how does it provide understanding? In what ways may it be an illuminating way of understanding the unity, value, and meaning of a life? We will discuss the notion of being the "author" of one's life (as distinguished from, say, a character in a play whose overall plot one cannot understand), as well as the connection between narrative and the emotions, and between narrative and perspective. Contemporary philosophical work will be read in conjunction with classical texts, putting the historical and contemporary into dialogue. This seminar is required of all first year PhD students, and is open only to them. Particular emphasis will be placed on developing research skills, public presentation skills, the ability to formulate a clear and concise argument, the use of secondary sources, and an understanding of what it means to prepare a paper for publication in a refereed journal.

REQUIRED BOOKS (available in paperback at the University bookstore)

- Epicurus. *Epicurus Reader*. Trans. Inwood and Gerson. Hackett, 1994.
ISBN 978-0-8-7220241-2
- Halliwell, S., trans. *Poetics of Aristotle*. Longleaf, 1987. ISBN 978-0-8-0784203-4
- Hutto, D. D. *Narrative and Understanding Persons*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007.
ISBN 978-0521714099
- MacIntyre, A. *After Virtue: Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. Univ. of Notre Dame Press,
2007. ISBN 978-0-2-68035044
- Plato, *Republic*, 2nd ed., trans. A. Bloom. Perseus, 1991. ISBN 978-0-4-6506934-.
- Ricoeur, P. *Time and Narrative*, trans. K. McLaughlin. Vol. 1. Univ. of Chicago Press,
1984. ISBN 978-0-2-2671332-8
- Sartre, J. P. *Nausea*, trans. L. Alexander. New Directions, 2007. ISBN 978-0-8-112-1700-2

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- Griswold, C. *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007).
ISBN 978-0-5-21703512
- Griswold, C., editor. *Platonic Writings/Platonic Readings*. Pennsylvania State U.P.,
2001. ISBN 978-0-2-7102137-9
- Ricoeur, P. *Oneself as Another*, trans. K. Blarney. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992.
ISBN 978-0-2-2671329-8
- Rousseau, J. J. *The Confessions*, ed. P. Coleman. Oxford University Press, 2000.
ISBN 0192822756 (or ISBN 978-0-1-9282275-8)

Additional texts will be distributed during the semester.

RESERVE LIST FOR PH457 (MUGAR LIBRARY, 2 hour reserve)

* = confirmed to be on reserve, the others in transit.

- 1) Berlinger, N. *After Harm: Medical Error and the Ethics of Forgiveness*. Baltimore: J. Hopkins University Press, 2005. (See ch. 1, “Narrative Ethics,” inter alia.)
- 2) Brooks, P. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.*
- 3) Donnelly, J., ed. *Language, Metaphysics, and Death*, 2nd ed. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.
- 4) Earle, W. *The Autobiographical Consciousness*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972.*
- 5) Fischer, J. M. *The Metaphysics of Death*, Stanford University Press 1993.
- 6) Griswold, C. *Forgiveness: a Philosophical Exploration*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- 7) Griswold, C. *Platonic Writings/Platonic Readings*. Penn State University Press, 2001.
- 8) Krausz, M. *Rightness and Reasons: Interpretation in Cultural Practices*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- 9) Malpas, J. and R. C. Solomon, eds. *Death and Philosophy*. New York: Routledge, 2003. (Copy not yet acquired by Mugar)
- 10) Miller, D. A. *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.*
- 11) Mueller-Vollmer, J., ed. *The Hermeneutics Reader*. New York: Continuum, 2006.
- 12) Rabinowitz, P. *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.*
- 13) Reising, R. *Loose Ends: Closure and Crisis in the American Social Text*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.*
- 14) Richter, D. *Fable's End: Completeness and Closure in Rhetorical Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.*
- 15) Ricoeur, P. *Oneself as Another*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.*
- 16) Ricoeur, P. *Time and Narrative* vol. II. Univ. of Chicago Press. 1985
- 17) Rimmon-Kennan, S. *Narrative Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- 18) Smith, B. H. *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.*
- 19) Torgovnick, M. *Closure in the Novel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.*

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

- [1] **Sept. 3** Hermeneutic issues: what is “the author,” and does “authorial intent” matter? What are the criteria for defensible interpretation? Why might a philosopher write in literary form?
- (a) A. Nehamas, "What an Author Is," *Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986): 685-91.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2026619>
- (b) C. Griswold, "Plato's Metaphilosophy," in *Platonic Writings/Platonic Readings*, ed. Griswold, pp. 143-67.

[2] **Sept. 10** classical sources: mimesis, narrative, the engagement of the emotions

- (a) Plato, *Republic*, selections from bks. II and III, 376e-403c
- (b) Plato, *Republic* bk. X, 603c-608a
- (c) Plato, *Phaedrus* 264c, on “organic unity”: what is “unity”?
Trans. Woodruff and Nehamas (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995).

[3] **Sept. 17** classical sources, cont.; plot, unity, and the engagement of the emotions

- (a) Aristotle, *Poetics*, chapters 1-13 (pp. 31-45), and Halliwell’s comments on those chapters (his commentary begins on p. 69).

[4] **Sept. 24** classical sources, cont.

Aristotle, *Poetics*, chapters 14-26 (pp. 45-68), and Halliwell’s comments on those chapters

[5] **Oct. 1** narrative, plot, mimesis

- (a) P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, ch. 2 (“Emplotment: a Reading of Aristotle’s *Poetics*,” pp. 31-51).
- (b) Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, ch. 3 (“Time and Narrative: Threefold Mimesis,” pp. 52-87).
- (c) P. Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, ch. 1 (“Reading for the Plot,” pp. 3-36).

[6] **Oct. 8** narrative, ethics, the unity of self

- (a) A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, ch. 15, pp. 204-225.
- (b) P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, ch. 6 (“The Self and Narrative Identity,” pp. 140-68).

[7] **Oct. 15** criticisms of narrativism

- (a) G. Strawson, “Against Narrativity,” *Ratio* 16 (2004): 428-452. Available at http://web.gc.cuny.edu/philosophy/people/strawson/against_narrativity.pdf
- (b) G. Strawson, “Episodic Ethics,” in *Narrative and Understanding Persons*, ed. Hutto, pp. 85-115.
- (c) K. Behrendt, “Reasons to be Fearful: Strawson, Death, and Narrative,” in *Narrative and Understanding Persons*, ed. Hutto, pp. 133-153.

[8] **Oct. 22** the debate continued

- (a) M. Schechtman, “Stories, Lives, and Basic Survival: a Refinement and Defense of the Narrative View,” in *Narrative and Understanding Persons*, ed. Hutto, pp. 155-178.
 (b) P. Lamarque, “On the Distance between Literary Narratives and Real-Life Narratives,” in *Narrative and Understanding Persons*, ed. Hutto, pp. 117-132.

[9] **Oct. 29** the debate continued

- (a) Sartre, J. P. *Nausea* (selections)
 (b) F. Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Part V, pp. 127-152.
 (c) Rousseau, *Confessions* p. 3; bk I, pp. 5-7; and the Appendix (pp. 643-649).
 (d) Plato’s *Phaedo*, esp. the closing scene, and the assertion that philosophy is the practice for dying and death (64a, 67e)

[10] **Nov. 5** how does the explanatory and unifying work of narrative involve the emotions and perspective?

- (a) P. Goldie, "One's Remembered Past: Narrative Thinking, Emotion, and the External Perspective," *Philosophical Papers* 32 (2003): 301-319. Available at:
<http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/disciplines/philosophy/about/staff/goldie/documents/One's%20remembered%20past.pdf>
 (b) P. Goldie, "Narrative and Perspective; Values and Appropriate Emotions." In *Philosophy and the Emotions*, ed. A. Hatzimoysis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 201-220. Draft available at:
[http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:99pW4y5Mjh0J:www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/disciplines/philosophy/about/staff/goldie/documents/Narrative%2520and%2520perspective%2520%2520values%2520and%2520appropriate%2520emotions.doc+\"Narrative+and+Perspective%3B+Values+and+Appropriate+Emotions.\"&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us](http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:99pW4y5Mjh0J:www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/disciplines/philosophy/about/staff/goldie/documents/Narrative%2520and%2520perspective%2520%2520values%2520and%2520appropriate%2520emotions.doc+\)

[11] **Nov. 12** narrative and the emotions (cont.)

- (a) D. Velleman, "Narrative Explanation." *Philosophical Review* 112 (2003): 1-26.
http://philreview.dukejournals.org/cgi/pdf_extract/112/1/1
 (b) C. Griswold, “Forgiveness, Narrative, and Ideals,” in *Forgiveness*, pp. 98-110.

[12] **Nov. 19** narrative and the value of a life

- (a) D. Velleman, “Well-being and Time,” rpt. in *The Metaphysics of Death*, ed. J. M. Fischer, pp. 329-357. (On reserve in Mugar.)
 (b) McMahan, J. *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margin of Life* (Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 2.6.2, pp. 174-188 (“Narrative Unity: Retroactive Effects, Desert, and Desire”). The full text of this book is available at Oxford Scholarship Online; see
<http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/oso/private/content/philosophy/9780195079982/p051.html>
 If that doesn’t open, find the book in Mugar’s on-line catalogue, click on the link that appears, then type in BU log-in name and password.

[Nov. 26-30, Thanksgiving break]

[13] **Dec. 3** beginning, middle, and end in life: is death a disruption of unity, or a precondition of it? Is death to be feared?

- (a) T. Nagel, "Death," rpt. in *The Metaphysics of Death*, pp. 61-69.
- (b) Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*
- (c) Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. M. F. Smith (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), bk. III (selections, pp. 84-98).

[14] **Dec. 10** beginning, middle, and end in life, cont.: would deathlessness (immortality) be better, other things being equal? And so, a narrative without an ending?

- (a) J. Malpas, "Death and the Unity of a Life," in *Death and Philosophy*, ed. J. Malpas and R. C. Solomon (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 120-134.
- (b) B. Williams, "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality," rpt. in *Life, Death, and Meaning: Key Philosophical Readings on the Big Questions*, ed. D. Benatar (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), available at:
http://books.google.com/books?id=B9vHZd2UJ3sC&pg=PA331&lpg=PA331&dq=williams,+The+Makropulos+Case&source=web&ots=aoKRLr7Idm&sig=PzgT18ySgxucnwpIUXaLf2NpQd0&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=6&ct=result#PPA331,M1

SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

(a) A one-page paper (double spaced) due at the start of each class (13 papers total), explaining the argument—or a central argument—of one of the readings or a section thereof. Please bring 7 copies for the other members of the class. It is anticipated that you will be asked to read your analysis to the group, and defend it, at least every other class. When you present in class, your grade for the paper will reflect the quality of your presentation. (40% of the final grade)

Late papers will be docked one full grade for each day they are late. (A paper is late if it is turned in after the start of class on the day it is due.) Electronic submissions will not be accepted unless there is an emergency. (Printer problems do not qualify as emergencies.)

(b) A term paper of no more than 10 pages in length, double spaced. You must clear the topic with the instructor in advance. The paper is due Dec. 17 at noon in my office (you may also leave it by then in my department mailbox). (40% of the final grade)

(c) This seminar places great emphasis on class participation; it is assumed that you will attend all sessions, come well prepared to contribute, and participate every class. (20% of the final grade).

(d) You must attend at least two philosophy colloquia offered by the Department during the Fall semester.

SOME OTHER RELEVANT TEXTS

on narrative:

- Benziger, J. "Organic Unity: Leibniz to Coleridge." *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 66 (1951): 24-48.
- Booth, A. *Famous Last Words: Changes in Gender and Narrative Closure*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993.
- Bruner, J. *Acts of Meaning*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- _____. "Life as Narrative." *Social Research* 71 (2004): 691-710.
- _____. *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1927.
- Gordon, E. F. "Book of Days," *The American Scholar*, Winter 2003: 17-32. (on autobiography)
- Hinchman, L. P. and Hinchman, S. K. *Memory, Identity, Community: the Idea of Narrative in the Human Sciences*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2001.
- Kafalenos, E. *Narrative Causalities*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006.
- Miller, J. H. *Reading Narrative*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998.
- Nabokov, V. *Speak: Memory*. Everyman's Library, 1999.
- Neisser, U. and R. Fivush. *The Remembering Self: Construction and Accuracy in the Self-narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Nelson, H. L. *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Special Issue: *Narrative Endings* 33, No. 1 June 1978: 1-158.
- Neupert, R. J. *The End: Narration and Closure in the Cinema*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995.
- Page, R. *Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Feminist Narratology*. Houndsmill, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006.
- Peters, J. S. "Law, Literature, and the Vanishing Real: On the Future of an Interdisciplinary Illusion." *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 120 (2005): 442-453.
- Richardson, B. *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Plot, Closure, and Frames*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2002.
- Schechtman, M. *The Constitution of Selves*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006. (See esp. ch. 5, "The Narrative Self-Constitution View.")
- Scholes, R. and Kellogg, R. *The Nature of Narrative*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Taylor, C. *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Williams, B. *Truth and Truthfulness: an Essay in Genealogy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Winnett, S. "Coming Unstrung: Women, Men, Narrative, and Principles of Pleasure." *PMLA* 105 (1990): 505-518.

Other relevant work:

- Anderson, L. "Nietzsche on Truth, Illusion, and Redemption." *European Journal of Philosophy* 13.2 (2005): 185-225.
- Carroll, N. *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Nehamas, A. *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.

- Peters, J. S. “Law, Literature, and the Vanishing Real: On the Future of an Interdisciplinary Illusion.” *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 120 (2005): 442-453.
- Pippin, R. *Henry James and Modern Moral Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000.
- Small, H. *The Long Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Other philosophical work on the fear of death, mortality, etc:

- Améry, J. *On Aging: Revolt and Resignation*. Trans. J. D. Barlow. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Bradley, B. “When is Death Bad for the One who Dies?” *Nous* 38 (2004): 1-28.
- Draper, K. “Disappointment, Sadness, and Death.” *Philosophical Review* 108 (1999): 387-414.
- Eagleton, T. *The Meaning of Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Feldman, F. *Confrontations with the Reaper: A Philosophical Study of the Nature and Value of Death*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- _____. “Basic Intrinsic Value.” *Philosophical Studies* 99 (2000): 319-345.
- _____. “Some Puzzles About the Evil of Death.” *The Philosophical Review* 100 (1991): 205-227.
- _____. “The Termination Thesis,” in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Volume XXIV, ed. P. A. French and H. Wettstein, 98-115. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.
- Grey, W. “Epicurus and the Harm of Death.” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1999): 358-364.
- Ki, J. “Commentary on Lamont’s When Death Harms its Victims.” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1999): 349-357.
- Lamont, J. “A Solution to the Puzzle of when Death Harms its Victims.” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 76 (1998): 198-212.
- McMahan, J. “Death and the Value of Life.” *Ethics* 99 (1988): 32-61. Reprinted in *The Metaphysics of Death*, ed. Fischer.
- Mothersill, M. “Old Age.” *Proceedings and Addresses of the APA*, 73 (1999): 9-23.
- Silverstein, H. “The Evil of Death.” *The Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1980): 401-424. Reprinted in *The Metaphysics of Death*.
- _____. “The Evil of Death Revisited,” in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Volume XXIV, ed. Peter A. French and Howard Wettstein, 116-134. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.
- Warren, J. *Facing Death: Epicurus and his Critics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

SOME WEB RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH IN PHILOSOPHY

(nb: some of the most recent issues of these resources are available only in the library, not on-line)

- To search BU's libraries: <http://library.bu.edu/> (includes ability to search libraries of other institutions)
- For a useful list of links to philosophy databases, see the link through the BU library: http://www.bu.edu/dbin/ejournals/esources/display5xyPD.php?gu_id=96&indexp=96^Philosophy
- Bibliographies: see the APA site, <http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/asp/bibliographies.asp>
- Répertoire bibliographique de la philosophie, <http://www.rbif.ucl.ac.be/rbif-en.html>
- Revue Philosophique de Louvain (<http://www.uclouvain.be/34348.html>)
- French libraries: <http://www.uclouvain.be/16002.html>
- JSTOR (journal articles on line) <http://www.jstor.org/>
- The Philosopher's Index (<http://www.philinfo.org/>); for hardcopy, see Mugar library.
For free access, try
http://www.bu.edu/dbin/ejournals/esources/display5xyPD.php?gu_id=96&indexp=96^Philosophy
The Index provides summaries of many articles (it seeks to be comprehensive).
- on line papers by many contemporary philosophers: <http://phonline.org/index.php>
and <http://www.ssrn.com/> (the social science reprint network, but has philosophy papers too)
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>
- The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>
- An extensive site for philosophy related searching: <http://www.epistemelinks.com/>
- electronic text sources:
 - (a) <http://sunsite.informatik.rwth-aachen.de/phil/sites/etext-prov.html>
 - (b) <http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/asp/e-texts.asp>
 - (c) <http://humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/ARTFL/>
(data base for many Enlightenment texts in French)
- a helpful search engine for philosophy texts, events, etc.: <http://noesis.evansville.edu/bin/index.cgi>
- a helpful site for checking philosophy journals: http://users.ox.ac.uk/~worc0337/phil_journals.html
- Perseus Digital Library: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>
- Journal of the International Plato Society: <http://www.nd.edu/~plato/>