

Individuals in the Microcosms of Power: Analyses of Literary Texts

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MA course, 4 credits, Winter 2020.

Monday, 15.30 – 17.10 and Wednesday, 17.20 – 19.00.

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The course aims at combining the methods of qualitative research in the social sciences and literary hermeneutics in order to gain a fuller understanding of how political power influences the life of the individual. The working hypothesis of the course is that the analysis of literary works can contribute to a fuller understanding of political structures in operation. Literary works reflect (often in a critical manner) political concepts, and how they influence everyday life, whereas the formation of political ideology is influenced by narratives, symbols and metaphors that appear in literary works. Moreover, literature, particularly novels, often reflect on how the individual needs to respond to political conditions and pressures.

Despite this interrelation between literary and political texts, it is a different approach that these two kinds of texts require. Political texts are often read as straightforward statements by their authors, whereas the concept of the author is a complicated and debated issue in literary studies. Similar problems appear with the notion of fictionality, which is often considered to describe something nonexistent or counterfactual, and hence considered irrelevant in the social sciences, yet literary studies emphasizes its relatedness to empirical or political reality.

The outcome of the combined approach of literary studies and political science is a better understanding of the formation of political ideology and its influence on the life of the individual. This way literary texts become a source for political and social understanding, rather than only an illustration.

GRADE

participation, activity, written assignment:	35%
presentation:	25%
final essay (3000 words)	40%

WEEK 1. January 6, 8. Introduction, theoretical background

Mandatory readings

M. H. Abrams (1971), "Orientation of Critical Theories" In *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Oxford University Press, 3-29.

John Horton & Andrea Baumeister (1996), „Literature, Philosophy and Political Theory" In Horton and Baumeister (eds). *Literature and the Political Imagination*. London: Routledge, 1-31.

Maureen Whitebrook (1995), "Politics and Literature?" In *Politics*, Vol. 15 (1), 55-62.

Suggested readings

Maureen Whitebrook ed. (1992), *Reading Political Stories: Representations of Politics in Novels and Pictures*. Savage Md.: Roman & Littlefield.

Catherine Zuckert (1995), 'Why political scientists want to study literature', *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28:2

Maureen Whitebrook (1996). "Taking the narrative turn: what the novel has to offer political theory." In Andrea Baumeister, and John Horton, (eds.), (1996), *Literature and the Political Imagination*. London: Routledge, 32-52.

Ruth Ronen (1994), *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press

Murray Edelman (1995), *From Art to Politics: How Artistic Creations Shape Political Conceptions*. University of Chicago Press, 1-14.

WEEK 2. January 13, 15. Intellectuals and writers of literary texts

Mandatory readings

Edward Said (1994), *Representations of the Intellectual*. London: Vintage, 3-17.

W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. and M. C. Beardsley (1946), "The Intentional Fallacy" In *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep), 468-488.

Michel Foucault (1998), "What is an author" In *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*. New York: The New Press, 205-222.

Suggested readings

Roland Barthes (1977), "The Death of the Author" In *Image Music Text*. London: Fontana, 142-148.

Jonathan Culler (2000), *Literary Theory – A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Maureen Whitebrook (1993), 'Only Connect: Politics and Literature 10 Years Later, 1982-92', *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 26:2. 257-262.

WEEK 3. January 20, 22 JOSEPH CONRAD: *Under Western Eyes*

Film: Fred Zinnemann (dir 1952. 85 min.), **High Noon**

Mandatory reading

Joseph Conrad (1981 [1911], *Under Western Eyes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, „Part First” 3-72.

Suggested readings

The rest of the book.

John G. Peters (2006). *The Cambridge Introduction to Joseph Conrad*. Cambridge University Press.

Normand Sherry (1997). *Joseph Conrad – Critical Heritage*. Routledge, London.

WEEK 4. January 27, 29. Utopia and Dystopia

Film: Marcell Jankovics (dir, 2011) **The Tragedy of Man** (excerpts)

Mandatory readings

Fátima Vieira (2010), “The Concept of Utopia” In Claeys, Gregory, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-27.

Imre Madách (1993 [1862]) *The Tragedy of Man*. Translated by Iain MacLeod. Edinburgh: Canongate Press. excerpt from the Phalanstery.

Suggested readings

Lyman Tower Sargent (2010). *Utopianism – A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Howard Segal (2012), *Utopias. A Brief History from Ancient Writings to Virtual Communities*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

Claeys, Gregory, ed (2010). *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zsolt Czigányik (2017) "Introduction. Utopianism: Literary and Political" and "Afterword" In: Czigányik Zsolt (szerk.) *Utopian Horizons: Ideology, Politics, Literature*. Budapest; New York: CEU Press, 2017. pp. 1-10 and 239-247.

Ruth Levitas (2013), *Utopia as Method*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

WEEK 5. February 3, 5. ARTHUR KOESTLER: *Darkness at Noon*

Mandatory reading

Arthur Koestler (1994 [1940]), *Darkness at Noon*. London: Penguin, Vintage. Chapters: „The Third Hearing” and „The Grammatical Fiction” 135-211.

Suggested readings

The rest of the book

S. Ingle, 'Politics and Literature: Means and Ends on Koestler', *Political Studies*, 1999, 47:2.

Michael Scammell (2009). *Koestler: The Literary and Political Odyssey of a Twentieth-Century Skeptic*. London: Random House.

WEEK 6. February 10, 12. GEORGE ORWELL: *Animal Farm*

Film: Pawel Pawlikowski (dir. 2018. 88 min.), *Cold War*.

Mandatory reading

George Orwell (1989 [1945]), *Animal Farm*. London: Penguin

Suggested readings

Zsolt Czigányik (2018), "Cultic Heroes in Everyday Discourse. A Brief Analysis of the Cults of Shakespeare and Orwell." Natália Pikli et al (eds). *Built upon His Rock*. Budapest: ELTE. 36-44.

Rodden, John (2007). *The Cambridge Companion to George Orwell*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gregory Claeys (2017). *Dystopia. A Natural History*. Oxford University Press, 390-445.

WEEK 7. February 17, 19. GEORGE ORWELL: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Film: Michael Radford, (dir. 1984. 113 min.), 1984

Mandatory reading

George Orwell (1983 [1949]), *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*. New York: Penguin, pp. 7-73 and 257-268.

Suggested reading

The rest of the book

Branningan, John (2003). *Orwell to the Present: Literature in England, 1945–2000*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Davison, Peter (1996). *George Orwell: A Literary Life*. London: Macmillan.

WEEK 8. February 24, 26. WILLIAM GOLDING: *Lord of the Flies*.

Film: Peter Brook (dir, 1963. 92 min). *Lord of the Flies*

Mandatory reading

William Golding (1987 [1954]), *Lord of Flies*. London: Faber and Faber, 7-34, 171-223.

Suggested readings

The rest of the book, particularly 120-136.

Paul Crawford (2002). *Politics and History in William Golding*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.

WEEK 9. March 2, 4. MARGARET ATWOOD: *The Handmaid's Tale*

Film: *The Handmaid's Tale*

Mandatory reading

Margaret Atwood *The Handmaid's Tale*. (2017 [1985]), London: Penguin. Chs 1-3, 7-9, 16-20, 28-29 and Historical Notes.

Suggested readings

Harris, Jocelyn (1999). "The Handmaid's Tale as a Re-Visioning of 1984". In George Slusser et al. (eds.). *Transformations of Utopia: Changing Views of the Perfect Society*. New York: AMS Press.

Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson (2010). *The Cambridge Introduction to Margaret Atwood*. Cambridge University Press.

Carol Ann Howells (2006). *The Cambridge Companion to Margaret Atwood*. Cambridge University Press.

WEEK 10. March 9, 11. CZESLAW MILOSZ: *The Captive Mind*

Film: Laura Poitras (dir. 2014. 114. min.), *Citizenfour*

Mandatory readings

Czeslaw Milosz (1981 [1951]), *The Captive Mind*. New York: Octagon, 54-81, 82-110, 191-222.

Edward Snowden (2019) *Permanent Record*. London: Macmillan, 227-263.

Suggested readings

Václav Havel (1985), *The Power of the Powerless*. Edited by John Keane. London: Hutchinson, 23-96.

John Keane (2000), *Václav Havel*. New York: Basic Books

WEEK 11. March 16, 18. TIMOTHY SNYDER: *On Tyranny*.

Student presentations: final essay work in progress

Mandatory readings

Timothy Snyder (2017), *On Tyranny*. New York: Penguin

Suggested readings

Maureen Whitebrook (2001), *Identity, narrative, and politics*. London: Routledge.
<https://www.apsanet.org/section30>

Timothy Snyder (2018), *The Road to Unfreedom*. New York: Tim Duggan Books

WEEK 12. March 23, 25. DAVE EGGERS: *The Circle*

Mandatory reading

Dave Eggers (2013), *The Circle*. New York: Alfred A Knopf. 1-8, 47-55, 118-126, 176-190, 238-248, 253-306, 361-380.

Suggested readings

The rest of the book, particularly 444-461.

Margaret Atwood (2013), “When Privacy is Theft” *The New York Review of Books*, 21 Nov, 2013. <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2013/11/21/eggers-circle-when-privacy-is-theft/>

Allard Den Dulk (2014). *Existentialist Engagement in Wallace, Eggers and Foer – A Philosophical Analysis of Contemporary American Literature*. Bloomsbury.