

Fall 2017

GEW 4730/JST4936

**Kafka and the Kafkaesque**

Instructor: Eric Kligerman  
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Time: Tues, period 4, Thurs, periods 4-5  
Walker Hall 201  
Office Hours: Tues, period 5/ Thurs, period 6

This seminar will explore the writings of Franz Kafka and the effect that his literary legacy has had on literature and film. Our objective will be to analyze how elements of modern consciousness and "the Kafkaesque" reappear in selected texts of later modern and postmodern writers and filmmakers. The first part of the seminar will focus on understanding Kafka's complex narratives and his place and influence in literary and cultural history of Jewish-German-Czech Prague in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Our study of Kafka's work will be situated alongside the debates regarding European modernity within the context of Jewish languages, culture and identity. In addition to reading short stories (including *The Metamorphosis*, *In the Penal Colony*, and *The Hunger Artist*), we will turn to his novels *The Castle* and *The Trial*, personal diaries and correspondences. Our readings of Kafka will center on such topics as law and justice, family and solitude, humans and animals, modernity, travel, the crisis of language and Judaism.

After our in-depth analysis of Kafka's works, we will explore the major role Kafka played in the construction of the modern and postmodern literary canon of the twentieth century. The course will explore Kafka's impact on World literature and aesthetic culture, whereby his writing has triggered multiple responses in shifting languages and media. We will trace "the Kafkaesque" in the narrative fictions of selected authors, including Jorge Luis Borges and Albert Camus, and filmmakers such as the Coen brothers.

**Texts:**

1. *Der Process (The Trial)*
2. *Das Schloss (The Castle)*
3. *Brief an den Vater (Letter to his Father)*
4. *Erzählungen (Collected Short Stories)*
5. Borges, *Labyrinths*

\*\*\*\*I will also provide handouts and send links to other material.

**Grading:**

Final Research Paper (8-10 pages)	25%
Participation 20%/attendance 5%	25%
Midterm Exam (take home)	25%
Final Exam (take home)	25%

Although this course will be taught in English, students taking the class for German major or minor credit at the 4000 level are strongly encouraged to read the Kafka texts in German. Also, it is strongly encouraged that the exams and final paper be written in German.

1) Students are allowed 2 unexcused absences. 1/2 a point will be deducted from your final grade for each unexcused absence thereafter. Missing a Thursday class is equivalent to 1.5 days, while missing a Tuesday class is equal to 1 class. **If you miss 6 classes in the semester, you will automatically fail the course. Participation will play a major part of the final grade and students are expected to partake and contribute daily to class discussions. If you do not bring to class the text we are discussing for that day, you will be marked as absent.**

2) There will be a take home midterm and take home final exam comprised of identification and short answer essay questions.

3) There will be final research paper on topic of choice selected by the student in consultation with me. **The final paper is due 12/4. Late papers will not be accepted.**

**Please silence your cell phones before entering our classroom. Do not text message in class.**

**Academic honesty and integrity** are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. Violations of the honor code include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, bribery, misrepresentation, fabrication, and conspiracy. Such violations may result in the following: lowering of grades, mandatory 0 on assignments, redoing assignments, a final failing grade in the course, expulsion from the course, referral to the student-run Honor Court. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: *On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.* For more information, refer to: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/>

**Students with Special Needs:**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

**Syllabus subject to change:**

**Kafka's Languages: Reading and Writing**

**8/22**

Introduction: Warhol's *Kafka*

**8/24**

Batuman, "Kafka's Last Trial" (print out from NYT:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/26/magazine/26kafka-t.html> )

Read: *Before the Law; An Imperial Message; Cares of a Family Man; On Parables*

**8/29**

Continue discussing: *Before the Law*; *An Imperial Message*; *Cares of a Family Man*; *On Parables*

**8/31**

June 1921 letter to Max Brod (on *Mauscheln*); "For a Minor Literature" (Diary entry 12/25/1911)

Kundera, "Somewhere Behind"; Deleuze and Guatari, *Kafka Toward a Minor Literature*

### **Fathers and Sons:**

**9/5**

"Letter to His Father"

**9/7**

"Letter to His Father"

**9/12**

"The Judgment", Diary entry Sep. 23, 1912

### **The Body Inscribed:**

**9/14**

"*In the Penal Colony*"

**9/19**

"*In the Penal Colony*"

**9/21**

**No Class**

### **Trials and the Idea of Judgment:**

**9/26**

"*A Hunger Artist*"

**9/28, 10/3 and 10/10**

*The Trial*

**10/5—NO CLASS**

**10/12 and 10/17**

Camus, "*Myth of Sisyphus*"; "*Hope and the Absurd in the Work of Franz Kafka*" (cp), Kafka's "The Hunter Gracchus"

**(Take-Home midterm due on 10/14)**

**Animals:**

**10/19 and 10/24**

*“The Metamorphosis”*

Suggested readings: *“Jackals and Arabs”, “A Crossbreed”, “Investigations of a Dog”;*  
*“Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk” “A Report to an Academy”*

**Facing Authority:**

**10/26, 10/31, 11/2 and 11/7**

*The Castle*

Suggested readings: *“The Great Wall of China”*

**Kafka and Borges’ Labyrinths (selections)**

**11/9, 11/14 and 11/16**

*“Kafka and his Precursors”, “The Library of Babel”, “The Garden of Forking Paths”*

Suggested readings: *“Prologue to The Library of Babel”;* Franz Kafka’s *“I, a Jew”, “Death and the Compass”, “The Zahir” “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”, “The Lottery in Babylon”, “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote”, “Funes the Memoriosus”*  
Kafka’s *“A Common Confusion”, “Pit of Babel”, “The Vulture”* and *“The Silence of the Sirens”*

**Aspects of the Kafkaesque in American Cinema (find times for viewing)**

**11/21 and 11/28**

Screening and Discussion: Coen Brothers, *A Serious Man*

**11/23—No Class/ THANKSGIVING**

**11/30 AND 12/5**

**Conclusions**

**Take home final exam due 12/4**

**Final paper due on 12/11**

## Secondary Sources

Anderson, Mark. *Kafka's Clothes: Ornament and Aestheticism in the Habsburg Fin de Siècle*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992., ed. *Reading Kafka: Prague, Politics, and the Fin de Siècle*. New York: Schocken, 1989. Bauer, Johann. *Kafka and Prague*. New York: Praeger, 1971. Bloom, Harold, ed. *Franz Kafka's Metamorphosis*. New York: Chelsea, 1988. Borges, Jorge Luis. *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*. New York: New Directions, 1964. Brod, Max. *Franz Kafka: A Biography*. New York: Schocken, 1960. Brooker, Peter, ed. *Modernism/Postmodernism*. London: Longman, 1992. Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1984. Cerna, Jana. *Kafka's Milena*. Chicago: Northwestern UP, 1993. Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986. Emrich, Wilhelm. *Franz Kafka*. New York: Ungar, 1968. Gilbert, Felix. *The End of the European Era: 1890 to the Present*. New York: Norton, 1991. Gilman, Sander. *Franz Kafka, the Jewish Patient*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Gray, Richard T. *Approaches to Teaching Kafka's Short Fiction*. New York: MLA, 1995. Gray, Ronald, ed. *Kafka: A Collection of Contemporary Essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1962. Gross, Ruth V. *Critical Essays on Franz Kafka*. Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1990. Janouch, Gustav. *Conversations with Kafka*. New York: New Dimensions, 1971. Kafka, Franz. *The Complete Stories*. New York: Schocken, 1983. \_\_\_\_\_. *Dearest Father and Other Writings*. New York: Schocken, 1954. \_\_\_\_\_. *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910-1913*. New York: Schocken, 1988. \_\_\_\_\_. *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1914-1923*. New York: Schocken, 1987. \_\_\_\_\_. *Letters to Felice*. New York: Schocken, 1988. \_\_\_\_\_. *Letters to Friends, Family & Editors*. New York: Schocken, 1990. \_\_\_\_\_. *Letters to Ottila*. New York: Schocken. \_\_\_\_\_. *Letters to Milena*. New York: Schocken, 1953. \_\_\_\_\_. *The Castle*. New York: Schocken, 1992. \_\_\_\_\_. *The Trial*. New York: Schocken, 1968. \_\_\_\_\_. *The Metamorphosis: Translation, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*. Ed. and trans. Stanley Corngold. New York: Norton, 1996. Karl, Frederick R. *Franz Kafka, Representative Man: Prague, Germans, Jews, and the Crisis of Modernism*. New York: Ticknor, 1991. Kundera, Milan. *Testaments Betrayed*. New York: Harper Collins, 1995. Kuper, Peter. *Give It Up! and Other Short Stories by Franz Kafka*. New York: NBM Publishing, 1995. Mairowitz, David Zane, and Robert Crumb. *Introducing Kafka*. Cambridge, England: Totem Books, 1993. Nabokov, Vladimir. *Lectures on Literature*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980. Neumayer, Peter F., ed. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Castle*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1969. Pawel, Ernst. *The Nightmare of Reason: A Life of Franz Kafka*. New York: Farrar, 1984. Politzer, Heinz. *Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1962. Robert, Marthe. *As Lonely as Franz Kafka*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1982. Schorske, Carl E. *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*. New York: Knopf, 1980. Wagenbach, Klaus. *Kafka's Prague*. Overlook Press, 1996.