

Syllabus: Freshman Seminar 143

Political Theory and Literature: The Politics of Tragedy and Comedy

Patrick Deneen: Corwin 246, Mondays 10-12 (x-8-4752, pdeneen@princeton.edu)

Reading Assignments: (note: an additional short reading may be added each week in order to help draw out the philosophical aspects of the literary texts)

September 18: Introduction: Comedy and Tragedy
Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy"
Homer, *Odyssey*, Books 1-12

September 25: Homer, *Odyssey*, Books 13-24

October 2: Sophocles, *Philoctetes*

October 9: Aristophanes, *Birds*

October 16: Plato, *Symposium*

October 23: Machiavelli, *Mandragola, Prince* (Selections)

Fall Break

November 6: Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet*

November 13: Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Parts I and II

November 20: Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Parts III and IV

November 27: Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*

December 4: DeLillo, *White Noise*

December 11: Conclusion: Comedy and Tragedy Reassessed

**Special Activity: *The Odyssey*, McCarter Theater, Wed. September 20 at 7:30 pm.
Meet in front of Lobby at 7:15 p.m.**

Four Films will be shown, Wednesday Evenings:

All are optional, but attendance is strongly recommended;
Informal discussion will follow each film.

Wednesday, October 11: "Cinema Paradiso"

Wednesday, October 25: Woody Allen, "Crimes and Misdemeanors"

Wednesday, November 15: Whit Stillman, "Barcelona"

Wednesday, November 29: Terry Gilliam's "Brazil"

Course Assignments:

One presentation on one book during the semester (10-15 minutes);

Two essays, 8-12 pages:

First essay due Monday, November 6.

Second essay due Monday, January 16 ("Dean's Date").

You may write on an approved topic arising from any of the assigned readings. Individual conferences for discussion of possible topics will be scheduled. No extensions will be granted other than with accompanying medical documentation or for extreme extenuating personal reasons.

Because we are a small seminar, I don't want to limit what you can write about to a pre-assigned essay question. You are encouraged to think deeply about a particular issue raised by several texts, or by questions that arise from a single text. I encourage you to think about these essay assignments as you read each work.

Grading will be based on the following:

Presentation: 15%

First Essay: 30%

Second Essay: 30%

Participation: 25%

Participation throughout the semester is of utmost importance to the success (or failure) of this seminar. This means that each week students are expected to come prepared to seminar, not only having read the work, but having read it with some care while thinking about the stated themes of the course. Some weeks demand more time to complete the readings; other weeks, far less. Please plan your reading schedule accordingly.