

Literature and Identity

Summer 2013

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Office Hours: By appointment, 2nd floor of New North (lounge)

**NOTE: SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. CHECK THE WEBSITE REGULARLY FOR UPDATES.

OVERVIEW

Am I the same person as I was at age eight? Could I live on as a computer if all of my memories and personality traits were downloaded into the hard drive? What if I experienced neurological degeneration due to advanced dementia? Would I be a different person if I were systematically oppressed in private and public spheres? These questions revolve around core issues in the philosophy of personal identity. In this course, we will explore different perspectives on numerical and narrative identity. Numerical identity refers to the criteria for persisting as a single distinct self across various changes experienced over time. In this vein, we will read positions on biological and psychological continuity. Narrative identity, on the other hand, involves a self-told story that highlights important events and gives personal meaning to our lives. We will analyze and evaluate narrative views, and we will give particular attention to the effects of oppression on identity formation. In addition to reading philosophical texts, we will also read short stories, plays, and poetry. Literature can provide unique insights by expanding our imaginative space and helping us to see the implications of different philosophical positions.

COURSE GOALS

- Develop critical thinking and writing skills, which for philosophy involves the following:
 - recognizing the parts of arguments
 - understanding how these parts work together to form a coherent argument
 - critiquing the steps, reasoning, consistency, or validity of the argument as a whole
 - inferring the implications of the argument, given your critique or other critiques that can be made
- Understand key philosophical questions related to the problems of personal identity, along with different approaches that philosophers have taken when tackling these problems

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- Learn some of the foundational debates philosophers have had about the persistence of identity over time, and be able to locate nuanced points of agreement or disagreement
- Evaluate what is potentially at stake in philosophical discussions of personal identity, such as the import these debates have on applied issues in ethics and politics

LOGISTICS

This class takes place during the summer pre-session, May 20th-June 14th. We meet **MTWRF** from **10.45 am – 12.45 pm** in **Car Barn 306**. You can find class readings on Blackboard, but all other class materials and information will be on the course website.

<http://identity-lit.weebly.com>

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment	Weight	Deadline
Participation	15%	
Paper #1	15%	May 26 th @ 11:59 pm
Paper #2	15%	June 1 st @ 11:59 pm
Paper #3	20%	June 8 th @ 11:59 pm
Paper #4	20%	June 15 th @ 11:59 pm
Discussion Leadership	15%	(depends on your assigned day)

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Participation. You are expected to participate regularly and thoughtfully. You should demonstrate that you have read the required material, and you should also engage with your classmates. *If there are not enough people participating on a given day, I will give out a pop quiz.* In case you've been too quiet, you can improve your grade by contributing to the class blog on our website.

<http://identity-lit.weebly.com/class-blog.html>

Blog posts cannot be fully substituted for in-class participation, however.

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Weekly papers. You are required to write four papers based on the prompt that I provide. These analytic papers should be 750-1,000 words in length. The prompt can be on any readings that we have done up to that point. The point of these papers is to help you build your philosophical writing skills. You must submit to Blackboard SafeAssign.

- ✱ *Creative writing option.* Students have the option of writing three analytic papers and one short story (in lieu of writing four analytic papers). The short story must incorporate philosophical ideas from the course. To ensure clarity, transparency, and fairness, students must create a “critical edition” of their story, meaning you must include endnotes with explanations of how the plot events, character traits, etc. relate to course materials. You will *not* be graded on the quality of the short story as a piece of creative fiction; you *will* be graded on how the story reflects on the arguments we discuss in class. As such, it is in your interest not to write a story that is overly obscure or difficult to follow. The short story should be no longer than 2,500 words. In addition (i.e., not included in the previous word count), endnotes should be 1-2 pages in length.

Discussion leadership. Early in the semester you will choose one day in the term to lead discussion for 20-30 minutes. You need to have Power Point (or Keynote or Prezi or something else comparable) slides prepared for one reading (e.g., one chapter or article) for the day. You should provide a critical analysis of the reading and provide discussion questions. Upload your presentation to Assignments: Discussion Leadership before class begins on your assigned day. Your classmates will be able to access your document once you upload it.

CLASS MATERIALS

REQUIRED:

The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka (any version)

- You can read the eBook if preferred.

http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=313562&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_Cover

The rest of the required readings will be available on Blackboard (<http://campus.georgetown.edu>).

RECOMMENDED:

Anthony Weston's *A Rulebook for Arguments*

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COURSE POLICIES

Attendance and tardiness. You are expected to attend class every day, and you should avoid tardiness. I will take roll daily. If you miss roll due to lateness, it is your responsibility to make sure that I have corrected the attendance sheet. If you need to miss class, you must e-mail me, preferably before the class meets. Keep in mind that sleeping in, fun local events, and work do not excuse you. You are only permitted one unexcused absences before points are deducted from your grade. You will lose two-thirds of a letter grade on your final grade for each unexcused absence after the first one (so 'B+' becomes a 'B-' after one extra, 'B+' becomes a 'C' after two extra). You must provide proper documentation for absences that you want excused. You only need to give me enough information for me to discern whether the excuse is legitimate and whether the documentation is adequate. **Given how short pre-session is, if you miss more than 3 class days (unexcused OR excused), I will schedule a meeting with you to discuss the feasibility of your receiving full course credit.

Late assignments. You must turn assignments in on time unless you are given permission to do otherwise. I will deduct a full letter grade for each day an assignment is late without a documented, legitimate excuse (e.g., an 'A' paper becomes a 'B' for one day late; an 'A' paper becomes a 'C' for two days late). It is conceivable that you will have multiple deadlines and stressors in the same week as you have a deadline for this course, but this is not grounds for asking for an extension. In the case of piling deadlines, I recommend that you work out an earlier deadline for your assignment for this course. Except in extraordinary circumstances, I will not grant extensions when the assignment is due in less than 24 hours. Keep in mind that the deadline applies even if you have computer trouble.

Paper length. You have 100-word leeway either way for papers. How many points are deducted will depend on how much you go over or under the word limit.

Citations. All of your work must be cited correctly, and you must include a bibliography. You can use any official method, such as MLA, APA, or Chicago. Points will be deducted for omissions, serious errors, and repeated mistakes.

Cell phone use. Your cell phones should be turned off when class begins.

Laptops. You are permitted to use your computer in class, but only for class purposes. If you become a laptop zombie in class, I will email you with a polite warning. Repeated abuses of your laptop privilege will result in my prohibiting you to bring it to class anymore.

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Drafts and outlines. I will not look at drafts over e-mail or in office hours. However, you can bring in or send *short outlines*. I do not accept attachments, so you will need to copy and paste your text into the body of an email.

Appealing grades. It is within your rights as a student to ensure that your grades fairly reflect the quality of your work. If you believe you deserve a higher grade on an assignment, you need to send me a list of concrete reasons for appealing your grade. I will then take 24 hours to review your work, and I will either keep your grade as is or raise it. After you have completed this step, you can appeal to my teaching mentor if desired. My mentor can give you a higher *or a lower* grade, depending on his judgment of your work.

GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM

As signatories to the Georgetown University Honor Pledge, and indeed simply as good scholars and citizens, you are required to uphold academic honesty in all aspects of this course. You are expected to be familiar with the letter and spirit of the Standards of Conduct outlines in the Georgetown Honor System and on the Honor Council website. As faculty, I too am obligated to uphold the Honor System and will report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty. In this course, we will use Blackboard SafeAssign, which generates an originality report and indicates potential plagiarism cases. If I suspect plagiarism, I will alert you of my concerns and ask you for a meeting to discuss the case before I contact the Honor Council.

Standards of Conduct. <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53519.html>

ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTER AND ADA ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have a disability or believe you might and would like to receive accommodations in my course, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@georgetown.edu) to register as a student with a disability or for an evaluation referral. You should do this at the beginning of the term. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodation in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies. The Center is located on the third floor of the Leavey Center, Suite 335. You may access their website at <http://ldss.georgetown.edu>.

WRITING CENTER

Please consider taking advantage of the resources of the Writing Center. The Writing Center provides one-on-one peer tutoring focused on improving your writing skills. I encourage you to take your paper

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drafts to the Writing Center. Visit <http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu> for more information. You can also schedule an appointment with a Writing Center tutor online on the center's website.

DAILY BREAKDOWN OF READINGS & DEADLINES

You need to read the materials by the date listed.

WEEK ONE

Monday

Introduction

Tuesday

"Personal Identity" by Eric Olson (pgs. 2-12)

The First Night by John Perry (excerpt)

Read the syllabus in its entirety.

Wednesday

"Of Identity and Diversity" by John Locke

"The Soul" by Anthony Quinton

Thursday

Sign up for discussion leadership

"Of Personal Identity" by Joseph Butler

"Of Mr. Locke's Account of Identity" by Thomas Reid

"Personal Identity and Memory" by Sydney Shoemaker

Friday

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson (excerpt)

* Paper #1 DUE Sunday, May 26th, @ 11:59 pm.

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WEEK TWO

Monday

Memorial Day. no class

Tuesday

"The Self and the Future" by Bernard Williams

Wednesday

"Fission and the Focus of One's Life" by Peter Unger

Thursday

"Human Beings" by Mark Johnston

Friday

"Where Am I?" by Daniel Dennett

※ Paper #2 DUE Saturday, June 1st, @ 11:59 pm.

WEEK THREE

Monday

"Identity and Identities" by Bernard Williams

"Human Persons: Narrative Identity and Self-Creation" by David DeGrazia (excerpt)

Tuesday

"Empathic Access: The Missing Ingredient in Personal Identity" by Marya Schechtman

Wednesday

"Personal Identity, Narrative Integration, and Embodiment" by Catriona Mackenzie

Thursday

"Narrative Repair: Reclaiming Moral Agency" by Hilde Lindemann Nelson

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Friday

The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka

- Recommended: "Competing Theories of Identity in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*" by Kevin Sweeney

* Paper #3 DUE Saturday, June 8th, @ 11:59 pm.

WEEK FOUR

Monday

"On Psychological Oppression" by Sandra Lee Bartky

"Outliving Oneself" by Susan Brison

Tuesday

Gender Trouble by Judith Butler (excerpts)

Wednesday

"Disability, Identity and Difference" by Tom Shakespeare

Thursday

"Dworkin on Dementia: Elegant Theory, Questionable Policy" by Rebecca Dresser

"Advance Directives, Dementia, and the Someone Else Problem" by David DeGrazia (excerpt)

Friday

"The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1952/1952-h/1952-h.htm>>

* Paper #4 DUE Saturday, June 15th, @ 11:59 pm.