

THE LITERATURE OF κρίσις

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Hours: T/Th 1-2

Lectures: T/Th 11-11:50aM: 420-040

Website: <http://www.stanford.edu/class/ihum55>

Coursework: <http://coursework.stanford.edu>

This introduction to classical and early-modern thought and literature focuses on the universal experience of crisis. Most human lives contain at least one major turning point: a pivotal event that dramatically transforms the trajectory of an individual's future. On a far larger scale, families, societies, nations, and cultures also undergo crises: political, social, intellectual, and religious changes that forever alter the course of human history. "The Literature of Crisis" will examine personal, family, and societal forms of crisis through six incomparable texts organized in pairs: two examples of moral philosophy, two examples of tragic drama, and two examples of epic or mock-epic. Three of these texts were produced in classical Greece and Rome, one in early Medieval Italy, one in Renaissance England, and one in eighteenth-century France. By thus pairing texts composed in various countries during different historical periods, we hope to provide a multi-faceted conceptual framework which may enable students to address the crises that occur in their own lives and in today's world with a greater degree of understanding and, perhaps, with a clearer sense of how to survive them.

Lectures will be given at 11.00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Beginning with the first week, there will be weekly seminar meetings (required) at pre-arranged times. During the course of the quarter, students will be asked to write two papers, one of four to five pages due on **Thursday, October 26**, and one of six to seven pages due on **Thursday, November 16**. The final examination will be held on **Wednesday, December 13** from **7.00-10.00 pm** and may not be taken early. **Note:** deadlines for written assignments may change to accommodate course needs.

Grades for the course will be determined not only by the papers and final examination, but also by performance in the weekly seminars. In determining the final grade, the various components of the course will be weighted as follows: seminar performance 25%, first essay 20%, second essay 25%, final exam 30%.

Papers are due on Coursework on or before the specified deadline; hardcopies should be turned in as specified by your seminar leader. Failure to complete any one of the assignments will result in a failing grade for the quarter. Incompletes will not be given except for documented medical reasons or in cases of dire family emergencies. Note additional policies below as well as those specified on your section syllabus distributed by your seminar leader.

Texts:

Plato. *The Last Days of Socrates*. Trans. Hugh Tredennick. New York: Penguin.

Sophocles. *Oedipus the King*. Trans. R. Fagles. New York: Penguin.

Virgil. *Aeneid*. Trans. Robert Fitzgerald. New York: Random House.

Boethius. *Consolation of Philosophy*. Trans. V.E. Watts. New York: Penguin.

Shakespeare. *Hamlet*. New York: Signet Classics.

Voltaire. *Candide*. Trans. John Butt. New York: Penguin.

Course Goals:

The programmatic goals of fall quarter IHUM courses are to develop students' abilities to:

- Read closely,
- Think critically,
- Recognize the possibility of different readings produced by approaching texts from different disciplinary perspectives,
- Learn effectively from lectures,
- Engage in sustained intellectual discussion, and
- Develop effective college-level argumentation skills, both oral and written.

Seminar Leaders:

Erin Ferris, Course Coordinator	eferris@stanford.edu	Sweet 322
Clyde Moneyhun	moneyhun@stanford.edu	460-020
Liz Pentland	pentland@stanford.edu	Sweet 317
Alice Staveley	staveley@stanford.edu	Sweet 314
David Walter	davywynn@stanford.edu	Sweet 310

Seminar Sections:

2	TTh	1:15p-2:45p	Meyer 147	Staveley
3	TTh	3:15p-4:45p	Meyer 147	Staveley
4	TTh	6:00p-7:30p	Meyer 147	Staveley
5	WF	9:00a-10:30a	250-251K	Ferris
6	WF	11:00a-12:30p	250-251K	Ferris
7	WF	1:15p-2:45p	250-251K	Ferris
8	TTh	2:15p-3:45p	Sweet 303	Walter
9	TTh	4:15p-5:45p	EDUC 208	Walter
10	TTh	6:00p-7:30p	EDUC 208	Walter
11	TTh	1:15-2:45p	EDUC 207	Pentland
12	WF	12:15-1:45p	EDUC 230	Pentland
13	WF	2:15-3:45p	EDUC 230	Pentland
14	TTh	12:15-1:45p	Sweet 403	Moneyhun

IHUM Section Attendance Policy

More than two section absences will severely affect a student's participation grade. If a student has a prolonged illness, varsity athletic competitions, or a personal situation that might lead to more than two absences, the student should contact his or her Teaching Fellow *before* missing section. Under certain conditions (such as varsity athletic competitions or prolonged illness), a student *may* be provided an opportunity to make up the work missed in section. **Note:** insufficient section attendance will result in failure of the course.

Provost's Statement Concerning Students with Disabilities:

Students who have a disability that may necessitate an academic accommodation or the use of auxiliary aids and services in a class, must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC), located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). The SDRC will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend appropriate accommodation, and prepare a verification letter dated in the current academic term in which the request is being made. Please contact the SDRC as soon as possible; timely notice is needed to arrange for appropriate accommodations. The Office of Accessible Education is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone 723-1066; TDD 725-1067).

Resources:

Stanford Writing Center, Building 460-020. The writing center does not offer editing services, but rather help for your overall writing skills including one-to-one conferences and writing workshops. You can make appointments online at <http://swc.stanford.edu>.

Stanford's Center for Teaching and Learning (4th Flr. Sweet Hall, ctl.stanford.edu) provides a wide variety of resources for students including tutors, workshops, and information on a number of learning skills.

Literature of

crisis

Schedule: Fall 2006

T	Sept 26:	Organization	Week 1
Th	Sept 28:	Introduction The nature of the Humanities in general and the role of literary studies in particular. The historical origins of the Humanist movement. Theories concerning the unchanging human heart. The experience of seeing the world from a new emotional and intellectual center. The value of similarity versus the value of difference. Moral theories of reading expounded by Percy Shelley, C. S. Lewis, and others.	
Note: first seminar meetings begin Thurs. Sept. 28 and Fri. Sept. 29.			
Personal Crisis: Major Issues to Consider: How and why do Plato's and Boethius's accounts of imprisonment and impending death differ from each other? Do these texts present themselves as philosophical statements, emotional expressions, or simply as dramatic fictions? What assumptions do they make about human nature and the nature of the universe? What audience do they seem to be addressing? To what extent do their values reflect the social and intellectual milieu within which they were created? What is the nature of "crisis" in Plato and Boethius?			
T	Oct 3:	Plato, <i>The Apology, Crito</i> Introduction to early Greek philosophy and education. The sophists. The career of Socrates. The Peloponnesian War. Socrates's trial and defense speech (his <i>apologia</i>). Socrates's imprisonment. What do you owe to the laws of your country? Socrates's view of death.	Week 2
Th	Oct 5:	Continued	
T	Oct 10:	Boethius, <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i> The collapse of the Western empire and the transfer of the capital from Rome to Ravenna. Ostrogothic culture under Galla Placidia and the emperor Theodoric. Boethius's career as Theodoric's counselor. His downfall, imprisonment, and execution. The influence of the <i>Consolation</i> on subsequent cultures. Lady Philosophy's role and Boethius's arguments concerning predestination versus free will and the nature of the good.	Week 3
Th	Oct 12:	Continued	
T	Oct 17:	Continued	Week 4

Family Crisis: Major Issues to Consider:

How and why do the tragic dramas of Sophocles and Shakespeare differ from one another? What assumptions does each poet make about human nature and the nature of the universe? Do these plays present themselves as philosophical arguments, historical documents, or dramatic fictions? What, if anything, do they have to teach us about the history of the periods in which they were conceived? What forms of crisis do they explore? Do they achieve a satisfying resolution of those crises?

Th	Oct 19:	Sophocles, <i>Oedipus the King</i> Introduction to Periclean Athens. The function of theater in Athenian society. <i>Oedipus the King</i> and the Peloponnesian War. The role of the Delphic oracle in Greek religion. Guilt and innocence, fate and free choice. Aristotle's "fatal flaw."	
T	Oct 24:	Continued	Week 5
Th	Oct 26:	Continued	Paper 1
T	Oct 31:	Shakespeare, <i>Hamlet</i> The intellectual crisis of the sixteenth century—the three revolutions. The problem of Hamlet. The theological and moral solutions. Sigmund Freud's interpretation of the Oedipus myth. The Oedipal interpretation of <i>Hamlet</i> . The aesthetic solution and an alternative.	Week 6
Th	Nov 2:	Continued	
T	Nov 7:	Continued	Week 7

Societal Crisis: Major Issues to Consider:

What use do Vergil and Voltaire make of philosophical or theological ideas? What use do they make of ancient or recent history? Do these narratives present themselves as history or fiction? What is the nature of the protagonist as he is defined in these two works? What kind of role do women play in the story? What is the nature of the crisis in Vergil and in Voltaire and how is it resolved?

Th	Nov 9:	Vergil, <i>Aeneid</i> The impact of Roman imperialism, Greek epic, and Stoic philosophy on Vergil's poem. The limits and costs of power as the <i>Aeneid</i> presents them. The interactions between fate and free choice in Aeneas's experience. Optimism and pessimism in the <i>Aeneid</i> .	
T	Nov 14:	Continued	Week 8
Th	Nov 16:	Continued	Paper 2
	Nov 20-24:	Thanksgiving Holiday: no classes	
T	Nov 28:	<i>Aeneid</i> continued	Week 9
Th	Nov 30:	Voltaire, <i>Candide</i> Voltaire's text as a re-working of classical and renaissance epic traditions. The Lisbon earthquake and its effect on Voltaire's belief system. Three solutions to the problem of evil. <i>Candide</i> as a critique of Optimism and Manichaeism. Voltaire's attitude to the traditional Christian belief in the Fall of Man.	
T	Dec 5:	Continued	Week 10
Th	Dec 7:	Panel Discussion of some major issues	
W	Dec 13:	FINAL EXAMINATION 7-10pm (locations TBA)	

Grading Guidelines:

Essays: IHUM courses foster rigorous inquiry and critical thinking and promote effective written argumentation. These guidelines govern the evaluation of argumentative papers generally, but they do not take into account specific disciplinary requirements, which may be added by individual courses.

A-range: This paper is outstanding in form and content. The thesis is clear and insightful; it is original, or it expands in a new way on ideas presented in the course. The evidence presented in support of the argument is carefully chosen and deftly handled. The argument is not only unified and coherent, but also complex and nuanced.

B-range: This paper's thesis is clear; the argument is coherent and presents evidence in support of its points. The argument shows comprehension of the material and manifests critical thinking about the issues raised in the course. The paper is reasonably well written and proofread. The argument, while coherent, does not have the complexity, the insight, or the integrated structure of an A-range paper.

C-range: This paper has some but not all of the basic components of an argumentative essay (i.e., thesis, evidence, coherent structure): for example, it may offer a thesis of some kind, but it presents no evidence to support this thesis; or it may present an incoherent thesis; or it may simply repeat points made in class without an overall argument. Such a paper is usually poorly organized, written and proofread. A paper will fall below a "C" if it lacks more than one of the basic components of an argumentative essay.

Section Participation: IHUM courses are mandated to encourage vigorous intellectual exchange, the expression of various viewpoints, and the ability to speak effectively and cogently. Participation in discussion will be evaluated on the following guidelines, which stress the quality rather than the mere quantity of contributions to discussion. See also specific course and section requirements as well as IHUM's section attendance policy.

A-range: The student is fully engaged and highly motivated. This student is well prepared, having read the assigned texts, and has thought carefully about the texts' relation to issues raised in lecture and section. This student's ideas and questions are substantive (either constructive or critical); they stimulate class discussions. This student listens and responds to the contributions of other students.

B-range: The student participates consistently in discussion. This student comes to section well prepared and contributes quite regularly by sharing thoughts and questions that show insight and a familiarity with the material. This student refers to the materials discussed in lecture and shows interest in other students' contributions.

C-range: The student meets the basic requirements of section participation. This student is usually prepared and participates once in a while but not regularly. This student's contributions relate to the texts and the lectures and offer a few insightful ideas but do not help to build a coherent and productive discussion. Failure to fulfill satisfactorily any of these criteria will result in a grade of "D" or below.

The Honor Code

Violating the Honor Code is a serious offense, even when the violation is unintentional. Students are responsible for understanding the University rules regarding academic integrity; you should familiarize yourself with the code if you have not already done so. In brief, conduct prohibited by the Honor Code includes all forms of academic dishonesty, among them copying from another's exam, unpermitted collaboration, and representing as one's own work the work of another. The Honor Code is available at: <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/guiding/honorcode.htm>. If you have any additional questions about these matters, consult your teaching fellow.