

Politics and Literature

Avila University

IS 345-01 (3 credit hours)

Prerequisite: Level III – students must have completed Level I requirements, as well as 15 hours of Level II requirements.

This course explores the relationship between literature and politics in relation to point of view, dialogue, and power from a variety of different angles and across a number of literary genres. We will challenge you to expand your thinking about these subjects, so that no matter how sophisticated your understanding of literature and/or politics, you will necessarily expand your understanding to include perspectives with which you are currently unfamiliar. It is our hope that you will come to appreciate how interrelated the fields of literature and political science are, and that you will continue to explore the richness of this relationship after this course has ended.

Required Texts

Achebe, Chinua. 1959. *Things Fall Apart*. New York: Doubleday.

hooks, bell and Cornel West. 1991. *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life*. Boston: South End Press.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. [1888] 2002. *The Communist Manifesto*. Trans. Gareth Stedman Jones. New York: Penguin

Plato. [1955] 1987. *The Republic*. Trans. Desmond Lee. New York: Penguin.

Shelley, Mary. [1818] 1991. *Frankenstein*. New York: Bantam.

Sinclair, Upton. [1906] 2003. *The Jungle*. New York: Bantam

Other required readings will be distributed in class.

Teaching Philosophy

We believe that education needs to be interactive in order to be most effective. That is, students need to be the *subjects* of education, not merely the *objects*. We hope and expect that by participating in this kind of learning you will learn a lot more that will stick with you. This topic is, we think, inherently interesting and fun, but to get the most out of it, you will need to keep up with the readings and participate meaningfully in all aspects of the course. We envision an interactive process where your contribution is valued and appreciated by everyone in the classroom. The key, of course, is that you work hard.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes. You are responsible for everything that goes on in class. This includes, but is not limited to: lecture material, class discussion, and assignments. *Basically, you need to be here*. If you are not, you can get assignments from other students in the class, but you may not make up quizzes or turn in assignments late. If you know you are going to miss, you must get your assignment to one of us before the start of class the day it is due.

Sensitive Material

There will be times this semester when we will need to discuss sensitive topics and issues. We will present these topics and issues in a professional manner, making every effort possible to not offend. You need to be aware, however, that avoiding these issues entirely is not only undesirable, but also wholly inconsistent with the notion of a higher education experience.

Late Work Policy

Late assignments will not be accepted. This means that you need to start printing early and make sure to get to class on time, especially on those days when assignments are due. Email is always an acceptable way to get us your assignments. As long as they are stamped with a date and time before

the deadline, they will be accepted without penalty. We will respond when we receive the paper, so please do not assume that we have it until you get a response.

Grades

Grades for the course will be determined by the following methods of evaluation:

Attendance/Participation	50
Quizzes	700
Short paper	100
Final paper	150
Total Points	1000

Attendance and Participation are listed first because they are the most important. If you attend class and participate mentally and verbally, you are likely to be successful in all other areas of evaluation. You must have the reading done in time for class so that you are able to contribute meaningfully to class discussion. *This is an upper-level course and it relies heavily upon you.* We expect that you will contribute to class discussion each day and demonstrate that you have done the work to prepare for class, even if you do not understand everything you have read. If you do this, we can virtually assure you that by the end of the semester you will have a greater appreciation for the theories and perspectives that we will discuss. But if you do not show up and contribute, you will sacrifice much of this potential. We all come from different cultures and backgrounds and bring with us different social, political and life experiences. One reason that we are so adamant about you being in class is because your perspective is not represented when you are not here. In a sense, *we all suffer when you do not come to class.* We are only capable of experiencing one perspective: our own. But we are capable of learning and understanding opinions and experiences of infinite diversity. Accordingly, we all want to hear what you think about things.

The **quizzes** are designed to make sure you have read the material on time, and that you have read it carefully (it will be impossible to have meaningful class discussions otherwise). To be sure that you are reading carefully, we will have a short-answer quiz on many of the assigned readings. These quizzes are worth a full 70% of your grade for the course.

While quizzes are designed to make sure you have read, we are also interested in how you interact with the material at a deeper level. Accordingly, there will be two **papers**. We will give you the specific assignments during class meetings. Grammar and spelling count, so be sure to consult a writing guide to help you as you go. The final paper assignment will allow you to use the work you have done during the course to express your understanding of the complexities of this field.

Your **grade** for the class (assessed by the above evaluations) will be an “A” if you finish the course with 90%-100%, a “B” if you finish with 80%-89%, a “C” if you finish the course with a 70%-79%, a “D” if you finish with 60%-69%, and an “F” if you finish with 59% or lower.

Course and University Educational Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

Personal, Spiritual, and Social Development ILOs

Outcome: Be able to:	Measurement
Demonstrate self-motivation, intellectual curiosity and openness to differing perspectives	Class discussions
Demonstrate sensitivity to socio-cultural diversity	Class discussions, papers

Communication ILOs

Outcome: Be able to:	Measurement
Read a document and demonstrate and understanding of its written . . . content	Quizzes, class discussions, papers
Write a clear, well-organized paper, using documentation . . .	Papers

Higher Level Thinking ILOs

Outcome: Be able to:	Measurement
Employ skeptical, evaluative and logical approaches in processing information and drawing conclusions	Class discussions, papers
Analyze one's own thinking processes, including how one's experiences, feelings, ideas, and intuition affect thinking	Class discussions, papers

Knowledge ILOs

Outcome: Have knowledge of:	Measurement
Arts, literature and language through experiential and intellectual understanding of their elements and principles	Quizzes, class discussions, papers
Philosophers, theologians, writers, artists and other great thinkers and their influence upon the development of civilization	Quizzes, class discussions, papers
The theories that describe or explain individual and group behavior	Quizzes, class discussions, papers
Cultural diversity in the United States and throughout the world	Quizzes, class discussions, papers

Course ILO

Outcome	Measurement
Student will have an appreciation for the inherent political nature of all writing, irrespective of prospective audience or intent of the author	Final paper

Writing

Writing will be an important component of this course. As noted above, class participation is important, and part of that participation is your engagement with the material on a personal level. So you should speak as much as possible, and you will write frequently.

We will be able to tell from your writing if you need some work in this area. Often students are upset when required to write well in classes other than English, but we would be doing you a disservice if we looked past grammatical and stylistic shortcomings and graded you solely on substance. The substance, for the most part, is lost if the paper is not well organized and articulated. Therefore, please do not be offended if we suggest that you pay a visit to the Student Resource Center. There are folks there who can see in your writing what you cannot. Writing is a cumulative process, and everyone (including professors!) needs to work to improve his or her writing. We can never get enough

practice. You will need writing skills throughout your life no matter what career you choose. This class is no different.

Classroom Courtesy

It is especially important that we all respect one another. Many of the topics we will be covering are controversial and exciting in nature, and there will likely be emotional discussion during many of the class meetings. As long as we all remain civil and stay away from personal attacks, these times can be learning experiences for all of us.

It is also important that we respect each other by not being late to (or absent from) class, making sure to turn off all pagers and cellular phones (unless you have a compelling reason to have it on, in which case you must see one of us before the class period begins), and refraining from being distracting during class by leaving early or engaging in side conversations. Being discourteous will detract from your course participation grade.

Academic Honesty

The policy of Avila University concerning cheating and plagiarism will be strictly followed in this course. As is stated in the College Catalog, “[c]heating, plagiarism and falsification of documents will not be tolerated and appropriate sanction will be imposed” (p. 64). We only expect two things from you for you to be successful: keep up with the assignments and be thoughtful in your responses to them. If you do that, we can guarantee that you will not have to cheat to learn a lot and get a good grade.

Fun

Even though this course will not be a “blow-off,” it does not have to hurt. The fields of politics and literature can be vibrant and exciting, but a lot depends on you. We both like to have fun while we learn (it seems less like work then). If you are “up” for class each day, the time will go much faster, and your interest and participation will help the material sink in better. That means less time “cramming” for the exams and papers; you will not have to because you will have a solid grasp of the issues we are discussing. What you learn is likely to stay with you longer and that is one of our personal goals. So, get involved early on and keep up. Come to class prepared each day, and this experience will be more enjoyable for all of us.