

Great Books Seminar Learning Objectives

Great Books Seminar

In this course students will study those larger works that have not already been covered in other courses. The books have been chosen not only for their critical acclaim but also for their timeless themes. Many of the books subtly discuss the human condition or astutely observe the reality of death, social and personal corruption, man's psychology, life struggles, false aspirations, and social conventions. Although some of the works do not offer the solutions to the difficult issues discussed, they present the issues for honest confrontation and evaluation.

Reading and Literature

Students will read and study the following works and be tested weekly on their content and material presented in the lectures. The instruction on the literature will include the authors' biographies as well as the works' themes and literary techniques. For example, in our reading and study of George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris in London* we will first discuss the author's own experience with poverty and interaction with the underdog, and then examine the technical aspects of the work, such as the way in which its dialog, character description and narrative detail communicate the shame, physical privation and moral effects of being poor. The book will be studied in the context of Orwell's political perspectives as expressed in his essay "Why I Write."

NOVELS

- George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (Edited by Mr. Walter)
- Charlotte Bronte, *Villette*
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Scarlet Letter*
- Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
- Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*
- Alfred Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*
- William Shakespeare, *Tempest*
- an independent reading book from the following list: Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*; John Milton, *Paradise Lost* or *Samson Agonistes*; Henry James, *Daisy Miller*; Arthur Miller, *The Crucible*; Edith Wharton, *Ethan Frome*; Christopher Marlowe, *Faust*; Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*; Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Return of the Native*, *The Woodlanders*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, or *Under the Greenwood Tree*; William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, *Macbeth*, or *Othello*; Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*; Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*; Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*; Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*; Willa Cather, *My Antonia*.

ADDITIONAL READING

- Wayne C. Booth's "Boring from Within: the Art of the Freshman Essay."
- George Orwell, "Why I Write"
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil," "The Shaker Bridal," and "Endicott and the Red Cross"

- Julian Hawthorne, “Writing the Scarlet Letter”
- Oliver Sacks, Essays from *The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat*
- a possible selection of one or more essays from the following list: E. B. White, “Afternoon of an American Boy”; James Thurber, “The Dog that Bit People”; George Orwell, “Such, Such Were the Joys”; and Charlton Heston, “The Cultural War”

Writing

Students will write a two-page critical paper on at least three of the above works. They will learn the importance of using textual support in their analysis and of hedging statements that are not objectively conclusive. Students will also write four formal essays according to an assigned format, using professional models. Students will analyze the theme, technique and various other aspects of the professional essays in class and implement what they learn in their own essays. Students will review the elementary principles of good writing, such as using detail, description figures of speech and dialog (when appropriate), using active instead of passive voice, making revisions, omitting needless words, etc.). In tandem with learning various essay formats, student will study terms pertaining to formal composition, such as thesis statement, voice, mood, style, irony, and tone. Student will study these terms in relation to the essays that he reads and to his own writing when applicable. Instruction will also include discussing the importance of sensory detail, concrete images, and specific examples.

Rhetoric and Speech

Students will write one speech to be presented before an audience of about two hundred people. In preparation for this speech, students will review/study, read examples of and implement the learned rhetorical devices as well as learn the important aspects of delivering a speech, including poise, gestures, and the regulation of the voice’s pitch and volume.