

how to do things with

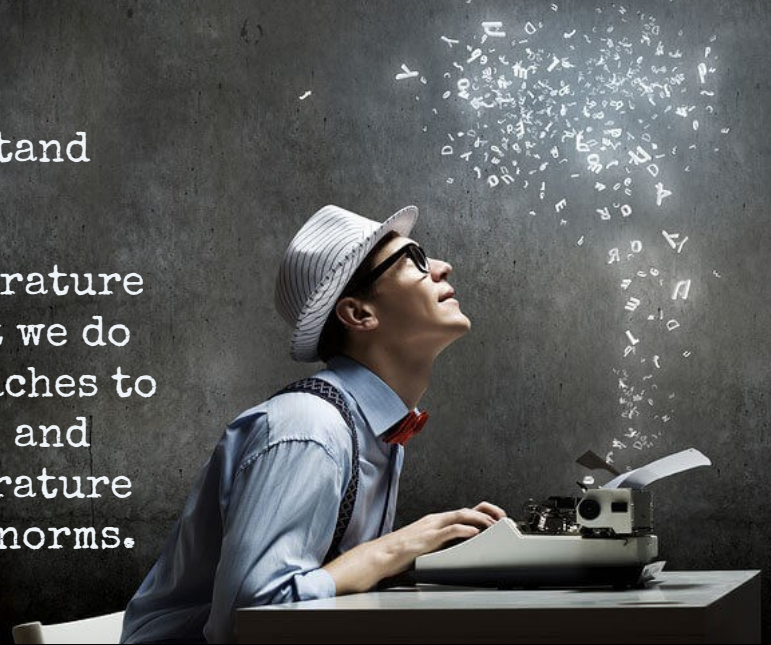
WORDS

(PHI215) Philosophy of Literature
Spring 2018

course description

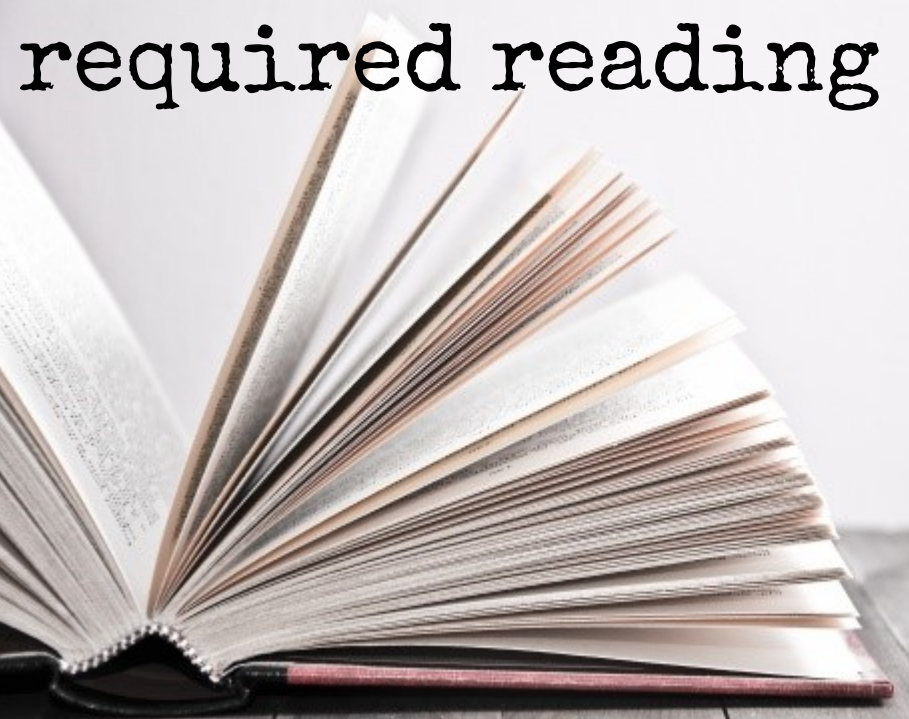
How does philosophy and critical theory help us understand literature? What does literature *do*?

This course considers the performative function of literature and language: **how we do things with words**, and why what we do with words matters. Students engage theoretical approaches to language and literature alongside short stories, poems, and excerpts from novels to better understand the role literature plays in articulating, shaping, and resisting cultural norms.



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required reading



Most of the readings required for this course will be available on our **Blackboard** site. Please note that the readings listed for each topic are due **before** you come to class on that day.

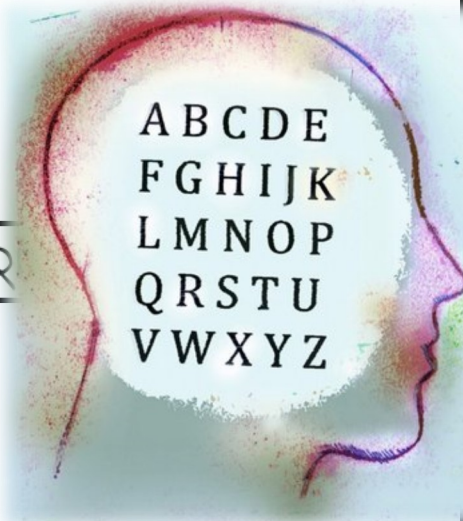
In addition to the readings on Blackboard, you will need:

- Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*
- Kidd, *The Cheese Monkeys*
- King, *The Truth about Stories*

expectations

This is an introductory course. **I don't expect you will know anything about philosophy or literature.**

If you're not familiar with humanities scholarship—particularly reading and analyzing scholarly articles and writing in standard humanities styles—you might find some assignments challenging. Please read directions carefully and **ask for help before deadlines.**



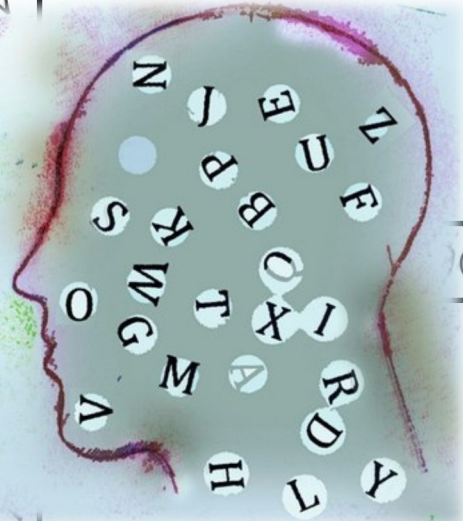
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If you require accommodations for in-class discussions or activities, have emergency medical information, or need special arrangements during a building evacuation, please let me know as soon as possible. Students who require assignment or in-class accommodations should **register with the DSC** and inform me during the first week of classes.

accommodations

class format

Each class will include lecture, close reading, and discussion elements. None of these work **unless you attend class regularly and read the assignments carefully.** Please come to class ready to analyze and respond to the readings, as well as to the contributions of your fellow students. **Bring the readings to class with you.** Remember: engagement includes active listening!



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Laptops and similar devices are permitted for specific class activities, or as accessibility requires. You will also need to know how to access Blackboard, how to create a PDF, and how to use Twitter. (We will discuss these in class.) **I only accept assignments as PDF's submitted through Blackboard:** no emails, hardcopies, or *.doc/*.docx files, please.

technology

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inclusivity

I am committed to making our classroom and our campus an **inclusive and supportive learning environment** for people of all races and ethnicities, sexual and gender identities, levels of ability, and expressions of embodiment

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know your IX

Sex and gender-based violence and harassment are Civil Rights offenses. Offenders are subject to the same kinds of penalties applied to offenses against other protected categories (such race, national origin, etc.).

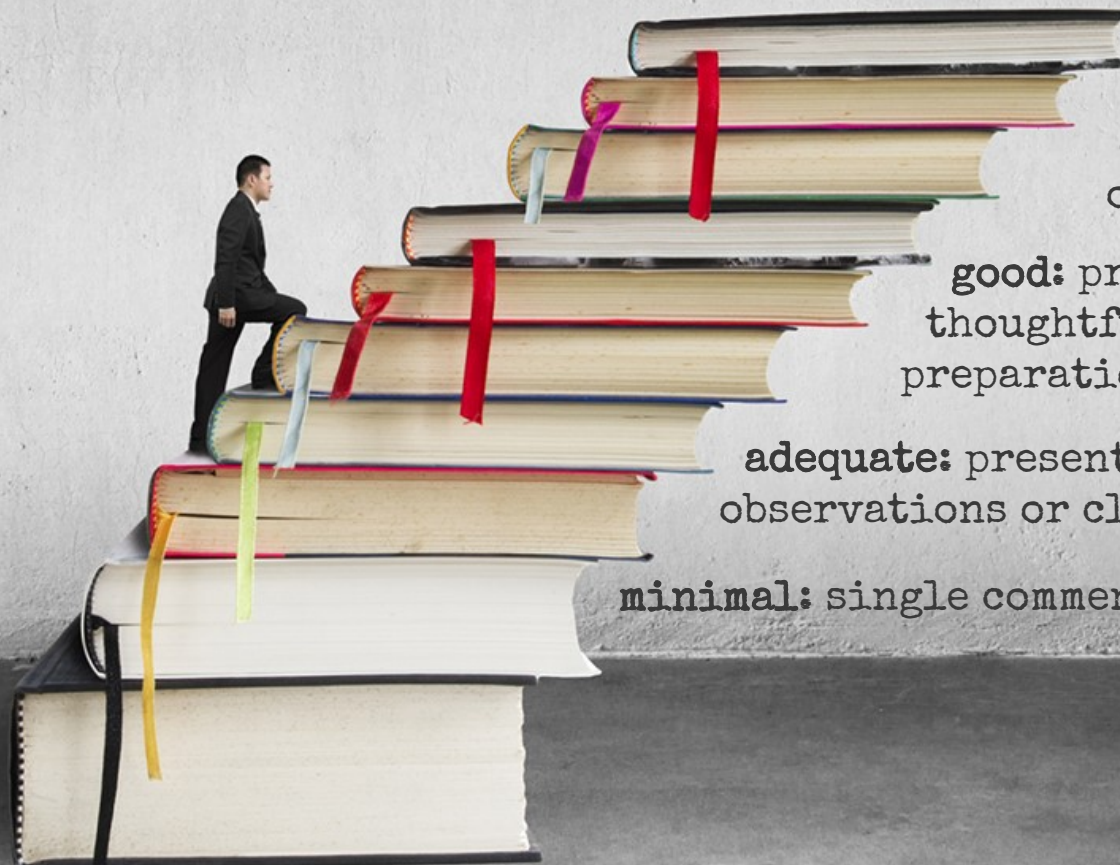
Survivors are entitled to confidential support.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, USM wants to help. **Here are our resources.**

“a word after a word after a word is power.”

— Margaret Atwood —





excellent: present, prepared, & engaged. Refers to readings, lectures, & class discussions consistently. Encourages other students' comments and questions.

good: present, prepared, & engaged. Offers thoughtful comments and questions to demonstrate preparation for class & attention to discussions.

adequate: present & prepared; contributes surface-level observations or clarifying questions

minimal: single comment based on others' observations; "I agree"

participation

attendance is mandatory. unless you have an emergency, missing more than one class will affect your grade.

but succeeding in this course requires more than just showing up. engage fully in activities & discussions.

in short: **SPEAK UP!**

The image features a close-up of an open book on the left side, with its pages showing some text. The background is a dark, textured surface covered with numerous white, stylized letters, numbers, and symbols (like pi and infinity) that appear to be floating or falling. The word "grading" is written in a large, white, serif font across the center of the image.

grading

You will be graded on **HOW** you think—not **WHAT** you think—in this class. In other words, **you will not be graded on your beliefs, opinions, or the positions you advance.** I evaluate how well you articulate your thoughts and positions, how closely you read the assigned texts, and how much your ability to **think critically and synthetically** about course themes develops throughout the semester.

- 10% attendance
- 10% participation
- 10% online discussion
- 15% Harkness discussion
- 25% midterm project
- 30% reading notes

Cheating = failing. Please don't. Complete this **plagiarism tutorial** by 30 January. Check out the "What is Plagiarism?" handout on Blackboard or USM's **Academic Integrity Policy** for more info. "I didn't know" is not an excuse.

Go know.

assignments

reading notes

Learning to read, understand, and think critically about challenging material is a key skill for liberal arts scholarship. This assignment will help you become a more careful reader of these texts and prepare you for our concluding Harkness discussion. Submit reading notes for the text in bold on the class schedule each week. **Reading notes are due by 8am before the class meets.** Please review the assignment sheet, rubric, and sample assignment for further instructions.

online discussion

Each week, contribute one tweet to the class hashtag (#USMwords) summarizing the class session's primary theorist and offer one question for your classmates. Respond to at least one classmate's question. **Tweets are due by noon before class meets.**

midterm project

Students **live-tweet one film** (either *Quills* or *Stranger Than Fiction*), applying key course concepts in their responses. Read the accompanying materials (one theorist, one critique) and write a **1000-1500 word analysis** of how these materials help you understand the cultural work done by the film. See the assignment sheet for more info.

harkness discussion

This is a method designed to spark rigorous, student-led classroom discussions. At the end of the semester, students will use the class period to respond to a prompt provided in advance. Students will also receive further research questions and a list of required readings. I will record the conversation but participate only to pause for check-ins. All participants earn a single grade for this discussion. **You must attend to receive credit for this assignment.** Review the assignment sheet for more info.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Assignment
23 January	Introductions	
30 January	How to Do Things with Words	Austin, <i>How To Do Things With Words</i> Kidd, from <i>The Cheese Monkeys</i>
6 February	Speech Acts & Performativity (1)	Derrida, "Signature Event Context" Butler, from <i>Bodies That Matter</i> Lewis, from <i>The Magician's Nephew</i> Rowell, from <i>Carry On</i>
13 February	Speech Acts & Performativity (2)	Wittgenstein, from <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> Nelson, from <i>The Argonauts</i> from <i>Obergefell v. Hodges</i> (2014)
20 February	Narratology	Bal, from <i>Narratology</i> Schwartz, "The Green Ribbon" Machado, "The Husband Stitch"
27 February	Language, Myth, & Metafiction	Foucault, "Language to Infinity" Barthes, "Myth Today" Borges, "The Library of Babel"
6 March	Midterm Workshop	
13 March	Spring Break	
20 March	Gender, Language, & Literature	Moi, from <i>Sexual/Textual Politics</i> Derrida, "Choreographies" Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa" Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"
27 March	Race, Language, & Literature	Fanon, "The Black Man and Language" Coates, from <i>Between the World and Me</i> Ellison, from <i>Invisible Man</i> Thomas, from <i>The Hate U Give</i>

CLASS SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Assignment
3 April	Sexuality, Language, & Literature	Muñoz, from <i>Cruising Utopia</i> Feinberg, from <i>Stone Butch Blues</i>
10 April	Class, Language, & Literature	Voloshinov, from <i>Marxism & the Philosophy of Language</i> Allison, from <i>Skin</i> Allison, from <i>Bastard Out of Carolina</i>
17 April	Politics, Language, & Literature	Butler, from <i>Excitable Speech</i> Orwell, from <i>1984</i>
24 April	The Truth about Stories	King, <i>The Truth About Stories</i> Silko, from <i>Ceremony</i> Genesis 1-3 (NRSV)
1 May	Conclusions	Harkness Discussion

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How to do with
things words

course info

Instructor: Prof. Megan Goodwin

Email: megan.goodwin@maine.edu

Office: Payson Smith 122

Office hours: 6-7pm Tuesdays or by appointment

Twitter: #USMwords