

**QUEST 1: IDS 2935
POLITICS AND THE ARTS, 1910-2018**

[David Leavitt](#)

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Location: Weimer 1094

Quest 1 Theme: The Examined Life

General Education: Humanities, Writing (2000 words)

(Note that a minimum grade of C is required for General Education credit)

Class resources, announcements, updates, and assignments will be made available through the class [Canvas site](#).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The relationship between politics and the arts has always been a fraught one. At one end of the spectrum are those artists and writers who advocate a strict separation of art and politics (“art for art’s sake”); at the opposite end are those who consider it the creative artist’s duty to engage with the political issues of their time. In this course, we will look at five arenas in which politics and the arts became inextricably caught up with each other and artists found themselves *obliged* to enter into the political fray, sometimes even if they didn’t want to. Through the close reading of stories, novels, poems, and essays, as well as consideration of paintings and other examples of the visual arts, theater, dance, and film, we will examine how the arts have reflected, foretold, and sometimes brought about political change. Our approach will be to study these works less as discrete entities than as participatory contributions (sometimes polite, sometimes contentious, sometimes enraged) to an unending conversation about government, sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, war, and religion; in short, about what it means to be human.

Please note that in this course, we will be focusing most of our attention on works of art and literature, including essays by writers. On occasional scholarly analyses, reportage, opinion pieces, political tracts, and theoretical texts will be used as we address our topic.

The arenas we will look at:

1. The Emergence of Modernism

With her declaration that “on or about December 1910 human character changed,” Virginia Woolf drew a direct connection between the Modernist movement in the arts, as exemplified by the exhibit “Manet and the Post-Impressionists,” and the changes in “human relations” with which it was concurrent. In Woolf’s formulation, “when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature.” In this section of the course we will examine the ways in which Modernism both reflected and foreshadowed the collapse of nineteenth-century social and political institutions and the outbreak of World War I. (This section will also include a brief foray into mathematics for which no mathematical background is required.)

2. World War Two, Anti-Semitism, and Diaspora

In this section of the course, we will consider works of art that reflect upon and respond to the upheaval of World War Two, the plight of Anti-Semitism in Europe, and the vast human displacements that occurred in the wake of the Allied victory.

3. “The Love that Dares Not Speak its Name,” the AIDS Epidemic, and the Foundations of Queer Identity

As early as the Wilde trials at the end of the nineteenth century, artists were challenging religious and societal intolerance of “the love that dares not speak its name.” Yet in England the notorious Labouchere Amendment, which criminalized acts of “gross indecency” between adult men, in public and in private, remained law until 1967. In this section of the course we will investigate how artists, directly or obliquely, argued not just for the legitimacy of same-sex love but for its vital cultural importance, as well as the profound effect of the AIDS epidemic on literature and the arts.

4. Debates Over Diversity, Inclusion, and Identity

No debate has spotlighted the question of whether the making of art carries a burden of social responsibility as urgently as the one over identity and cultural appropriation. To what extent are writers and artists obliged to represent the experience of their ethnic, racial, religious, sexual, or gender “constituencies” (to borrow a term from Susan Brownmiller)? Conversely, when a writer or artist speaks from the point of view of a constituency not their own, is it appropriate, or is it “appropriation”?

5. The #metoo Phenomenon and the Transcendence of the Binary: Gender, Sex, Power, and Trauma

Although it extends far beyond the arts, the #metoo movement has had a powerful impact on artists. In this last section of the course we will look at how artists and

writers are contending with #metoo and the changes that the movement signals in our attitudes toward sexuality, power, and trauma.

QUEST ONE AND GENERAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Quest 1 Description: Quest 1 courses are multidisciplinary explorations of truly challenging questions about the human condition that are not easy to answer, but also not easy to ignore: What makes life worth living? What makes a society a fair one? How do we manage conflicts? Who are we in relation to other people or to the natural world? To grapple with the kinds of open-ended and complex intellectual challenges they will face as critical, creative, and self-reflective adults navigating a complex and interconnected world, Quest 1 students use the humanities approaches present in the course to mine texts for evidence, create arguments, and articulate ideas.
- Quest 1 SLOs:
 - Identify, describe, and explain the history, theories, and methodologies used to examine essential questions about the human condition within and across the arts and humanities disciplines incorporated into the course (Content).
 - Analyze and evaluate essential questions about the human condition using established practices appropriate for the arts and humanities disciplines incorporated into the course (Critical Thinking).
 - Connect course content with critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond (Critical Thinking).
 - Develop and present clear and effective responses to essential questions in oral and written forms as appropriate to the relevant humanities disciplines incorporated into the course (Communication).
- Humanities Description: Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.
- Humanities SLOs:
 - Identify, describe, and explain the history, underlying theory and methodologies used in the course (Content).
 - Identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape thought within the subject area. Approach issues and problems within the discipline from multiple perspectives (Critical Thinking).

- Communicate knowledge, thoughts and reasoning clearly and effectively (Communication).
- Diversity Description: In Diversity courses, students examine the historical processes and contemporary experiences characterizing social and cultural differences within the United States. Students engage with diversity as a dynamic concept related to human differences and their intersections, such as (but not limited to) race, gender identity, class, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and (dis)abilities. Students critically analyze and evaluate how social inequities are constructed and affect the opportunities and constraints across the US population. Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultures and beliefs mediate their own and other people's understandings of themselves and an increasingly diverse U.S. society.
- Diversity SLOs:
 - Identify, describe, and explain the historical processes and contemporary experiences characterizing diversity as a dynamic concept related to human differences and their intersections, such as (but not limited to) race, gender identity, class, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and disability (Content).
 - Analyze and evaluate how social inequities are constructed and affect the opportunities and constraints of different groups in the United States. Analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultures and beliefs mediate understandings of an increasingly diverse U.S. society (Critical Thinking).
- Writing Description: The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures that students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades have two components: the writing component and a course grade. **To receive writing credit a student must satisfactorily complete all the assigned written work and receive a minimum grade of C (2.0) for the course.** It is possible to not meet the writing requirement and still earn a minimum grade of C in a class, so students should review their degree audit after receiving their grade to verify receipt of credit for the writing component.
- Writing Evaluation:
 - This course carries 2000 words that count towards the UF Writing Requirement. You must turn in all written work counting towards the 2000 words in order to receive credit for those words.
 - The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written work with respect to content, organization and coherence, argument and support (when appropriate), style, clarity, grammar, punctuation, and other mechanics, using a published writing rubric.
 - More specific rubrics and guidelines for individual assignments may be provided during the course of the semester.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

Student Learning Outcomes

Reflecting the curricular structures of Quest 1 and these Gen Ed designations, after taking this course you will be able to:

1. Identify, describe, and explain how the resources available in the humanities allow you to make informed and thoughtful contributions to conversations about the relationship between politics and the arts. (Content SLOs for General Education Humanities and Quest 3.)
2. Identify and analyze the ways in which artists have contributed to political discourse in the West over the last hundred years. (Critical Thinking SLOs for General Education Humanities and Quest 3.)
3. Identify, evaluate, and analyze thoughtfully the moral questions raised by a consideration of the roles that gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual identity have played in the artistic and political arenas. (Critical Thinking SLO for General Education Humanities.)
4. Analyze and evaluate the impact that the arts have had on politics in arenas other than the ones we are studying. (Critical Thinking SLO for General Education Humanities.)
5. Analyze, evaluate, and reflect critically on the ways in which what you have learned in this course may contribute to your professional development at UF and beyond. (Critical Thinking SLO for Quest 2.)
6. Develop and present clear and effective responses to essential questions about the arts and politics in oral and written form. (Communication SLO for General Education Humanities and Quest 2.)
7. Be able to analyze and communicate, clearly and effectively, your ideas about the relationship between politics and the arts whenever events occur that bring that relationship to the fore. (Communication SLO for General Education Humanities and Quest 2.)
8. Develop the critical capacity to draw connections between past and present intersections of politics and the arts to articulate those connections cogently. (Critical Thinking SLO for Quest 2 and Communication SLO for General Education Humanities and Quest 2.)

BOOKS AND MATERIALS

Readings will consist mostly of short works (essays, stories, poems, novel excerpts) that will be made available to students via Canvas and that will average **20-30 pages per week**. In addition we will be discussing a few films that you will watch on your own time.

The usage guide for this course will be *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th Edition (University of Chicago Press).

ASSIGNMENTS

Over the course of the semester you will be asked to write three short response papers of 500-1000 words each. These essays should be considered as contributions to the endless conversation referenced in the course description in which you state plainly and frankly your perspective on one of the issues raised in the class. These are not to be regarded as traditional academic essays but as personal statements that demonstrate your thoughtful engagement with the topic. Don't be afraid to talk about yourself or to refer to yourself as "I."

At the end of the semester, you will be required to submit a creative project that constitutes an artistic response to a political issue of concern to you. Although this project may be in any genre, should you choose to submit a project that is *not* written, you must consult first with me. Written assignments will be graded according to the rubric outlined [here](#). Should you choose to submit your final project in a genre other than writing, please contact me and I will go over the grading rubric with you.

Throughout the semester, you will be expected to participate actively in classroom discussion. Although I will do some lecturing, most of our time will be devoted to *conversations* along the lines of the ones we will be studying. Your grade for this aspect of the class will be based less on how *much* you say than on *what* you say and how carefully you listen, both to me and to your fellow students. Please note that in these conversations, your goal should not be to score points, as in a debate, but to develop and refine your own perspectives by talking them through with one another. Openness to new ideas is essential to this process, as is respect for divergent views. (A proviso: some of us have a much easier time speaking in public than others. If you have anxieties about speaking in class, please see me and we can talk about how to deal with them.)

Experiential learning is a crucial aspect of Quest class. As the syllabus notes, over the course of the semester we will have the privilege of talking, either in person or via Skype, with a number of writers, artists, editors, and scholars. It will be on the basis of your interactions with these visitors that the experiential learning component of the course will be assessed.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND GRADING POLICIES

Grading will be based on the following criteria:

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|---|-----|
| • Participation in Class Discussion and Experiential Learning | 15% |
| • Quizzes | 20% |
| • Short Response Papers | 30% |
| • Final Project | 30% |

Grading Scale:

A	4.0	94-100
A-	3.67	90-93
B+	3.33	87-89
B	3.0	84-86
B-	2.67	80-83
C+	2.33	77-79
C	2.0	74-76
C-	1.67	70-73
D+	1.33	67-69
D	1.0	64-66
D-	0.67	60-63
E	0.00	0-59

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

Students are required to attend class regularly, to arrive on time, and to remain for the full class period. If a student misses more than **six** periods during a semester, they will fail the entire course. Missing class on a double period counts as **two** absences. **Only** those absences deemed excusable according to UF policy, including university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, illness, and religious holidays, will be exempted from this policy. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed. University policies on class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work are outlined [here](#).

If students are absent, it is their responsibility to make themselves aware of all due dates. If absent due to a scheduled event, students are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.

Make-Up Work

Work is due on the date specified on the syllabus. Work may be turned in late without penalty only when the student has valid **excused** absence. Otherwise there will be a 1/3 grade penalty for each twenty-four hours that a submission is late.

UF Honor Pledge

UF students are bound by the Honor Pledge which states: “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: ‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’ The [Honor Code](#) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate

personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in the class.”

Plagiarism & Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the [Student Honor Code](#). The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism. A Student must not represent as the Student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
2. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student’s own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student’s own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
4. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code.

Plagiarism on any assignment will result in an automatic grade of 0 and will be referred to the DSO.

Writing Studio

The Writing Studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the Writing Studio [online](#) at or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

[E-learning Technical Support](#) can be reached at (352) 392-4357 (select option 2) or by email at learning-support@ufl.edu.

[Library Support](#) can help you in using the libraries and finding resources.

UF’s [Teaching Center](#) in Broward Hall can help you with general study skills and tutoring. (352) 392-2010 or (352) 392-6420.

Classroom Behavior

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

Electronic devices should be switched off and put away during class meetings.

In-Class Work

In addition to written work, students will occasionally be asked to work in small groups in-class and to participate in group discussions. Be prepared for unannounced quizzes or activities in response to the readings or classroom discussion. Students must be present for all in-class activities to receive credit for them.

Paper Maintenance Responsibilities

Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material.

Mode of Submission

All written work should be submitted as a Microsoft Word document or rtf to canvas. Final drafts should be presented in a professional manner. All submissions must be in a legible 12-point font (Times, Times New Roman, and Garamond are recommended), double-spaced with a 1-inch margin and page numbers in the top-right hand corner of each page.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available [here](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. They can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or [here](#). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students [here](#).

Students Requiring Accommodations

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students requesting accommodation should contact the Students with Disabilities Office, Peabody 202 or online [here](#). Once registered, a student will receive an accommodation letter that they should then give to the instructor. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or call (352) 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

UF's [Counseling and Wellness Center](#) may be reached at (352) 392-1575.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Care Health Center, (352) 392-1161..

[The University Police Department](#) may be reached at (352) 392-1111. For emergencies, call 911.

Assignments and Written Work

Over the course of the semester, students will be asked to submit three short response essays (500-1000), one for each of the five course segments. These should be personal essays that reflect on and engage with what you have learned rather than traditional academic research papers. As a final project, each student will be asked to submit a creative project, in a genre to be agreed upon with the instructor, that represents a personal response to a political issue.

Virtual and Real Visits

From time to time, the class will have the opportunity to have a conversation, either in person or via Skype, with people who have personal experience of the subjects under discussion. Possible virtual and real visitors include:

- Henry Finder, Editorial Director, *The New Yorker*
- RL Goldberg, PhD Candidate, Princeton University
- Michael Hofmann, Translator, Poet, and Professor of English
- Patricia Lockwood, Poet and Essayist
- Ange Mlinko, Poet and Associate Professor of English
- Anis Shivani, Literary Critic and Novelist

COURSE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

The Emergence of Modernism

8.20: Introduction; Oscar Wilde on Moral and Immoral Books; The Advent of Modernism

8.22: What Happened in November 1910?

[Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" \(essay\)](#)

8.27: Modernism and Prophecy

[E. M. Forster, "The Machine Stops" \(short story\)](#); [T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men" \(poem\)](#)

8.29: Artistic Responses to World War One

[Sabotage, a film by Alfred Hitchcock \(1936\)](#)

9.3: The Dream of a Stable Foundation Collapses (1)

Excerpts from Jean Van Heijinoort, *From Frege to Gödel: A Source Book in Mathematical Logic* (Harvard University Press, 2002)

9.5: The Dream of a Stable Foundation Collapses (2)

World War Two, Anti-Semitism, and Diaspora

9.10 Responses to Anti-Semitism Before the Second World War

Selected Essays and Feuilletons by Joseph Roth

9.12: The Outbreak of War

W. H. Auden, “September 1, 1939” (poem)

9.17: Responses to the Holocaust

Cynthia Ozick, “Who Owns Anne Frank?” (Essay, *The New Yorker*, October 6, 1997)

9.19: Diaspora

Excerpt from Lore Segal’s *Other People’s Houses* (The New Press, 2004; originally published in 1964)

Chess Story, a novel by Stefan Zweig (NYRB, 2005; originally published in 1942)

9.24: Anti-Semitism and Literature: The Case of T. S. Eliot (1)

Cynthia Ozick, “T. S. Eliot at 101” (Essay, *The New Yorker*, November 20, 1989)

9.26: Anti-Semitism and Literature: The Case of T. S. Eliot (2)

Louis Menand, “Eliot and the Jews” (Essay, *The New York Review of Books*, June 6, 1996)

First Response Paper Due

“The Love that Dares Not Speak its Name,” the AIDS Epidemic, and the Foundations of Queer Identity

10.1: Gay and Lesbian Identity: Early Voices

E. M. Forster, Excerpt from *Maurice* (Norton, 2005; originally published in 1971)

10.3 Artistic Responses to the AIDS Crisis

Susan Sontag, “The Way We Live Now” (story) and accompanying paintings by Howard Hodgkin; art works by David Wojnarowicz

10.8: Literary Responses to the AIDS Crisis (1)

Allan Barnett, “*The Times as it Knows Us*” (story, from the collection *The Body and Its Dangers*, St. Martins, 1990)

10.10: Responses to the AIDS Crisis in Film(1)

Longtime Companion, a film by Norman René (1990, 96 minutes)

10.15: Responses to the AIDS Crisis in Film (2)

Parting Glances, a film by Bill Sherwood (1996, 90 minutes)

10.17: Responses to the AIDS Crisis in Theater

Marvin’s Room, a play by Scott MacPherson

Debates Over Diversity, Inclusion, and Identity Politics

10.22: Diversity and Identity Politics: Early Voices (1)

Grace Paley, “The Long-Distance Runner” (story, from *The Collected Stories*, FSG, 1993)

10.24: Calls for Change

Selections from the works of Gwendolyn Brooks and Langston Hughes

10.29: Contrarians and Anti-Contrarians (1)

Lionel Shriver’s Brisbane Lecture; Yassmin Abdiel-Magid’s response to it; Anis Shivani, “Notes on the Ascendancy of Identity Politics in Literary Writing” (*Subtropics* 23, Spring 2017)

10.31: Communitarianism and Community

Selected Short Essays by Roxane Gay

Second Response Paper Due

[The #metoo Phenomenon and the Transcendence of the Binary: Gender, Sex, Power, and Trauma](#)

11.5: Challenges to Patriarchy in the Arts

Grace Paley, “An Interest in Life” and “Living” (stories, from *The Collected Stories*); paintings and photographs by Sherrie Levine and Cindy Sherman; *Born in Flames*, a film by Lizzie Borden (1983, 1 hour 19 minutes)

11.7: The Discourse of Liberation

Excerpt from Catherine Millet’s *The Sexual Life of Catherine M.* (memoir, Grove 2001); paintings by Paula Rego

11.12: The Discourse of Trauma (1)

Reading: Jacqueline Rose, “I Am a Knife” (essay, *The London Review of Books*, February 22, 2018); Patricia Lockwood, “Rape Joke” (poem, from *Motherland Fatherland Homelandsexuals*, Penguin, 2014); Kristen Roupenian, “Cat Person” (story, *The New Yorker*, December 11, 2017)

11.14: The Discourse of Trauma (2)

11.19: The Backlash and the Backlash Against the Backlash

Reading: Jian Ghomeshi, “Reflections from a Hashtag” (essay, *The New York Review of Books*, October 11, 2018) and the responses it generated

11.21: The Transgender Experience (1)

Reading: Jacqueline Rose, “Who Do You Think You Are?” (essay, *London Review of Books*, May 5, 2016)

11.26: The Transgender Experience (2)

RL Goldberg, “A Conversation with My Father” (memoir, *Subtropics* 22, Fall/Winter 2016); Ryan Ruff Smith, “New Neighbors” (memoir, *Subtropics* 20/21, Spring/Summer 2016)

December

3: The “Shitty Media Men” List and its Repercussions

Third Response Paper Due

4: Final Thoughts