

# **IDS 2935, Section 1EW1**

## **Higher Education and the Pleasures of Creative Reading**

UF Quest 1 – Examined Lives

General Education – Humanities

Note: A minimum grade of C is required for General Education Credit

### **Time and Place**

Tuesday, Period 4 (10:40-11:30 a.m.); Turlington 011

Thursday, periods 4-5 (10:40 a.m.-12:35 p.m.); Weimer 0194

### **Instructors**

Dr. Phillip Wegner

Professor and Marston Milbauer Eminent Scholar in English

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Phone: 352-294-2813

Office location: Turlington 4115

Office Hours: Tuesday, 1-3 p.m.; and by appointment

Note: It is best to schedule an appointment by email to see Dr. Wegner, as otherwise you may have to wait during scheduled office hours.

Teaching Assistant: Ryan Kerr

TA email: [ryankerr@ufl.edu](mailto:ryankerr@ufl.edu)

TA Office: Turlington 4212

TA Office Hours: Thursday, 1-3 p.m.; and by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course will explore the importance of a rich and wide ranging reading in the humanities for living the best possible and most fulfilling life, and enacting to the fullest extent the principles of democratic self-governance. In his *apologia*, or defense speech at his trial, the Greek philosopher and teacher Socrates expresses the deep value of finding time every day for “conversing and testing myself and others;” this is because, Socrates famously concludes, “the unexamined life is not worth living.” Socrates’ words would profoundly shape for the next two millennia notions of the value of higher education: a full education should provide us not only with specific skills and technical training, but also the tools for engaging in an ongoing, rigorous, and even sometimes painful examination of ourselves and the complex world in which we live. At the very heart of such an education in the humanities is the creative activity of *reading*, the latter understood in its broadest sense as a scene of an encounter and conversation with books, visual arts, theater,

film, places, and even other people. If read in a truly creative fashion, these diverse works provide us with a way of accessing other lives and values necessary to reflect upon and examine our own. The founders of the United States similarly saw such an education as indispensable for the continuation of the fragile democratic experiment they had recently undertaken—and it is no coincidence that among the first things any tyrant does is to ban books and art, if not to restrict the activity of reading altogether. In our course, we will work to create a foundation for a life long practice of creative reading, both by looking at a rich variety of works that take up the themes of education, reading, and the examined life, and by engaging in such practices for ourselves. After reading Plato's account of Socrates' statements at his trial, we will look at to a handful of short readings that meditate on the role of higher education and especially its value for a democratic culture. We will then turn to a number of works where the themes of the importance of education and reading for an examined and free life are at the forefront. In the second half of the semester, we will shift our attention to diverse expressions of examined lives, from some of the earliest existent works of art to exciting recent fiction and film. These works will be drawn from a wide range of different national cultural traditions, and a number will deal directly with the issue of cultures in contact. In this way, they will also provide the means of thinking about what it means to live in an increasingly interconnected global world.

## **Course Policies**

### **1) Attendance**

As one of the fundamental aims of this course is to familiarize you with the core humanities practices of close reading and deep listening, your engaged presence in class is indispensable for our work. Given that this class will meet only two days a week, every student will be allowed to miss during the course of the semester no more than 6 hours of classroom time: I would recommend you reserve these for various appointments, short-term illnesses, or other reasons. Each additional absence will result in a lowering of the attendance grade by 20 points. If the attendance grade drops to a zero, you will be considered not to have completed the requirements of the course, and hence will not receive a passing grade. Late arrivals and/or early departures from class meetings (especially at the break on the two-hour meeting day) will be counted as 1 hour absences. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

## 2) Participation

You will discover that there are great benefits to your active engagement in our discussions in class. As someone who as a student was quite shy, I will be more than happy to meet with you individually to discuss strategies to enrich your participation in all of your future UF classes. However, participation is by no means simply a quantitative assessment of the number of times we hear your voice. Rather, participation encompasses the qualities of all your activities for the course. This includes the preparation demonstrated in both your oral and written work for each class meeting; bringing the materials to be discussed in class to each and every meeting; the seriousness and respect for the readings, the professor and your fellow students demonstrated in any contributions you make to the course; the timeliness of your turning in your assignments; and so forth.

## 3) Use of electronic devices

Students may use computers or other electronic platforms for accessing readings and/or taking notes. However, Wi-Fi connections should be turned off unless otherwise instructed, and students are not allowed to surf the web, work on other assignments, read novels, play games, view other pages, or engage in any other such activities during course discussion. Cell phones also should be turned off or silenced as soon as class begins. Violations of this policy will be deducted from your participation points, and may count as absence for that class meeting. If you have any questions about appropriate use of these devices please come and see me.

## 4) Course Reading

Readings should be completed before the class meeting in which they are to be discussed. This means that from our first meeting onward, you should be reading continuously, with the aim of getting ahead of our discussions. You are also required to bring copies of the readings to class. This course will ask you to do a good deal of reading, some of which you may find challenging in that they may lead to questions about deeply ingrained and unexamined assumptions and expectations. If you approach these works with an open mind, a spirit of adventure, and a willingness to expand your horizons, I think you will find the effort required well worth it. However, this will also mean that you need to work on developing in your reading skills new levels of attentiveness, concentration, and listening. The first step in becoming a stronger creative reader is to become a more active and engaged one. If you do not already do so, start reading with a pencil or pen in hand, marking passages that seem especially important or intriguing to you, and jotting insights and questions in the book's margins or on a near-by note pad. At the same time, you should try as much as possible to inhabit the intellectual and cultural contexts of the work's author. Ask yourself these questions of the readings: What are the writer's goals? What things does she or he challenge or call into question? What are the writer's own expectations and assumptions? How does she or he work to achieve

both their stated and implicit goals? And most importantly, in what ways does this work enable you to think in new ways?

### 5) Reading notes

During the course of the semester I will ask you to identify in advance at least three passages or scenes in the week's readings that are especially of interest to you or raise difficulties or questions, and which you would like to see addressed in class. This will be very straightforward, involving no more than noting the passage followed by a one- or two-sentence statement concerning why this passage intrigued you. For example:

-- Plato's *Apology*, pg. 33: "the unexamined life is not worth living." This seems very important for Plato. How do we examine life?

I do ask that you give points from three different places in any reading, and preferably from different readings (i.e. three passages from the first two pages of one essay won't fulfill the assignment).

Given the demands of all of our schedules, you will need to do this for only 10 of the 15 weekly readings, beginning with the second week of the semester. Of course, you may do the readings and submit your notes in advance. We will try to touch on a number of your points in discussion.

### 6) Writing assignments

A) As our course will explore a number of different practices and forms in the humanities, I will be asking you to prepare four 2-page written assignments where you summarize the protocols of reading for non-fiction, fiction, visual arts, and film, as these are developed in our class discussions. Think of these as short take-home quizzes more than a formal paper.

B) A mid-term 4-6 page close reading essay. This will be the semester's formal writing assignment, wherein I will ask you to select a passage from one of the work's of fiction we have read up to that point, and explain both the significance of the passage and how it relates to the larger themes and issues of the course.

### 7) Encounters beyond the classroom

A) Around mid-semester, we will plan a trip to UF's Harn Museum of Art, in order both to familiarize you with this extraordinary campus resource and to think a bit about the difference between reading visual art forms when viewed in person and in reproduction.

B) Interview project. During the course of the semester, every student will be required to meet with a faculty member in a UF humanities departments of interest to you. In advance of the meeting, you will do a short bit of research on the faculty member concerning their education, research, and scholarship (these are readily available on UF Department websites). This will be followed by a short, no more

than 15 minute interview where you ask that teacher about what led them to choose their vocation, and those things they find most rewarding about working in the humanities.

### 8) final exam

In order to encourage you to take good notes throughout the semester, the final exam will be open note, and involve short written responses to themes and issues we discuss during the semester. Typical questions might include:

- What is the name of the particular strategy of reading Homer's *Odyssey* that Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno practice in their essay? Discuss how they use this strategy to engage in a reading of the role of art and education in the present.
- Discuss two changes made in Gabriel Axel's film adaptation of "Babette's Feast." How does such a reading transform the story?

## **UF Policy Statements**

### Covid Policies

In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit [one.ufl.edu](https://one.ufl.edu) for screening / testing and vaccination opportunities.
- If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated. As with any excused absence, you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up missed work.

### **Accommodations for Disabilities**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor. Students needing accommodations should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### **Academic Honesty Policy**

Students are required to review the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Plagiarism or any other violation of the Student Honor and Conduct Code will result in an automatic failure of the assignment. A report will be filed with the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution Office.

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 Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions, and can be accessed at <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

### **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 at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>

### **In-Class Recording**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or

transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student.

## **Campus Resources**

### **Health and Wellness**

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

*Counseling and Wellness Center:* <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>, and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

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

*University Police Department* at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

### **Academic Resources**

*E-learning technical support:* 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to [Learning-support@ufl.edu](mailto:Learning-support@ufl.edu) / <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

*Career Resource Center:* Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/> (Links to an external site.)

*Library Support:* <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>  
Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

*Teaching Center:* Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>

*Writing Studio:* 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

### **Grading percentages**

1) Attendance (see above Course Policies 1)  
100 points

- 2) Participation (see above Course Policies 2)  
100 points
- 3) Passage identification assignments (see above Course Polices 4)  
10 X 30 points each = 300 points
- 4) Short “How to Read” papers (see above Course Policies 5)  
4 X 50 points = 200 points
- 5) Mid-term close reading essay (see above Course Policies 5)  
100 points
- 6) Interview (see above Course Policies 6)  
50 point
- 7) final exam (see above Course Policies 7)  
150 points

TOTAL: 1000 possible points

### **Grading Scale**

	A = 94-100% of points	A- = 90-93%
B+ = 87-89%	B = 84-86%	B- = 80-83%
C+ = 77-79%	C = 74-76%	C- = 70-73%
D+ = 67-69%	D = 64-66%	D- = 60-63%
<60=F		

See the following web page for UF policies for assigning grade points:  
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

### **Required texts**

William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (illustrated edition)  
Michelle Cliff, *Free Enterprise*  
Frederick Douglas, *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, A Slave*  
William Shakespeare, *Love’s Labor’s Lost*  
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*  
Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

As we will be doing a good deal of close reading in class, you need to pick up copies of the editions ordered for our course.

All shorter readings and images of paintings we will discuss will be made available on the course Canvas web site.



Beginning in week 6, we will be screening a number of films. I will arrange evening screening times; if these are unworkable for you, we can discuss other possibilities for viewing the films.

## **Anticipated Schedule**

This schedule is tentative and subject to change.

### **Part I: Introduction: Education for an Examined Life**

Week 1, January 10-12

Plato, *Apology* (c. 399 B.C.)

Week 2, Jan. 17-19

Immanuel Kant, "Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (1784)

Thomas Jefferson, from *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 14: Laws (1787); and "A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge," Section I (1778)

John Taylor, "The Virtue of an Educated Voter" (2016)

Excerpts from Ruling by Judge Mark E. Walker (2022)

### **Part II: Why Read?**

Week 3, Jan. 24-26

Franz Kafka, letter to Oskar Pollack (1904)

David Foster Wallace, "This is Water" (2005)

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, Preface and First Treatise (1887)

Week 4, Jan. 31-February 2

"The Twelve Articles of the Swabian Peasants" (1525)

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818)

### **"How to Read Non-Fiction" short paper #1 due on Tuesday, January 31**

Week 5, February 7-9

Frederick Douglass, *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, A Slave* (1845)

Week 6, Feb. 14-16

Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961)

Micha Ullman, *Bebelplatz Bibliothek Memorial* (1995)

### **Part III: Examined Lives I**

Week 7, Feb. 21-23

*Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, d. Werner Herzog (2010)

Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave paintings (29,000 – 27,000 B.C.)

Kim Stanley Robinson, from *Shaman* (2013)

*Visit to Harn Museum of Art*

**“How to Read Fiction” short paper #2 due on Tuesday, February 21**

Week 8, February 28-30

Homer, *Odyssey*, Book 12 (8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.)

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, “Parable of the Oarsmen” from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944)

Week 9, March 7-9

William Shakespeare, *Love’s Labor’s Lost* (1597)

filmed performance of the play

**Midterm close reading paper due Thursday, March 9**

Week 10, March 14-16:

Spring Break!

Week 11, March 21-23

Michelangelo de Caravaggio paintings (1571-1610)

Simon Schama’s episode of *Power of Art* (2006)

John Berger, “Carravagio” (1984)

William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790); with Blake’s illustrations

**Part IV: Examined Lives II**

Week 12, March 28-30

Michelle Cliff, *Free Enterprise* (2004)

J. M. W. Turner, *The Slave Ship* (1840)

**“How to Read a Painting” short paper due on Tuesday, March 28**

Week 13, April 4-6

Isak Dinesen, “Babette’s Feast” (1950)

film adaptation, *Babette’s Feast*, d. Gabriel Axel (1987)

Week 14, April 11-13

Joseph Conrad, “Preface” (1897)

Lu Hsun, Preface to *Call to Arms* (1922)

James Joyce, “The Dead” (1907)

**Humanities Faculty Interviews due on Thursday, April 11**

Week 15, April 18-20

Erich Auerbach, “Odysseus’ Scar” (1946)

*Rogue One*, d. Garerth Edwards (2016)

Week 16, April 25  
Ted Chiang, "Story of Your Life" (1998)  
film adaptation, *Arrival*, d. Dennis Villeneuve (2016)

**"How to Read a Film" short paper #4 due at the last class meeting, Tuesday, April 25**

**Finals week**  
**May 4, 5:30-7:30 p.m.: final examination**