Philosophy and Literature (Phil. 331)
Spring 2011, M and W 4:00-5:50 p.m.; 104CON.
Professor Alejandro A. Vallega

Syllabus

Class Description
This is an intensive upper level philosophy course with emphasis on the relationship between central issues in philosophy and the way these are articulated differently by literature. The central themes explored will be identity, narrative, writing, language, history, and time. The first part of the course will focus on developing the philosophical interpretation of these issues. We will do so by reading Illuminations by Walter Benjamin. The second part of the course will consist on developing these issues by looking directly at literary works by two Latin American writers: Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar. In reading each story we will identify philosophical themes by giving close attention to the function of story or narrative line, form, symbolism, style, and linguistic choices. The course will include introductory and methodological lectures on how to read philosophically, as well as close reading and interpretation of texts. The goal of the course is to introduce students to the philosophical reading of literature in order to ultimately expand their reading and interpretative philosophical skills and to challenge and expand the way they understand the limits and possibilities of conceptual philosophical knowledge.

Books Required
Please notice that the required materials are in English but native speakers and advanced Spanish majors are encouraged to read the authors in the original language.


Contact Information and Office Hours
Professor Vallega will be available during regular office hours or by appointment.
Office Number: Philosophy Department, PLC328
Office hours: M-W, 12:00 to 1:00
Email: avallega@uoregon.edu
In your emails please specify your full name and the title of the course you are attending.

Requirements
1. A final paper. This is an eight page paper: not less, and a page more when justified by the argument. The length does not include title page and reference page.
The paper should be double-space, font 12, with standard margins and top and bottom. The topic will concern material discussed in class and will be assigned by the instructor. You will be expected to include one of the suggested secondary sources, and be clear about the relevance of the source for your argument/discussion. All papers should be printed out; do not send papers by e-mail. Plagiarism will result in the automatic failure of the course (see Rules of Academic Honesty, below).

2. Course Reports. This is a weekly report that covers the material discussed in class. The first part of the report’s entry will include the main author/text discussed, themes, and technical issues such as form, symbolism, linguistic choices, etc…; the second part will be a one paragraph discussion of a specific aspect of the work or author that is most interesting to the student. This latter part should include the specific issue and a careful and thoughtful discussion of what and why this is of interest. The report will be collected twice in the semester, once in midterm and again at the end of the semester as a “comprehensive report” inclusive of all materials and themes discussed in class.

3. Course participation and class discussion. You are expected to attend all lectures and to participate actively in completing assignments in class and in class discussions. Keep in mind that this is a philosophy course, and this means that unlike other courses you must take the time to digest the ideas and themes of the course and to develop your understanding of them and your ability to think critically. This is accomplished in part by participating in class discussions: both by offering your understanding of the material and issues in a clear manner, and by listening carefully to your fellow students. During class discussion you will be expected to refer to and respond to your peers with respect.

4. A Comprehensive Final. (25%) We will have a comprehensive exam covering all material and discussions from the lectures. The test will require short sentence responses, with a final paragraph question.

Additional Requirements:
Any short writing in class must be clearly legible. All assignments outside of class are to be typed and turned in when due, unless you have a documented excuse. All late assignments are to be turned in no later than a week after their original due date and with the permission of the professor.

**Grade Breakdown**
2 Course Reports 40% (20% each); Final Paper 25%; Final Comprehensive exam 25%; and attendance and class participation 10%. **Failure to complete any of these requirements will result in a “D” or failure.**

Grade Rubric:
A = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.
B = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.
C = OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.
D = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.
F = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.
Please note that the grades refer to the expected level of general performance, and to the understanding and articulation of the material covered in this course.

**Course Policies**

1. **Attendance**

   It is the student’s responsibility to be in class and to make up the class assignments you have missed. Make sure you have at least one person in class who can provide you with notes and assignment information. Once you have worked on the material you missed, if you do not understand it or need clarification make sure you come and see me during office hours.

   **Two consecutive unexcused absences will result in a “D” or lower grade for the course.** If you know that you will be absent from class or if you have an emergency, notify the instructor before class or as soon as you can, make sure that you speak with him in person. Only serious emergencies will be considered as sufficient reason for an excused absence. Those who must be absent from class for athletic activities or other responsibilities related to the university will be expected to make up all work and may be required to meet with the instructor in order to discuss in detail their understanding of the material covered in class.

   **Unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your grade.**

2. **Computer, Cell Phone, and Electronic Equipment Policy**

   The use of computers, cell phones, or any other electronic equipment not specifically allowed by the instructor is not permitted during class.

3. **Rules of Academic Honesty**

   The following acts of academic honesty will result in course failure, i.e., an "F"

   **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else’s product, words, ideas, or data as one’s own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. By placing one’s name on work submitted for credit, one certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. Verbatim statements by others must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from the regular text as indented extracts.

   Students will avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is acknowledgement of indebtedness. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever: 1) one quotes another person’s actual words or replicates all or part of another’s product; 2) one uses another person’s ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one’s own words; 3) one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material—unless the information is common knowledge.

   Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. If in doubt, consult the instructor or seek assistance from the staff of Academic Learning Services (68 PLC, 346-3226). In addition, it is plagiarism to submit as your own any academic exercise prepared totally or in part by another person, even if that person is acting as a tutor or editor (and ends up substantially producing part of the work).

   **Fabrication:** Fabrication is the intentional use of information that the author has invented when he or she states or implies otherwise, or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive. Examples include, but are not limited to: 1) citing information not taken from the source indicated; 2) listing sources in a reference not used in the academic exercise; 3) inventing data or source information for research or other academic exercises.
**Cheating:** Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents or misleadingly demonstrates that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered, including the giving or receiving of unauthorized help in an academic exercise. Examples include but are not limited to: 1) copying from another student’s work; 2) collaborating without authority or allowing another student to copy one’s work in a test situation; 3) using the course textbook or other material not authorized for use during a test; 4) using unauthorized material during a test; for example, notes, formula lists, cues on a computer, photographs, symbolic representations, and notes written on clothing; 5) resubmitting substantially the same work that was produced for another assignment without the knowledge and permission of the instructor; 6) taking a test for someone else or permitting someone else to take a test for you.

**Course Reading Schedule**

All readings are to be done before class.

**WEEK I**
9/26- Syllabus and requirements. Introduction: Introduction to main themes and methodologies. Lecture: The eruption of time into history.


**WEEK II**
10/ 3-5 Walter Benjamin “The Storyteller” *Illuminations*

**WEEK III**
10/ 10-12 Walter Benjamin “The Task of the Translator” *Illuminations*

**WEEK IV**
10/ 17-19 Walter Benjamin “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” *Illuminations* [Assignment sheet handed out]

**WEEK V**
10/ 24-26 Review and Research Week. [Review sheet- stories by Borges]

**WEEK VI**

**WEEK VII**
11/ 7-9 *Artifices* (1944): “Funes His Memory,” “The Secret Miracle.”

**WEEK VIII**
16- *The Maker* (1960): “A Problem” and “Ragmarok.” *The Book of Sand*

**WEEK IX**
23- “Blowup.” [Paper assignment handed out]

-------------11/ 24-25 THANKS GIVING-------------
WEEK X 11/28 Antonioni’s “Blowup.”
[COURSE REPORTS AND FINAL PAPER DUE]

11/30 FINAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAM