New Course Proposal

**Fictions of Judgment: Austen and Kleist**

Fall 2021

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**Program in Comparative Literature and Translation Studies**

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**Course Description**

This course investigates how works of fiction stage what it means to make moral, aesthetic, and political judgments and how they may continue to teach readers today lessons in judgment. It focuses on works by two authors, Jane Austen (1775-1817) and Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811), who were contemporaries of one another at a time when the Western philosophical tradition was re-defining the intellectual activity of judgment itself in relation to new and modern understandings of reason, truth, and knowledge. We will read three of Austen’s six completed novels and a play, short stories, a novella, and prose writings by Kleist. Topics include self-knowledge, judgment, freedom, and autonomy; gender, class, race, and imperialism.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will learn in this course how to

•perform literary analysis in relation to texts of philosophy, theory, and political thought

•work between literary, philosophical, and theoretical texts across periods, languages, and cultures

•grapple with the question of what an intellectual tradition *is* while differentiating between different cultural traditions of poetics and theory

•pursue a sustained path of intellectual inquiry through engagement with a fundamental philosophical question with and through works of art

**Course Texts**

The following texts will be available at Book Culture.

Austen, Jane, *Mansfield Park* (Penguin)

*Persuasion* (Penguin)

*Pride and Prejudice* (Penguin)

Coetzee, J. M., *Life & Times of Michael K* (Penguin)

Kant, Immanuel, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. James W. Ellington (Hackett)

Kleist, Heinrich von, *The Marquise of O and Other Stories*, trans. David Luke and Nigel Reeves (Penguin)

For students who read German:

*Sämtliche Werke und Briefe* (Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag)

All other readings will be available as pdfs on our Courseworks class website, under “Files and Resources,” and are marked in the schedule with an asterisk.

**Course Policies and Requirements**

1. **Attendance and Punctuality.** Regular attendance is required. If you need to be absent from class because of an important matter, e.g., medical emergencies, illness or death of a family member, major religious holidays, please let me know in advance in person or by e-mail. More than three absences will lower your participation grade. A pattern of tardiness will likewise lower your participation grade.
2. **Preparation, Active Reading, and Engaged Presence.** Please come to class having read the assigned material carefully by the day it is scheduled for discussion. Please be prepared to share your ideas with the class. Your active participation is highly encouraged and will factor into your final grade for the course.

Bring your books to class. Our discussions depend on close attention to textual details, and it will be very difficult to have in-depth discussions and make surprising discoveries without the hard copies.

Laptops and tablets can be used for secondary critical texts and for note-taking, but I do expect you to be fully present to one another and not to be distracted by screens.

1. **Assignments**: Three 4-5 pp. papers, one oral presentation, occasional exercises and reading responses. All papers must be typed, in 12 pt. font, double-spaced, and carefully proofread. The pages are to be numbered and stapled together. I accept hard-copy submissions only. Papers are due in class on the dates indicated. One third of a letter grade (for example, from a B+ to a B) will be deducted from papers each day they are late. Please refer to the *MLA Style Manual* for proper citation of all sources.

I will distribute topics for oral presentations that should last around 10-15 minutes in duration. These presentations are meant to be formal affairs that should resemble papers in clarity of structure, conceptual rigor and depth, but differ from papers in their more open-ended, communicative quality. I will give more detailed instructions as to the elements of an effective presentation in the second week of the class.

I will also assign occasional exercises, e.g., précis of theoretical arguments, and Coursework Discussion Board responses. Discussion Board responses should consist of thoughtfully formulated questions and/or critical comments on the reading in question, and they should be posted by 5 p.m. the evening before the next class. All members of the class are expected to have read and to be prepared to discuss and respond to each other’s ideas.

**Course Evaluation**

Your final grade will be determined on the following basis:

Class participation (regular attendance and engaged presence): 15%

Exercises and Discussion Board responses: 10%

Oral presentation: 15%

Paper One: 20%

Paper Two: 20%

Paper Three: 20%

**Accommodation of Disability**

Students with a documented disability may be eligible for academic accommodations. If you have a documented disability, please let me know as early as possible in the semester so that arrangements for accommodations may be made in advance. Please note that you are required to register in advance with the Office of Disability Services. (For more information, go to <http://barnard.edu/disabilityservices>.)

**Academic Integrity**

I expect you to be familiar with the codes governing plagiarism and standards of academic integrity as detailed in the Barnard College Honor Code. (For the text of the Honor Code, go to <http://barnard.edu/dos/honorcode>.) Any failure to uphold these standards of academic integrity will carry severe consequences.

**Schedule**

Introduction

Excerpts from Austen

“On the Marionette Theater”

I.

Rational Happiness

*Pride and Prejudice*

*Mansfield Park*

Second Thoughts

*Persuasion*

II.

“On the Marionette Theater”

De Man, “Aesthetic Formalization in Kleist’s ‘On the Marionette Theater’”

Kant,

“On the Gradual Production of Thoughts While Speaking”

“The Marquise of O”

Rohmer, “The Marquise of O”

*The Broken Jug*

“The Betrothal in Santo Domingo”

“Michael Kohlhaas”

*Life & Times of Michael K*