WLL 460 Politics and Literature in the Twentieth Century

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Prerequisites for this Capstone course are junior or senior standing and completion of all General Education courses that build Core Objectives 1-3 and satisfy Core Objectives 4-8.

Textbooks

These editions are recommended but any are acceptable. I have indicated the cheapest editions available from amazon.com. Used copies are fine.

Description
This course examines how literature has been both a means of political expression and a narrative of political experience. Topics include the effect of literature in shaping political events, literature as a critique of ideology, literary testimony of the experience of violence and imprisonment, political ideology as a motivator of literary creation, and the struggle between public conformity and private conscience. Through readings by authors such as Brecht, Orwell, Hemingway and Ana Maria Moix, we will examine how political factors influenced the shaping of personal identity and set the terms of moral choice in the twentieth century.

Course design
About two thirds of our class meetings, and four of the six assigned books, address the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and its aftermath. A set of questions for you to consider in reading each of the assigned books is posted on Web Campus. Some of these questions address literary aspects of the readings; others, the historical and political context and aspects of biography. Other questions will ask you to comment on parallels between what we have read and events in the world today. Your answers to these questions will be evaluated according to the degree to which they are founded on evidence (both textual and factual) and on reason, rather than on your feelings and personal opinions. This standard applies to your discussion contributions, your class presentation and the expanded, written version of the discussion you led. You must prepare two copies of your answers to each set of discussion questions, one to hand in at the start of the hour, another to use during the discussion.

Beginning in Week 6, each student will be responsible for presenting his or her answers to the questions on the assigned reading as a way of leading the class through a detailed and meaningful discussion. In other words, you will be conducting the seminar for part of our readings. A final, written version of your presentation, in which you take account of the suggestions and objections made by your classmates and the instructor, is due on the last day of class (5/12). On the days on which you are not leading the discussion of the book, you are still expected to have thought about the questions and made a conscientious attempt to answer them. I will apply the criterion given above (‘reason and evidence rather than feelings and personal opinions’) in estimating the merits of your regular contributions to discussion.

This course satisfies both Core Objective 12 (Ethics) and Core Objective 13 (Capstone: Integration and Synthesis) of Silver Vein IV (Integrative Experience). What follows is a brief description of each of these objectives; a description of the Student Learning Outcomes associated with each in this course; and a description of the means by which the Student Learning Outcomes will be assessed.

Core Objective 12 (Ethics)
Students will acquire a thorough grounding in the genre of politically engaged literature as well as a sense of the moral dilemmas that have compelled authors to write on political themes. They will demonstrate understanding of ethical principles as they presented themselves both to writers and to ordinary citizens in specific political contexts of the twentieth century. Moreover, they will demonstrate an ability to recognize, articulate, and apply ethical principles in the personal and political contexts of their own lives.

Student Learning Outcomes for CO 12
Students will be able to (1) identify and analyze ethical issues in the subject matter under investigation; (2) identify the multiple ethical interests at stake in real-world situations; and (3) articulate what makes a particular course of action ethically defensible.
Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes for CO 12 will use (1) oral presentations that critically discuss ethical principles as these are applied in the professional practice of politically engaged writers; (2) writing assignments (evolved from the oral presentations) that encourage students to articulate an ethical course of action for a specific decision-maker encountered in the readings, and to defend that recommendation using ethical principles and values examined in class; and (3) midterm and final exam questions that require demonstration of knowledge of ethical values and principles.

Core Objective 13 (Capstone: Integration and Synthesis)
This course combines knowledge gained in other Core courses with knowledge gained in the major. Students will be able to integrate and synthesize Core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems or complex issues.

Student Learning Outcomes for CO 13
To assure competence in integration, this course enables students to combine knowledge gained from two Core Objectives in Vein I and one Core Objective in Vein III, namely:
CO1: Effective Composition and Communication. Emphasis is placed on the rigorous use of language to present arguments that provoke reasoned, evidence-based debate in discussion and in written coursework.
CO3: Critical Analysis and Use of Information.
CO12: Ethics. Students will demonstrate understanding of the ethical principles raised in the readings and demonstrate an ability to recognize and apply ethical principles in the context of their own lives.
To assure competence in synthesis, this course enables students to develop new information using techniques from different disciplines learned in previous Core Objectives and use that information to analyze a complex issue. Specifically:
1. Students will be able to explain key theories in the discipline related to the course topic. This objective applies to both literary and political theory. On the first score we will investigate the notions of literariness, of art for art’s sake, of ’engaged’ literature and meta-textuality; and on the other, the theoretical origins (in Herder’s writings on the nation, Montesquieu’s Spirit of Laws, Hobbes’s Leviathan, Kant’s ‘What Is Enlightenment?’ and other works read in excerpts) of the political ideologies that clashed in the twentieth century.
2. Students will be able to critically examine how one’s configuration within intersecting social forces impacts one’s worldview. Students will acquire an increased awareness of the way political reality impinges on literary creation and on the lives of ordinary people. They will appreciate the moral choices that confront those who are forced to struggle to maintain their integrity and dignity in the face of political oppression, and who must cope with even subtler demands for conformity and silence.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes for CO 13
Student presentations of individual works and the revised written versions submitted afterwards are organized around questions that challenge students’ critical thinking skills (CO3). This purpose is also furthered by the application of specific standards in class discussions (see detailed descriptions below). A quantitative assessment of students’ mastery of course content is provided by a midterm and a final exam combining both objective (true/false; multiple choice; identification of names, terms and texts) and open-form (written response) questions (CO1). Some questions on the exams and in the questions for discussion require students to put themselves in the shoes of a literary character whose moral values are being severely tried; others involve a comparison of ethical problems encountered in the readings with ones encountered in earlier coursework. In effect, students must demonstrate that they can analyze open-ended problems or complex issues. In so doing, they provide material for assessing the effective integration of CO12 into CO13.

Participation Scale
Since your participation counts for 20% of your course grade, it is important to understand the standard that will be applied in evaluating it. The guiding principle is that you must use reason and evidence (particularly evidence found in the texts) to support what you say. The emphasis is not on how you feel about things, but on how convincingly you can argue a position about them. You are welcome to express any opinion about the material of the course, but you will be required to defend your opinion using reason and evidence, rather than by proclaiming your feelings or talking about yourself or making general claims about ‘life’ and ‘people’. In terms of your graded performance in class discussions, this principle translates as follows:

A level (100 – 90): Today I brought all class materials with me to class. I was ready to begin at the start of the hour. I had read all of the assigned texts and had annotated them as I read, noting the details that struck me so that I could locate them quickly during the discussion and bring them forward as evidence to support my contribution. I had prepared a thoughtful written answer to any prompts or study questions provided in connection with the assigned readings, having understood that the effort required to put my ideas and reactions to the readings into written form gives them a clarity and definition they would not have if I trusted solely to my ability to express them spontaneously in class. The several contributions I made to today’s discussion were not disconnected points having no relation to each other. Rather, I was able to show that they were parts of a larger, over-arching argument which I had tried to formulate beforehand in a carefully considered form of words. I made an active effort to contribute to every phase of today’s discussion, both by advancing my own well-founded critical argument and by responding to the views expressed by other students in such a way that our general discussion led to a more fully informed understanding of the problems we addressed together. Where matters of vocabulary and historical fact in the readings were unclear to me, I had consulted reference materials beforehand in order better to understand them, and was ready to contribute what I had found to our
discussion. During the whole time of today’s discussion I stayed focused on the intellectual problems we were addressing. My demeanor was serious, courteous, and mature. I took full notes of any supplementary information provided by the instructor, particularly anything written on the board.

**B level (80 – 89):** I spoke up once or twice and made a worthwhile contribution to today’s discussion. I had read the assigned texts, thought about them, and brought them with me to class. My remarks, though relevant to the questions raised, were more in the nature of casual associations than attempts to work out a critical train of thought. Something in today’s readings may have reminded me of an anecdote from my personal experience, or something that happened to a relative or friend of mine, or something I saw in a movie or on TV, and I shared this connection with the class. In doing this, I contributed actively to building a positive spirit of inquiry in today’s discussion, although the sum of my remarks did not amount to a consecutive argument composed of several parts and capable of standing on its own merits, like the A student’s contribution. My attitude was friendly and courteous. At times my attention wandered from the task at hand, but I did not indulge in irrelevant private conversations or exchanges with my neighbor.

**C level (70 – 79):** I came to class today, but I either arrived late; or I did not have some of the assigned readings with me; or I had not read all of the assigned readings; or I volunteered nothing to the general discussion; or, if I did speak up, my comment(s) showed no specific relation to the content of the assigned readings or no serious thought about the study questions or prompts provided but were more in the nature of “shooting the breeze”. I paid only partial or intermittent attention to the group discussion, being occupied for at least some of the time with private. The best that can be said of my contribution to today’s discussion was that it did not actively hinder the process of learning.

**D and F levels (69 and below):** My participation had a negative impact on today’s discussion. I was present for some or all of the time, but I either carried on private conversations or whispered exchanges with another student while the instructor was speaking or while the class was engaged in group discussion; or I volunteered comments which were evidently contemptuous of the effort the rest of the class was making to think constructively about the matter at hand; or my behavior in the classroom was in some other way rude or childish, and so obstructed the process of learning.

**Checklist for discussion preparation**
The instructions prefixed to each set of questions about the readings in this course are: “Write thoughtful, text-based answers in full sentences. Your answers to the questions should not be lengthy—in most cases a single sentence is enough—but they must be clearly and concisely formulated, with attention to grammar, logic and the choice of words. References to the text that you use to support your answer need not be incorporated into your sentence(s), but you should indicate them on the page (in the margin or underneath your written answer). Bring two copies of your completed answers to class, one to hand in, the other to use during class.”

These instructions are given in the form of a checklist below. You may wish to print it out and use it to check your work before it is collected at the start of the hour. I will use the same checklist to monitor your weekly preparation for our discussions.

- [ ] Answers were thoughtful and text-based?
- [ ] Answers were full sentences?
- [ ] Answers were not lengthy?
- [ ] Answers were clearly and concisely formulated?
- [ ] Grammar, logic and choice of words were clear and correct?
- [ ] References to text were indicated on page?
- [ ] Two copies were brought to class?

**General Instructions for Student-Led Discussions**
Beginning in the sixth week of the semester, with the start of the student-led discussion sequence, the regular procedure for preparing answers to the questions uploaded for discussion will be adjusted as follows:

1. All students will still follow the guidelines given in the Checklist for Discussion Preparation but are only required to answer questions that do not bear an asterisk (*). You should still answer in full, written-out sentences that can be read out loud in class, and bring two copies of your answers to class.
2. The student who leads the discussion must answer all the questions uploaded for discussion (including those marked with an asterisk *). His or her answers should give evidence of serious reflection and of prolonged consideration of the text. They should be thoughtful and full. Don’t hesitate to follow your intuitions as a critic, and to speculate; but make sure your answers are always firmly rooted in the evidence of the text itself.

3. The student leading the discussion will (a) read each question aloud; (b) read his or her answer to that question aloud; (c) call on three or four students in the class in turn to contribute their answers. The discussion leader thus becomes a kind of moderator of the discussion. (Pacing is a factor here. If necessary, I will indicate when it is time to proceed to the next question.)

4. For the questions that only the discussion leader is required to answer (those marked with an asterisk *), he or she will read his or her answer out loud and then invite the class to respond to it; to test it against their own impressions and ideas; to argue about it.

5. After the discussion, I will give the discussion leader the duplicate copies of the prepared answers that the class has handed in to me. In writing up your final, written version of your presentation for the end of the course, you should consider these other answers and incorporate them in your written version, commenting on them thoughtfully and critically so as to produce a comprehensive résumé of the whole discussion.

Other class policies
- Late homework and compositions will not be accepted and make-up exams will not be given unless the student has a medical justification.
- The dates for the midterm and final exams are specified in the syllabus and will not be changed to accommodate students’ travel plans or other personal issues.
- Attendance is required and checked daily. If there is a medical reason for being absent, the student must call the instructor on the day of the illness. Only then can the absence be considered an excused absence, which will not lower the final grade. Absences due to delayed or missed flights, trains, buses, etc. are unexcused absences. One unexcused absence per course will not have repercussions on a student’s grade. Two unexcused absences will lower the grade in attendance by five points out of a total of ten points. If a student has three unexcused absences, s/he will not receive any points in attendance.
- Class starts punctually. Late arrival and early departure from class will count as half an absence. It is important to be on time.
- No extra credit will be given under any circumstance.
- Students are responsible to confirm that all assignments have been received by their instructor. This includes assignments submitted electronically or left on the instructor’s desk or mailbox when the instructor is not present.
- Classroom decorum: All cell phones and electronic devices must be turned off and put away, unless your teacher wants to use them as educational tools. Texting or having a cell phone on/ringing in class is disrespectful to the instructor and the other students. If you use these devices after being warned, you will be asked to leave class, and you will be counted absent (unexcused) for that day.
- Eating is not permitted in class.
- Should you need to use the restroom, please raise your hand and ask permission before leaving the classroom.

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<td>Attendance</td>
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<td>Informed participation</td>
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<td>Class presentation of an assigned text</td>
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<td>Written, revised version of the class presentation</td>
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<td>Midterm exam</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
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Course schedule
Note: This schedule indicates the portion of class time (amounting to 15 hours or 1 credit) devoted to satisfying CO 12 (Ethics).

Week 1 (1/13 & 1/15)
Readings provided: excerpts from Stendhal, Wilde, Yeats, Marinetti
**CO 12 component addressed: Is moral choice unavoidable?** Does the imperative of moral choice apply to creative writers as well as to politically ‘engaged’ ones? If so, what does this imply about the moral status of writers who assert the principle of ‘art for art’s sake’? Are they in a morally untenable position?

**Week 2** (1/20 & 1/22)  
**Reading:** Brecht

**Week 3** (1/27 & 1/29)  
Individual conscience and the pressure of authority. Brecht in the German Democratic Republic.  
**Reading:** Brecht

**CO 12 component addressed: Action or advocacy?** Should political actors and political writers be judged by the moral positions they advocate or by their personal political conduct? Both Brecht and Galileo advocated the courage required to speak truth to power; yet both showed cowardice when faced with this challenge in their own lives. **CO 13 component addressed:** The question arises whether human beings have free will or are determined to act as they do by factors beyond their control. Which approaches, from which other courses you have taken, might be useful in considering this question?

**Week 4** (2/3 & 2/5)  
The Holocaust. Adorno and ‘poetry after Auschwitz’.  
**Reading:** Borowski

**Week 5** (2/10 & 2/12)  
Survival and guilt. Nihilism.  
**Reading:** Borowski

**CO 12 component addressed: Free will v. determinism.** Are we free to make ethical choices, or are those choices determined by circumstances? Do extreme conditions (such as those in a concentration camp) exonerate one from failing to behave ethically? **CO 13 component addressed:** Which relevant theories, from which disciplines you have encountered in your studies, have a bearing on this fundamental question?

**Week 6** (2/17 & 2/19)  
The Spanish Civil War in testimony and imagination, 1.  
**Reading:** Hemingway

**Week 7** (2/24 & 2/26: Field Studies Trip to Andalucía, no class)

**Week 8** (3/3 & 3/5)  
The Spanish Civil War in testimony and imagination, 2.  
**Reading:** Hemingway

**CO 12 component addressed: Heroism and political extremism.** If the sacrifice of one’s own life is warranted by deeply held political beliefs, what about the sacrifice of others’ lives? Is a commander authorized to sacrifice the lives of others? Is a revolutionary? a terrorist? **CO 13 component addressed:** How does the meaning of terms such as ‘terrorist’ and ‘freedom-fighter’ vary according to factors you have encountered or contexts you have explored in other courses (e.g. in psychology, political science, history)?

**Week 9** (3/10 & 3/12)  
The Spanish Civil War in testimony and imagination, 3.  
**Reading:** Moix. Review for midterm.

**Week 10** (3/17 [3/19: no class])  
**Midterm exam:** 3/17

**Week 11** (3/24 & 3/26)  
The Spanish Civil War in testimony and imagination, 4.  
**Reading:** Orwell

**CO 12 component addressed: Left and Right; Right and Wrong.** Can there be a political standard of correct moral conduct? Or can morally admirable or morally detestable individuals occupy any position on the political spectrum? **CO 13 component addressed:**
addressed: In which other courses have you studied left- and right-wing political orientations? Which differences are apparent in the particular context of Orwell’s participation in the Spanish Civil War?

Week 12 (3/31 & 4/2: Spring Break, no class)

Week 13 (4/7 & 4/9)
The Spanish Civil War in testimony and imagination, 5.
Reading: Orwell

Week 14 (4/14 & 4/16)
The Spanish Civil War in testimony and imagination, 6.
Reading: Orwell

Week 15 (4/21 & 4/23)
The Spanish Civil War in testimony and imagination, 7.
Film: Viva la muerte (Arrabal) to be shown in class.

Week 16 (4/28 & 5/30)
The Spanish Civil War in testimony and imagination, 8.
Reading: Muñoz Molina

Week 17 (5/5 & 5/7)
The Spanish Civil War in testimony and imagination, 9. Review for final.
Reading: Muñoz Molina

CO 12 component addressed: Personal loyalty and ideological purity. Which is more important, fidelity to an individual human being or fidelity to a belief system? What happens when the two standards of ethical conduct come into conflict with one other? CO 13 component addressed: How would you act under circumstances requiring you to make this hard choice? Why?

Conclusion.
Final exam: 5/14

DISABILITY POLICY
Every effort will be made to accommodate students with disabilities or special learning needs. If you have a documented disability for which you have already requested accommodations through the USAC Central office, your instructor will have been notified so that arrangements can be made early in the term.

ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY
Plagiarism, cheating, submitting work of another person or work previously used and other forms of academic dishonesty will lead to lowered course grades, failure of the course or more severe measures, depending on judgments of the gravity of the individual case.

STATEMENT ON AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING
Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.