

Fall 2025
GET3930/JST3930/LIT4930
Kafka and the Kafkaesque

Instructor: Eric Kligerman

Office Hours: Wed. 9-11am and by appt.

Time: Tues. period 7 (1:55-2:45pm)

Thurs. periods 7 and 8 (1:55- 3:50pm)

Zoom Link to Office hours:

Email: ekligerm@ufl.edu

This seminar will explore the writings of Franz Kafka and the effect that his literary legacy has had on literature and film. Our objective will be to analyze how elements of modern consciousness and "the Kafkaesque" reappear in selected texts of later modern and postmodern writers and filmmakers. The first part of the seminar will focus on understanding Kafka's complex narratives and his place and influence in literary and cultural history of Jewish-German-Czech Prague in the first decades of the 20th century. Our study of Kafka's work will be situated alongside the debates regarding European modernity within the context of Jewish languages, culture and identity. In addition to reading short stories (including *The Metamorphosis*, *In the Penal Colony*, and *The Hunger Artist*), we will turn to his novels *Amerika* and *The Trial*, personal diaries and correspondences. Our readings of Kafka will center on such topics as law and justice, family and solitude, humans and animals, modernity, travel, the crisis of language and Judaism.

After our in-depth analysis of Kafka's works, we will explore the major role Kafka played in the construction of the modern and postmodern literary canon of the twentieth century. The course will explore Kafka's impact on American literature, cinema and literary criticism. We will trace "the Kafkaesque" in the narrative fictions of selected authors, including W.H. Auden, Zadie Smith, Phillip Roth and Vladimir Nabokov, and filmmakers such as Orson Welles, David Lynch and the Coen brothers.

- Texts:**
1. PDFs on Canvas
 2. *Der Process (The Trial)*
 3. *Die Schloss (The Castle)*
 4. *Brief an den Vater (Letter to his Father)*
 5. *Erzählungen (Collected Short Stories)*

Grading:

Final Research Paper (8-10 pages)	25%
Participation 20%/attendance 5%	25%
Midterm Exam (take home)	25%
Final Exam (take home)	25%

1) Students are allowed 4 unexcused absences. 1/2 a point will be deducted from your final grade for each unexcused absence thereafter. Missing a Thursday class is equivalent to 1.5 days, while missing a Tuesday class is equal to 1 class. **If you miss 8 classes in the semester, you will automatically fail the course. Participation will play a major part of the final grade and students are expected to partake and contribute daily to class discussions. If you do not bring to class the text we are discussing for that day, you will be marked as absent.**

2) There will be a take home midterm and take-home final exam comprised of identification and short answer essay questions.

3) There will be final research paper on topic of choice selected by the student in consultation with me. **The final paper is due 12/12. Late papers will not be accepted.**

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. Violations of the honor code include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, bribery, misrepresentation, fabrication, and conspiracy. Such violations may result in the following: lowering of grades, mandatory 0 on assignments, redoing assignments, a final failing grade in the course, expulsion from the course, referral to the student-run Honor Court. 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.* For more information, refer to: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/>

Students with Special Needs:

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Syllabus subject to change:

Reading and Writing

8/21 Introduction: Andy Warhol's *Kafka* painting

Read: Kafka's parable "Cares of the Family Man"

Read: Batuman, "Kafka's Last Trial" (print out from NYT: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/26/magazine/26kafka-t.html>);

8/26 Continue: Batuman, "Kafka's Last Trial" (print out from NYT:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/26/magazine/26kafka-t.html>);

Before the Law; An Imperial Message; Cares of a Family Man; On Parables

Kafka's Languages:

8/28 Continue discussing: *Before the Law; An Imperial Message; Cares of a Family Man; On Parables*

"Limited Circle is Pure," Zadie Smith, "The Wandering Jew," W.H. Auden

9/2 "Letter to His Father"

Fathers and Sons:

9/4 "Letter to His Father"; “*I Always Wanted You to Admire My Fasting*”; or, *Looking at Kafka*,” Philip Roth

9/9 "The Judgment", Diary entry Sep. 23, 1912

9/11 “The Judgment”

The Body Inscribed:

9/16 “*In the Penal Colony*”

9/18 “*In the Penal Colony*”

9/23 "A Hunger Artist"

9/25 “A Hunger Artist”

Trials and the Idea of Judgment:

9/30 *The Trial*

10/2 *The Trial*

10/7 *The Trial*

10/9 Orson Welles, *The Trial* (1962)

“How Franz Kafka Achieved Cult Status in Cold War America,” Brian Goodman
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I96axApGlwc>

10/14 Orson Welles, *The Trial* (1962):

(10/12- take-home midterm due)

10/16 Kafka’s “Hunter Gracchus”

Kafka’s Animals

10/21 “*The Metamorphosis*”

“Lectures on the Metamorphosis,” Vladimir Nabokov:
<http://www.kafka.org/index.php?id=191,209,0,0,1,0>

10/23 “The Metamorphosis”

David Lynch, *Eraserhead* (1977)

10/28 David Lynch, *Eraserhead* (1977)

*Suggested texts: "Jackals and Arabs", "A Crossbreed", "Investigations of a Dog";
"Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk" "A Report to an Academy"*

11/30 *Eraserhead*

Facing Authority:

11/4 Kafka, *The Castle*

11/6 Kafka, *The Castle*

11/11 Holiday

11/13 Kafka, *The Castle*

11/18 Kafka, *The Castle*

11/20 Coen Brothers, *A Serious Man*

Aspects of the Kafkaesque in American Cinema and Literature (find times for viewing)

11/25 (Thanksgiving)

12/2 Coen Brothers, *A Serious Man*,

Take-home Final Exam due date 12/6

Final Paper due date 12/12