

Studies in Literature and Politics

Political Science 4234
MWF 12:30-1:20

Fall – 2016
C. L. Eubanks

I. What Does It Mean to Dwell Poetically?

Is God unknown? Is he manifest as the sky? This I tend to believe. Such is man's measure.
Well deserving, yet poetically man dwells on this earth

Hölderlin

Readings: *The Art of the Novel*, Chapter One, Milan Kundera
Hölderlin, *In lovely Blue*
Heidegger, “. . . Poetically Man Dwells . . .”; “Building Dwelling Thinking”

II. What is the Measure of Human Being?

A man thought the gods deigned not to punish mortals who trampled down the delicacy of things
inviolable. That man was wicked.

Aeschylus

Readings: Aeschylus, *Oresteia*
Plato, *Republic*, Book IV

III. The Death of the Gods & The Birth of Freedom?

Zeus: What will they make of it?

Orestes: What they choose. They're free; and human life begins on the far side of despair.

Sartre

Readings: Jean Paul Sartre, *The Flies*
Jean Paul Sartre, “On Existentialism”

IV. Freedom? Identity?

Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For
others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns
his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men. Now,
women forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't
want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly.

Thurston

Readings: Zora Neal Thurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

V. The Birth and Death of Tragedy?

Come, God -- Bromius, Bacchus, Dionysus -- burst into life, burst into being, be a mighty bull, a hundred-headed snake, a fire-breathing lion. Burst into smiling life, oh Bacchus!

Euripides

Readings: Euripides, *The Bacchae*
Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

VI. The Birth and Death of Man?

When God made man the devil was at his elbow. A creature that can do anything. Make a machine. And a machine to make the machine. And evil that can run itself a thousand years, no need to tend it.

McCarthy

Readings: Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*
Simone Weil, *The Iliad, Or the Poem of Force*
Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 10-15
John Gray, "Hobbes & McCarthy"

VII. Perhaps there is Something in the Land, Work, and Friendship?

The two families, sundered in the ruin of a friendship, were united again first in new friendship and then in marriage. My grandfather made a peace here that has joined many who would otherwise have been divided. I am the child of his forgiveness.

Wendell Berry

Readings: Wendell Berry, *Fidelity*
Wendell Berry, "Compromise Hell" and "The Unsettling of America"

VIII. Perhaps Dwelling Is Merely Absurd?

But too many people now climb onto the cross merely to be seen from a greater distance, even if they have to trample somewhat on the one who has been there so long.

Camus

Readings: Albert Camus, *The Plague*
Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*

IX. And What, Now, of Dwelling Poetically?

Yet us it behooves, you poets, to stand Bare-headed beneath God's thunderstorms,
To grasp the father's ray, itself, with our own hands, And to offer to the people
The heavenly gift wrapt in song, For only if we are pure in heart,
Like children, are our hands innocent.

Hölderlin

But if he must, the poet remains fearless.
Alone with god, simplicity keeps him safe
And needs no weapons and no cunning,
As long as God's absence comes to his aid.

Hölderlin

Man seeks to articulate his purpose both in an overly subjective and an overly objective state ...
Yet this purpose can be attained only in a sacred, divine feeling, one that is beautiful because it is
neither simply agreeable and fortunate, neither simply sublime and strong, nor simply unified
and tranquil, but which is all of these simultaneously – a feeling which is transcendental and
where a pure, formal mood has been distilled from it that encompasses life in its entirety.

Hölderlin

Readings: Heidegger, "What are Poets For?"; "... Poetically Man Dwells ..."
Doestoevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor"

Course Objectives

First, as you can see from the syllabus, we begin and end this course with Heidegger's famous utterances on language and Being, based on Hölderlin's writings on poets and poetry. Heidegger is conducting a literal phenomenology of the poetic. In it, the first question we encounter, and a question we will continue to encounter throughout the semester, is the following: what is the relationship between being, the poetic, and politics? In order to answer this question satisfactorily, we must examine what is meant by poetics, politics, and being. Second, as you can also see, the syllabus continues this reflection on poetry and being by examining a selection of poetic writings with parallel philosophical discussions, each in their own way concerned with an important aspect of human being. In this manner, we shall engage in the exercise of "thinking" about what it means to think poetically about being. (This will require that we spend some considerable time reflecting on the nature of mythos and logos.) Third, and finally, the particular form of being with which we are concerned is the political. Here we diverge considerably from Heidegger and attempt to come to some understanding of what it means to dwell politically and what this being is who does the dwelling, namely the human being.

Course Requirements:

1. Reflections: At the conclusion of sections two through nine you will be required to write and submit (on Moodle) a 1 page (minimum 300 words) set of reflections on the relevant poetic/philosophical/political readings and class discussions. It is expected that these reflections on your part will be cumulative in nature, building on what you have read and reflected upon in previous sections. It is also expected that your thoughts will vary considerably depending on where you are in your own intellectual and experiential journey. These reflections will be due one week after a section is completed and, combined, will be worth 40% of your grade in the course.
2. Two semester examinations, only one of which will count. These will occur at about the 1/3 and 2/3 marks of the semester. Everyone in the class must take the first of these; you may choose whether you wish to take the second. You may take the higher grade for the two exams. The examination will count for 30% of your grade in the course.
3. Final project: In lieu of a final exam, or what in effect is your final exam, you will write a final project of 6 to 8 pages (Using Word, double-spaced and in a 12 pitch font) on a poetic/philosophical/political reading(s) that we do not cover in the course. (Graduate students are expected to write longer projects.) In every case, your selection of a set of readings to cover in this assignment must be approved in advance. (I will give you a list of suggestions.) It is important that you begin this project early in the semester, most assuredly by the mid-semester point. This final project will count for 40% of your course grade and it will be due no later than Midnight, November 30. (For those of you so inclined, this project may be a multi-media or otherwise creative endeavor.)

Reflections = 40%
Exam = 30%
Final Project = 30%

Total = 100%

Readings:

The readings are listed on the syllabus. Some are books that I have asked you to purchase, either at local book stores and/or via Amazon or other on-line book sellers. Others are links to internet versions of the readings, such as the assigned selections from Plato's Republic or Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan. Still others will be readings that I provide for you. These will be posted on Moodle, as will the links to internet versions mentioned above. I will, on occasion, add or suggest other readings as we progress through the semester.

Moodle:

I will make extensive use of Moodle for this course, first, by posting the syllabus and various course readings and by providing Moodle assignment access for you to submit your reflections and your final project. There will be a grade book published on Moodle as well.

Attendance:

I do not take attendance and there is no specific attendance grade for this course. However, I hasten to add that doing well in the course is very dependent on your continual participation in the conversation we are going to have about the way we think, use the language, and "dwell poetically" as well as "politically." In short, our discussions are going to be cumulative and participating in them at a meaningful level will require a commitment/presence on your part to attend class on a regular basis, do the readings in a timely manner, and engage the material with utmost seriousness.

Office Hours:

My schedule this semester will be MWF. I will be in my office at 9 AM each day and available until I teach another course at 10:30. In between my 10:30 class and this one, from 11:30 to 12:30, I will also be free for consultation. Bring something to eat and join me for lunch if you wish; we can discuss your course concerns (or anything else you like). If you have a special reason to meet with me after our class, I'll stay and talk to you then as well, although usually I will need to leave for the day around 1:30 to 2:00 pm. My Office is in 237 Stubbs. Email = poeubk@lsu.edu.