Description

This course will examine the treatment of legal themes in literary texts as part of a broader consideration of the relationship between literature and the law. We will compare and contrast how literature and the law address “questions that matter,” including individual morality, the purposes of criminal punishment, and racial and gender equality. Students will consider how literary texts, like legal texts, have power to influence politics and society. Many readings will invite consideration of “the other” in literary texts and the treatment of minorities in the criminal justice system. Readings will include such classic texts as Antigone, The Merchant of Venice, A Jury of Her Peers, and The Lottery. We will discuss the continuing relevance of these readings for vexed contemporary questions such as civil disobedience, the causes and prevention of crime, acquaintance rape, and ethical choices faced by lawyers in litigation. We will also examine the treatment of trials in literary texts and view some high-quality film depictions of trial scenes in texts that we study. We will also discuss a handful of judicial decisions to illustrate how the courts have decided litigation “about” or “over” literary texts (for example, censorship of allegedly obscene works, and tort cases involving books that gave erroneous advice).

Topics

1. Introduction to the Study of Law and Literature

9/2 Shirley Jackson’s short story “The Lottery” (ELMS)
Ursula LeGuin’s “Omelas” (ELMS)

2. The Individual versus the State

9/4 Sophocles’ Antigone (first half)
Film: Antigone
9/9 complete Antigone

3. Law versus Mercy

9/11 Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice (Acts 1 and 2)
9/16 Acts 3 and 4 Merchant of Venice
9/18 Merchant of Venice

4. Gender and Justice

9/23 Short essays due; In class discussion

5. Hanging “The Other”; Self-help

9/30 George Orwell’s “The Hanging” (ELMS)
Paul Laurence Dunbar’s short story, “The Lynching of Jube Benson” (ELMS)
Andre DuBus’s “Killings” (ELMS)
Maupassant’s “The Vendetta” (ELMS)

**10/2 Deadline for signing up for film presentations—selection of topic and date**

6. Trial of a Man’s Character

10/7 Albert Camus’s The Stranger (first half)
10/9 The Stranger, cont.

7. Capital Punishment

10/14 Kafka’s “In the Penal Colony” (ELMS)
Kafka’s “Parable of the Door” (in class)

8. Punishing Crime in Dystopia

10/16 Ray Bradbury’s ”Pedestrian” (ELMS)
AB Yehoshua’s “Flood Tide” (ELMS)
Philip K Dick’s “Minority Report” (ELMS)

9. Race and Justice

10/21 Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird (first half)
10/23 To Kill a Mockingbird (complete)

**Spring Break** No class 3/18 or 3/20

10. PowerPoints on Law Lit Films

10/28
10/30
11/4
11/6

11. Guilt and Shame

11/11 Katherine Anne Porter’s short story, “Noon Wine” (ELMS) (movie)
11/13 Visit to KAP room in UMD special collections, Hornbake

12. Mental Illness and Crime

11/18 Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* (first half)

11/20 *In Cold Blood* (second half)

13. The Necessity Defense

11/25 “Case of the Spelunchean Explorers”

11/27 Thanksgiving

14. When Prison is a Concentration Camp

12/2 Primo Levi’s *Survival at Auschwitz* (ELMS)

12/4 Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (ELMS)

15. Student Oral Summaries of Final Papers

12/9 Informal summaries in class of final papers

12/11 Informal summaries continued

Final Papers Due Dec 11

Class Meeting Times

11-12:15 Tuesdays and Thursdays

Office Hours

Dr. Schotland will be available before every class. Students wishing to meet at another time can arrange an appointment by email: sschotland@cgsh.com

Required Texts/Materials

You must purchase the following texts (may be cheapest to get used editions on line).


Other course materials can be found on ELMS course documents.
Assignments

Students are asked to prepare (a) one short essay of four pages each (double spaced), (b) a PowerPoint on a law lit film (see ELMS for suggestions) and (b) a final term paper of ten pages (doubled spaced). Students will also occasionally contribute informal thoughts, newspaper items, etc. to a course blog (the discussion board on ELMS).

Students are requested to post essays on ELMS in the assignment drop box before class on the date due and to bring hard copy of their essays to class. Students have an open choice of paper topic but a default list of suggested topics will be posted on ELMS for those looking for inspiration. Research guidance will also be posted on ELMS.

Grades will be determined as follows: 40% final paper, 20% participation and course blog postings, 20% short essay, 20% PowerPoint on film (20% each). Class participation is an especially important aspect of this course. By participating in class actively you will increase your own enjoyment of the course, demonstrate you have read the materials, and give your classmates the benefit of your thoughts. Through blog postings, you can pose questions for class discussion, follow upon points raised in class, and bring to the attention of the class stories, news clips, and movies related to law and literature.

Range:

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Academic Integrity & the Honors College

The University is an academic community. Its fundamental purpose is the pursuit of knowledge. Like all other communities, the University can function properly only if its members adhere to clearly established goals and values. Essential to the fundamental purpose of the University is the commitment to the principles of truth and academic honesty. Accordingly, the Code of Academic Integrity is designed to ensure that the principle of academic honesty is upheld. While all members of the University share this responsibility, the Code of Academic Integrity is designed so that special responsibility for upholding the principle of academic honesty lies with the students.

All University of Maryland students are asked to write and sign the following Honor Pledge to all submitted assignments and exams:

I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.

The University of Maryland honor system is fully described in the Code of Academic Integrity. Please read: [www.studenthonorouncil.umd.edu/code.html](http://www.studenthonorouncil.umd.edu/code.html). The Code is administered by an all-student Honor Council. The student Honor Council office is located in room 2118 Mitchell Building and can be reached at 301-314-8204.

The Honors College works to enrich its community life by promoting an atmosphere of honesty, trust, and mutual responsibility. In the event that a Honors College student is found responsible for a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity by the Student Honor Council, he or she will be dismissed from the Honors College for the semester in which the violation took place and for all subsequent semesters in which the student is enrolled as an undergraduate at Maryland.

Course Evaluation

Your feedback in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University as well as to the tenure and promotion process. CourseEvalUM will be open for you to complete your evaluations for spring semester courses. You can go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will be able to access the summary reports for thousands of courses online at Testudo.