

Bargaining with the Devil

Fall 2013, Rutgers University
German 01:470:390-01 [index 37908] /
Comparative Literature 195:375:01 [index
38855]
TuTh5 (2:50-4:10pm)
Scott Hall 220 (CAC)

Prof. Nicholas Rennie
Office hours Wed. 1:45pm, Th. 9:00am, &
by appointment
172 College Ave., rm. 201A
Tel. 732-932-7201
nicholas.rennie@rutgers.edu

Description

Writers, filmmakers, composers and painters have long been drawn to the idea of the individual who negotiates with the devil to gain knowledge or new experience. Three questions, especially, seem to drive this fascination: What would it be like to do, have or know anything I wanted? Could I dictate the terms of such a life? And what happens if I lose control of the knowledge and powers I have gained? We will examine a range of works that take up these themes, for instance as they are developed in various retellings of the story of Faust. Planned readings include (but are not limited to) excerpts from the Hebrew Bible, the late 16th-century *Historie* of Faust's adventures, dramatic treatments by Marlowe and Goethe, excerpts from Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, Klaus Mann's *Mephisto*, Elie Wiesel's *The Trial of God*, and Frayn's *Copenhagen*. As time allows, we will also discuss representations in film (e.g. Murnau's *Faust*), painting (Delacroix), and music (Berlioz).

Readings and discussion in English. Credits may be applied toward the German or German Studies major or minor with approval of the Undergraduate Director of German.

Required Texts

Ordered through the Rutgers University Store:

1. Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Plays* [ISBN 9780486282084]
2. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust* [ISBN 9780385031141]
3. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness and Other Tales* [9780199536016]
4. Klaus Mann, *Mephisto* [ISBN 9780140189186]
5. Michael Frayn, *Copenhagen* [ISBN 9780385720793]
6. Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God* [ISBN 9780805210538]

In order for us to discuss the weekly readings (both those available in book version, and those available as pdf-files), *each seminar participant is required to bring his or her copy of the assigned reading(s) to class in order to receive full credit for attendance* (see "Attendance" below). Unless you can both reliably and quickly navigate to the relevant page on an electronic device that you bring to class (and, ideally, have a mark-up feature as well to highlight specific passages or add marginal notes), you will need to print each pdf-file out and bring it in hard copy. In either case, be sure to buy and/or download (and print) all available readings early on, when you still have time to resolve any technical issues that might otherwise prevent your arriving prepared for a particular class.

Course Website

The website for this course is entitled *2013-09 Bargaining with the Devil* and appears at <https://sakai.rutgers.edu>. It is available to all students registered in the course. You will need to access the site regularly: to download texts that are not included in the books required for purchase; to participate in the class online discussions; to submit take-home exams and papers; to consult the online grade book to see how you are doing at any point during the semester; to

e-mail or chat with other students in the course; to download a fresh copy of the syllabus; to check assignment deadlines; and to check for any class e-mails that you may no longer have in your inbox. If you have suggestions about how to make the site better, please let me know.

Final Grade

Discussion-board posts & responses	20%
Take-home exam 1 (8 pp.)	40%
Take-home exam 2 (8 pp.)	40%

Grade Distribution

A=90-100%; B+=85-89; B=80-84; C+=75-79; C=70-74; D=65-69; F=64 and below.

Attendance

All students must attend regularly and arrive prepared. If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Those who miss more than two class sessions without a compelling excuse should expect a one-step reduction in the course grade (i.e. an A becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B). Every additional three absences may entail a further one-step grade-reduction. Three late arrivals count as one absence. Failure to bring copies of the assigned readings to three classes likewise counts as one absence. Note: It is the responsibility of students who have been absent (for any reason) to find out what they have missed and obtain materials that may have been handed out.

Disability Support Services

Students who may be requesting accommodations due to disabilities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with procedures and policies regarding disability support services at the following website: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>. It is recommended that students seeking accommodations begin filing paperwork as soon as possible as the documentation review process may take up to 30 business days. Students are encouraged to speak with teachers about these issues at the beginning of the term. All such conversations will be kept strictly confidential.

Academic Integrity

Violations of academic integrity are an extremely serious matter, and can lead to a student's failing the course and being referred to the University's Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary action. When referring to ideas other than your own, always acknowledge your sources clearly and completely, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing. Note also that use of online translation services is not permitted as a tool for generating work that you submit for course credit. Please see the University's policies on academic integrity at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>, and discuss with your instructor any questions you may have about this and related issues.

Assignments

.1. Weekly Discussion-Board Posts and Responses

Starting Monday, September 16th, you will be required to participate in a weekly online discussion board in order to put in writing some thoughts about that week's assigned reading(s). This is not intended to be busy-work, but rather to provide you a few concrete benefits: 1) Writing your thoughts down is generally the best way to clarify them, and doing some of this work before class will tend to make class discussion itself more productive for you and for the rest of us. 2) This is a great way, over the course of the semester, to build on class discussion to put yourself in the best position to perform strongly on the take-home exams. The questions

for these exams, which in each case will be posted one week before the exam's due date, will themselves be based on class discussion. This isn't to say that you'll just be asked to regurgitate what was already said – you won't. However, working through your and your peers' ideas about the texts each week should help you do much of the preparatory work for the take-home exams well before the exam questions themselves are posted. 3) If you carefully follow instructions for the class online discussion, this component of the course can be a fairly straightforward way to boost your overall grade. 4) If I see that your take-home exams or papers deal effectively with problems that other students (or I myself) pointed out in your online postings, this will benefit your grade on those assignments. (Hint: go back and read what your peers wrote in their responses to your posts!) 5) Research, in literature as in other fields, is driven in large part by collaboration. Taking this course involves participating in and learning from this kind of joint effort.

Posts and responses need to be submitted via the course Sakai page under "Discussion and Private Messages." Be sure to read the full instructions for these assignments during the first week of classes at that site (at the "Discussion and Private Messages" click on "INSTRUCTIONS FOR DISCUSSION BOARD") and let me know of any questions you may have. The basics:

- To receive full credit for a week's online discussion, you will need to post ca. 200 words about the week's assigned reading by Monday evening, *and* respond to two other posts by Thursday evening. (A posting without a follow-up response to two other posts can earn you a maximum of 5 of the 10 points for the week's assignment; two strong follow-up responses without a prior posting will likewise earn you a total of 5 points for the week.)
- Discussion forums are open for 12 weeks of the semester, with the first postings due on Monday, September 16th. Your lowest *four* [post-Hurricane-Sandy modification] grades will automatically be dropped. This means that if for some reason you don't participate during three or even four weeks, this won't necessarily affect your grade. I encourage you to participate from the start, however, so that you have a buffer if and when you are sick, or forgetful, or need the time for something else. Given the collaborative, real-time structure of the assignment, students who fail to participate during a particular week *for any reason* will not be able to make this work up after its original due dates.
- Both your posting and your responses need to engage analytically with the assigned readings. See the instructions at the Sakai "Discussion and Private Messages" page for more detail about my expectations.

.2. Take-home exams (and papers)

Take-home exams and papers (see below for the latter option for the second of these assignments) should be submitted via the course Sakai page under "Assignments." Each take-home exam will ask you to write essays in response to questions about the assigned readings. Questions may ask you to consider an issue in relation to a single text, or they may ask you instead to compare its significance within two or more readings. Format: 12-point Times or Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1" margins. Length: 8 full pages.

Take-home essays should not simply repeat back what we've already discussed; they should follow the lead of the exam questions in building independently on our discussions. Prepare your exam essays as you would any paper. Once you've thought about the question, work out your thesis statement (which you'll need to present clearly in a sentence in the opening paragraph of your response). Go back over your class notes and the relevant assigned text(s) to collect material for your argument. Cite or paraphrase relevant passages (and *always* include page numbers, as you would in a paper). Check your quotations for accuracy. Don't quote just for the sake of quoting; cite just the word or passage that you need to make your specific point, not more.

Finally, be sure to proofread your essays to make sure that they're coherent, that they answer all aspects of the question, that they meet (and don't significantly exceed) the length requirements of the assignment, and that they're articulated grammatically and clearly. Poorly written essays and essays whose arguments aren't systematically supported with references from the relevant text(s) will lose points.

Unlike the online discussions for this course, your essays are not collaborative. You are encouraged to build on the ideas you developed collaboratively in the course of weekly online class discussions; and if you wish to use others' ideas, whether these be suggestions made by another student in the course's online forum, or arguments developed in an article or book, you may do so as long as you reference them fully, whether in a footnote or in a parenthetical insertion. For instance, you might note: "As observed by Jane Doe in her response to my 9/23 posting, this idea may seem problematic because of [XYZ]. On the other hand..." (Rule of thumb: whatever particular format you use, I as a reader should be able to find easily and quickly the specific words, phrases, or arguments to which you're referring. Always include page numbers where these are available.) However, the work of planning your argument, organizing material, and writing out your analysis should be yours alone. If you have questions about this or about any matters relating to *academic integrity* (see also the section with this heading on this syllabus), be sure to let me know in advance, not *after* submitting your assignment.

Paper option: Students who have received a B+ or A on take-home assignment #1 have the option of writing a paper of their own in place of the second take-home exam, *but only after receiving my approval for their proposed topic*. If you are eligible and interested, contact me about this option at least two weeks before the next submission deadline, so that we still have time to discuss your topic and its feasibility before you get down to writing. Papers should focus on one or more assigned readings not covered in the previous take-home(s). Expectations (about length and format, submission procedure [Sakai/Assignments link] and deadline, and about presenting a thesis and supporting it with a clear argument and judicious citations) are the same as those outlined above with regard to take-home exams.

Online synchronization and backup, or: why computer failures won't get you off the hook with paper deadlines in this course!

Computer problems will *not* be accepted as an excuse for late submission of exams or papers in this course. To explain:

If you get nothing else out of this course, I do want you to get to know and use (if you haven't already) at least one of the free, simple and reliable online resources available to backup and synchronize electronic files (such as the papers you write, or the spreadsheets you use to keep your student organization's budget in order). Every computer and every hard drive will fail, sooner or later. However, if the important files on your hard drive are in folders that are set to synchronize automatically on a server each time you save your changes, you are likely to lose little or nothing when your hard drive has problems: just go to another networked computer, login to your online account to access the current version of your paper, and focus on finishing and submitting it before you go back to worrying about the problems your computer is having. It takes minutes to set this up, and you'll be really glad you did so when a problem arises. For information about some good options, go to <http://libguides.rutgers.edu/apps> and click on the "File storage" tab. Look into this now, *before* you start preparing your next project for this course or another, and let me know if you have any questions. I happen to be familiar with dropbox.com, but let me know if you find that another system is as good or better.

(Note that it can make sense both to synchronize some megabytes or gigabytes of your important files online as described above, *and* maintain a full backup of your computer's contents on an external hard drive of your own: the latter backup can give you some valuable options – e.g. access to older file versions that may no longer be backed up online, or the possibility of doing a full restore of your computer's contents if you have to replace its hard drive with a new one.)

Electronic devices in class

Use of electronic devices in class other than for study of the class topic (e.g. taking notes or consulting an assigned text in pdf form) is strictly forbidden. Those seen using such devices for other purposes will be asked to leave immediately. Their dismissal will count as an absence and may result in a lowering of their overall grade.

Weekly assignments

*(Texts must be read in advance and brought to class on the dates assigned. Readings from the bookstore are indicated in **boldface**. Unless otherwise indicated, all other readings are available as pdf files from Sakai.)*

.1. Sep. 3
Introduction

.2. Sep. 5
Book of Job, ca. 7th – 4th centuries BCE, chapters 1-13:3 and 32-42. *(As with all assigned readings, be sure to bring a hard copy to class.)*

.3. Sep. 10
The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus (1592), ed. William Rose (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1925) 60-80, 197-208 (chapters 1-8, 58-63)

.4. Sep. 12
Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* (ca. 1604)

.5. Sep. 17
Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*
John Milton (1608-1674), *Paradise Lost*, Book I (1667)

.6. Sep. 19
Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book I

.7. Sep. 24
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), *Faust* (1832), lines 1-353

.8. Sep. 26
Goethe, *Faust*, II. 354-2604

.9. Oct. 1
Goethe, *Faust*, II. 2605-3775

.10. Oct. 3
Goethe, *Faust*, II. 3776-4727; 11043-12111

.11. Oct. 8
Film-excerpt: Murnau, F.W. (1889-1931), *Faust* (1926)

.12. Oct. 10
Adelbert von Chamisso (1781-1838), *Peter Schlemihl's Remarkable Story* (1814)

.13. Oct. 15
Chamisso, *Peter Schlemihl's Remarkable Story*
Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), "Never Bet the Devil Your Head" (1841)

.14. Oct. 17
Washington Irving (1783-1859), "The Devil and Tom Walker" (1824)

***Take-home 1 due via Sakai
"Assignments" link by end of day Friday,
Oct. 18.***

.15. Oct. 22
Irving, "The Devil and Tom Walker"

.16. Oct. 24
Gottfried Keller (1819-1890), "A Village
Romeo and Juliet" (1855)

.17. Oct. 29
Keller, "A Village Romeo and Juliet"

.18. Oct. 31
**Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), *Heart of
Darkness* (1899)**

.19. Nov. 5
Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

.20. Nov. 7
Klaus Mann (1906-1949), *Mephisto* (1936)

.21. Nov. 12
Klaus Mann, *Mephisto*

.22. Nov. 14
Klaus Mann, *Mephisto*
Film-excerpt: István Szabó (1938-),
Mephisto (1981)

.23. Nov. 19
**Elie Wiesel (1928-), *The Trial of God*
(1977)**

.24. Nov. 21
Wiesel, *The Trial of God*

.25. Nov. 26
Film-excerpt: Martin Scorsese (1942-), *The
Last Temptation of Christ* (1988)

.26. Dec. 3
**Michael Frayn (1933-), *Copenhagen*
(1998)**

.27. Dec. 5
Frayn, *Copenhagen*

.28. Dec. 10
Concluding discussion

***Take-home 2 due via Sakai
"Assignments" link by end of day Friday,
Dec. 13.***