

Wise Fools

Fall 2017, Rutgers University
01:090:292-02 [index 12060]
Th 9:50am-12:50pm
AB-4050 (15 Seminary Pl. west wing, CAC)

Prof. Nicholas Rennie
O. hrs. Tuesdays 9:00am, & by appointment
AB-4124
Tel. (848) 932-7781
nicholas.rennie@rutgers.edu

Description: The “wise fool” is a paradoxical figure that has fascinated Western writers at least since the Middle Ages. The fool stands outside of social convention and society’s normal hierarchies, and as such serves to highlight problems and contradictions in society itself. His or her folly veils a deeper wisdom. To speak as a fool, however, is also to contend with various forms of explicit or hidden censorship, to find ways to defy and circumvent social norms. We will accordingly look both at individual figures of the fool, as depicted in work from Shakespeare and Cervantes to William Faulkner and Angela Carter; at examples of satire that bring into relief social issues of power, politics, gender, generational conflict, morality, and the relation between the individual and the collective; and at ways in which the language of folly itself serves as a model for some of the world’s most interesting examples of literary experimentation.



- This course applies toward the SAS Core Curriculum goal Writing and Communication [WCd(t)]: Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry.

Required Texts, available from the Rutgers University Store. So that we can discuss specific passages without everyone getting lost, you must have these specific editions with the exception of *King Lear*: another edition of Shakespeare’s drama is fine as long as it includes line numbers.

1. William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square Press, 1993. ISBN: 9780743482769.
2. Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, tr. Burton Raffel, ed. Diana de Armas Wilson. New York: Norton, 1999. ISBN: 9780393972818.
3. Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Idiot*, tr. David McDuff. London, New York: Penguin Classics, 2004. ISBN: 9780140447927.
4. Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*, ed. Michael Gorra. 3rd ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014. ISBN: 9780393912692.

Bringing readings to class: In order for us to discuss the weekly readings (both those available in book version, and those available as pdf-files), *each seminar participant will need 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 a laptop that you bring to class (and, preferably, 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 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.

Reserve materials: For your use, I’ve included unabridged editions of some excerpted texts (the Bible, Brant, Erasmus) along with the original-language editions of some of the translated texts on reserve at Alexander Library. See *Library eReserves* on Sakai.

Wise Fools

Sakai: The website for this course is entitled “2017-09 Wise Fools” and appears at <https://sakai.rutgers.edu>. You will need to access the site to download texts that are not included in the materials required for purchase; to submit course papers; to communicate with other students in the course, if you want; to download a fresh copy of the syllabus; to check assignment deadlines; to see what books are available on reserve for the course at Alexander Library; and to check for any announcements that you may no longer have in your inbox. If you have suggestions about how to make the site better, please let me know.

Grade:

Class Participation	10%
Paper 1 (7-8 double-spaced pages, due Friday, October 20 th)	40%
Paper 2 (9-10 double-spaced pages, due Wednesday, December 13 th)	50%

Class participation: Students are expected to come to each class with thoughts that, extending beyond matters of clarification, relate specific passages of the assigned text to the larger themes of the course as these are summarized in the course description above and further developed in our class discussions. See rubric appended to this syllabus for details.

Papers: Papers should present a clear thesis, be well structured, and substantiate their claims consistently with evidence from the texts (or other media) that they cite. To get a more precise idea of what I want, please be sure to download and read carefully [*Rennie tips on papers and presentations.pdf*], which is available on the course Sakai Resources page. Each paper should carefully examine an aspect or aspects of one or two of the assigned texts, and should build on ideas that we’ve discussed in class. Your analysis should focus on one or more assigned texts, but may also relate this material to another work or works of your choosing from literature or another art form. (For evaluation rubrics see the Sakai Assignments links for each each paper.) Please see me to discuss ideas and strategies. Use 12-point font, double-spaced, Times or New Times Roman, with 1-inch margins. Papers should be submitted as PDF files via the Sakai “Assignments” page.

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. Students who fail to bring the assigned reading to class may likewise be marked as “late” and, after three such occasions, will be marked as having missed a class. 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.

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.

Wise Fools

Rubric for evaluation of class-participation grade¹

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Level of Engagement and preparation	<input type="checkbox"/> Regularly contributes, of own initiative, ideas that are creative, relevant, and that demonstrate a high level of preparation in reading the assigned text(s). <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly and constructively engages others in class discussions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Often contributes ideas that are creative, relevant, and that demonstrate solid preparation in reading the assigned text(s). <input type="checkbox"/> Often engages others in class discussions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally contributes to class discussion by offering ideas and asking questions that demonstrate preparation in reading the assigned text(s). <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes engages others in class discussions	<input type="checkbox"/> Fails to contribute to class discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Fails to engage others in class discussions.

¹ Adapted from rubric published by Texas Education Agency, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKewib6pqIloHWAhVGSiYKHRxxA80QFggmMAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Ffacultyinnovate.utexas.edu%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2FClassroom_Discussion_rubric.doc&usg=AFQjCNEJRqcSBKFD-I9ODkIr-imJOU82sw

Wise Fools

Readings and assignments²

1. 9/7 Introduction. Sebastian Brant (1458?-1521), excerpt from *The Ship of Fools* (1494); Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466/9-1526), excerpts from *The Praise of Folly* (1511).
2. 9/14 William Shakespeare (1564-1616), *King Lear* (1606).
3. 9/21 *King Lear*; Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-1616), *Don Quijote* (1605 [Vol. I], 1615 [Vol. II]), Vol. I: Prologue, and chapters 1-24.
4. 9/28 *Don Quijote*, Vol. I: chapters 25-42.
5. 10/5 *Don Quijote*, Vol. I: chapters 43-52; Vol. II: Dedication to the Count of Lemos; Prologue to the Reader; chapters 1-4 and 74.
6. 10/12 Georg Büchner (1813-1837), *Lenz* (1837); *Woyzeck* (1836).
7. 10/19 Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881), *The Idiot* (1868-1869), Part I, and Part II, chaps. 1-2.

Friday, October 20th: First paper (7-8 pp.) due as PDF via Sakai Assignments page.

8. 10/26 Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, rest of Part II; Part III, chaps. 1-7.
9. 11/2 Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, rest of book; Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), excerpts on the madman and the fool.
10. 11/9 Nietzsche, excerpts on the madman and the fool; William Faulkner (1897-1962), *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), chaps. I & II ["April Seventh, 1928" and "June Second, 1910"]
11. 11/16 *The Sound and the Fury*, chaps. III & IV ["April Sixth, 1928" and "April Eighth, 1928"]
12. 11/21 *The Sound and the Fury*, including this fairly brief supplementary material from the Norton edition: the "Compson Appendix," and Faulkner's 1929 letter to Ben Wasson ("I received the proof. It seemed pretty tough to me [...]"); Robert Walser (1878-1956), "The Walk" (1917)
13. 11/30 Walser, "The Walk"; Gert Hofmann (1931-1993), *The Parable of the Blind* (1985)
14. 12/7 Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859), "Bluebeard"; Angela Carter (1940-1992), "The Bloody Chamber."

Wednesday, December 13th: Second paper (9-10 pp.) due as PDF via Sakai Assignments page.

² **Boldfaced** titles are required for purchase; the others are available for download from the course Sakai Resources page.

Wise Fools

Student-Wellness Services:

Just In Case Web App

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Scarlet Listeners

(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.