

Big Bang The Literature of Chaos and Order

Fall 2009, Rutgers University
German 01:470:364-01 [34663], Comparative
Literature 01:195:398-01 [31825]
MW, 1:10-2:30pm
German House (GH) 102 (172 College Ave.,
CAC)

Prof. Nicholas Rennie
O. hrs. W 2:45-3:45pm, & by appointment
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Considering how the world began has always also meant speculating how it might end. In recent centuries, increasingly, it has also involved thinking about the position of human beings in a physical and moral universe whose structures can no longer be taken for granted. This course examines the ways a selection of writers and philosophers from the Renaissance to the present have represented dramatic upheavals in the physical universe as analogies for crisis and revolution in the realms of history, politics, psychology, science, gender, and the arts.

In English. Counts for literature/civilization/film credits toward the German Studies major and minor. (Be sure to consult in advance with the Undergraduate Director.)

. Required Texts

Available from Rutgers University Store. These titles are indicated in **boldface** within the list of weekly readings below. Non-boldface titles are available online at the course Sakai website (see “Undergraduate Reserves” below).

1. Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno*, tr. John Ciardi, intro. Archibald T. MacAllister (New York: Signet, 2001) [0451527984]
2. John Milton, *Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained*, ed. Christopher Ricks, intro. Susanne Woods (New York: Signet, 2001) [0451527925]
3. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein* (New York: Pocket, 2004) [0743487583]
4. Georg Büchner, *Complete Plays, Lenz and Other Writings*, tr. John Reddick (New York: Penguin, 1993) [0140445862]
5. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, tr. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1999) [0393301583]
6. Samuel Beckett, *Endgame and Act Without Words* (New York: Grove, 1958) [0802150241]
7. Susan A. Clancy, *Abducted: How People Come to Believe They Were Kidnapped by Aliens* (Cambridge [MA]: Harvard University Press, 2005) [0674018796]

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. 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 in full 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.

. Final Grade

Two quizzes	25%
Three six-page papers	75%

. **Grade Distribution**

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

. **Papers**

Papers should present an argument based on your reading of the text, and should avoid plot summary or biographical information about the author except where clearly necessary to make a point about the text. The first paper should focus on a text or texts from the first half of the syllabus; the second should focus on a text or texts from the second half. In both cases, references to other works (whether or not these appear on the syllabus) are welcome as long as material from the syllabus remains at the center of your analysis. Your introductory paragraph(s) should present a clear thesis; the rest of the paper should provide analysis (and a judicious selection of referenced quotations) substantiating your thesis.

. **Course Sakai website**

A website for this course is available to enrolled students at sakai.rutgers.edu (login and select the tab *01:470:324:01 F09 Masters German Drama*). A copy of the syllabus is available at the website, as are pdf-copies of some readings (under *Resources*). You can e-mail one or more other participants by using the *Mailtool* tab, and under *E-mail archive* you can see messages that the senders have chosen to save.

. **Attendance**

All students must attend regularly and arrive prepared. Those who miss more than two class sessions without a compelling excuse (a doctor's or college dean's note, for instance) should expect a one-step reduction in the course grade (i.e. an A becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B). Three late arrivals count 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.

. **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is an extremely serious matter, and can lead to a student's failing the course and being referred to his or her dean for disciplinary action. When referring to ideas other than your own, always acknowledge your sources clearly and completely, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing. Please see the University's policies on academic integrity at <http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>, and discuss with your instructor any questions you may have about this and related issues.

. **Cell phones**

The use of cell phones and other text-messaging devices during class is strictly forbidden. Those seen using such devices during class will be asked to leave immediately. Their dismissal will count as an absence and may result in a lowering of their overall grade.

. **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.

. **Photocopies**

Department photocopying fees add up quickly and impressively; we will therefore need to collect from each student 5 cents per page toward the cost of handouts other than the syllabus, quizzes and tests. I plan to keep the use of such handouts to a minimum.

Weekly assignments

(Texts must be read in advance and brought to class on the dates assigned.)

- . **Sept. 2 Introduction**
- . **Sept. 8 Dante Alighieri (1265-1321)**
 - *Inferno* (from the *Divine Comedy*), Cantos 1-7, 11-13.
- . **Sept. 9 Dante**
 - *Inferno*, Cantos 14-25.
- . **Sept. 14 Dante**
 - *Inferno*, Cantos 26-34.
- . **Sept. 16 Dante; Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)**
 - Galileo, "The Shape of Dante's Hell," *Dante: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Michael Caesar (London: Routledge, 1989) 301-3.
 - Galileo Galilei, from *The Assayer*, in: *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, tr. and ed. Stillman Drake (Garden City [NY]: Doubleday, 1957) 237-38.
- . **Sept. 21 Galileo**
 - Galileo, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, tr. Stillman Drake (New York: Modern Library, 2001) 1-7, 123-49.
- . **Sept. 23 John Milton (1608-1674)**
 - Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book I; Argument to Book II.

Sept. 25: draft 1 of paper 1 due by end of the day at Sakai
- . **Sept. 28 Milton**
 - Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books III and IV; Arguments to Books V and VI.

Sept. 29: peer-review critiques due by end of the day at Sakai
- . **Sept. 30 Milton**
 - Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books VII and VIII; Arguments to Books IX-XI; Book XII: Argument and lines 466-649.

Oct 2: final draft of paper 1 due by end of the day at Sakai
- . **Oct. 5 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716); Alexander Pope (1688-1744)**
 - Leibniz, "The Theodicy: Abridgement," *Selections*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Scribner, 1951) 509-22.
 - Pope, "An Essay on Man," *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963) Epistles I & II, 501-25.
- . **Oct. 7 Voltaire ([François-Marie Arouet] 1694-1778); Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)**
 - Voltaire, "The Lisbon Earthquake," *The Portable Voltaire*, ed. Ben Ray Redman (New York: Penguin, 1977) 556-69.
 - Goethe, *From My Life: Poetry and Truth (Goethe's Collected Works*, vol. 4), tr. Robert R. Heitner, ed. Thomas P. Saine and Jeffrey L. Sammons (New York: Suhrkamp, 1987) 34-36.
- . **Oct. 12 Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811)**
 - **Reading quiz 1**
 - Kleist, *Earthquake in Chile*, tr. Michael Hamburger, in *German Romantic Novellas* (The German Library, vol. 34), ed. Frank g. Ryder and Robert M. Browning (New York: Continuum, 1985) 122-35.
- . **Oct. 14 Kleist**
 - Kleist, *Earthquake in Chile*.

- **Oct. 19 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851)**
- *Frankenstein*
- **Oct. 21 Shelley**
- *Frankenstein*
- **Oct. 26 Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837)**
- Leopardi, “History of the Human Race”; “Copernicus”: *The Moral Essays - Operette Morali*, trans. Patrick Creagh (New York: Columbia UP, 1983) 33-45, 189-99.
- **Oct. 28 Georg Büchner (1813-1837)**
- Büchner, *Danton’s Death: Complete Plays*, 1-73.
- **Oct. 30: draft 1 of paper 2 due by end of the day at Sakai**
- **Nov. 2 Büchner**
- Büchner, *Danton’s Death*
- **Nov. 3: peer-review critiques due by end of the day at Sakai**
- **Nov. 4 Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)**
- Nietzsche, “Second essay: ‘Guilt’, ‘bad conscience’ and related matters,” *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, tr. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 38-71.
- **Nov. 6: final draft of paper 2 due by end of the day at Sakai**
- **Nov. 9 Nietzsche**
- Nietzsche, “Second essay,” *Genealogy of Morals*
- **Nov. 11 H.G. Wells (1866-1946)**
- “The War of the Worlds” (audio recording, in class)
- **Nov. 16 Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)**
- Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, tr. Joan Riviere (New York: Dover, 1994) 1-70.
- **Nov. 18 Freud**
- Freud, “A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis,” *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* vol. 17, tr. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1964) 136-44.
- **Nov. 23 Joseph Losey (1909-1984)**
- *Galileo* (film, in class)
- **Nov. 30 Samuel Beckett (1906-1989)**
- **Reading quiz 2**
- Beckett, *Endgame*
- **Dec. 2 Beckett; Italo Calvino (1923-1985)**
- Beckett, *Endgame*
- Calvino, “A Sign in Space,” in: *Cosmicomics*, tr. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968) 31-39.
- **Dec. 4: draft 1 of paper 3 due by end of the day at Sakai**
- **Dec. 7 Susan A. Clancy ()**
- *Abducted: How People Come to Believe They Were Kidnapped by Aliens*
- **Dec. 8: peer-review critiques due by end of the day at Sakai**
- **Dec. 9 Clancy**
- *Abducted*
- **Dec. 14: final draft of paper 3 due by end of the day at Sakai**