

**Masterpieces:**

***Franz Kafka***

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**GERMAN 150; COMPLIT 114, JEWISHST 145  
Spring 2015**

German Studies WIM Seminar

**Mon 2:15 PM - 5:05 PM at School of Education 130**

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Prof. Amir Eshel

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Office: Building 260, Room 219

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30-3:30 (sign-up sheet outside my office)

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## Course Objectives

This course is designed to grapple in depth with Franz Kafka, one of the central writers of the German literary tradition; a writer who profoundly influenced modern world literature. For almost all ten weeks of the quarter, our focus will be on Franz Kafka's short fiction, novels, aphorisms, and letters. We will also read the work of some of the writers and thinkers who engaged his oeuvre and legacy. We will investigate different scholarly and historical approaches to Kafka's prose, and consider different ways of responding to his work in writing.

## Requirements

- *Read all the materials as assigned. All readings for this course will be made available to you via CourseWork*
- You may, of course, bring your own Kafka books to class. However, please make sure the book you bring contains *the same translation version* (same translator) as the one posted on CourseWork.
- To prepare for each class, you will post **brief responses** (300 words or more) on CourseWork (the *Forum* section) to the week's reading. The posts are due the evening before class by 10 PM.
- You have to be prepared to *present a brief summary* of our CourseWork Forum discussion at the beginning of each class; this will be the kick-off to our class and should touch upon the most pertinent points of the online discussion. Please think about additional avenues of inquiry and bring it to class!
- You are expected to *participate* in each class, including comments on texts, questions and relating to other students' in-class remarks.
- **One 10-page or more (for grad students) final paper**, on a topic of your choice.
  - Your final paper should be an expanded and more developed version of one of your short response papers. Your final paper is due on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 **at 8 AM**.
  - Submissions are turned in via email as Word documents. Papers should be emailed to [eshel@stanford.edu](mailto:eshel@stanford.edu)
  - All page numbers are **binding** and refer to **double-spaced 12-point font Times or Times New Roman**.
  - You must include **page numbers** on every page
  - Follow **MLA** documentation and citation **style**
  - Your paper must have a **title**

## Grading

Your final grade will consist of the following components:

- Process Work: 50% (entails the satisfactory and timely completion of all materials such as posts on our CourseWork site, and the final paper; as well as class participation)
- Final paper: 50%

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## WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION; KAFKA'S EARLY WRITING

### Required reading:

- From Franz Kafka, *Contemplation*
  - "The Businessman"
  - "Dresses"
  - "The Rejection"
  - "The Trees"
  - "Being Unhappy"
- The introductory essays on Modernism from the *Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*
- Judith Ryan: "Kafka Before Kafka"

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## WEEK 2: KAFKA'S SHORT PROSE, THE BEGINNINGS

### Required reading:

- Franz Kafka, "The Judgment"
- *Genesis* 1-22 (especially the stories of the Original Sin, Cain and Abel; Noah's Ark; Sodom and Gomorrah; and the Binding of Isaac. Check out 1-2 versions, here: [https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=Genesis&qs\\_version=ESV](https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=Genesis&qs_version=ESV))
- Freud, "The Ego and the Id"
- Ruth Gross, "Kafka's short fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kafka*

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## WEEK 3: METAMORPHOSIS

### Required reading:

- Franz Kafka, "Metamorphosis"

- Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Book X)
- Ritchie Robertson, “Kafka as Anti-Christian”

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## WEEK 4: IN THE PENAL COLONY

### Required reading:

- Kafka, “In the Penal Colony”
- Rolf Goebel, „Kafka and Post-Colonial Critique“

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## WEEK 5: The Trial I

### Required reading:

- Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, chapters 1-6
- The Book of Job, Chapters 1-10 (check out 1-2 different versions here, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+1&version=ESV>)
- Rolf Goebel, “The Exploration of Modern City in *The Trial*”
- Elias Canetti, Kafka's Other Trial: The Letters to Felice

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## WEEK 6: THE TRIAL II

### Required reading:

- Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, chapters 9-10
- Vivian Liska, “Before the Law stands a doorkeeper...”
- Watch: Coen Brother’s *A Serious Man*

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## WEEK 7: KAFKA’S THOUGHT—THE APHORISMS

**Required reading:**

- Franz Kafka, ‘The Zürau Aphorisms’
- Franz Kafka “*HE*” (the text is in the Hannah Arendt text Introduction to *Between Past and Future*)
- Franz Kafka, “A Little Fable”
- Hannah Arendt, Introduction to *Between Past and Future*
- David Grossman, “Writing in the Dark”

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**WEEK 8: KAFKA’S COVERSACTIONS**

**Required reading:**

- Franz Kafka, *Letters to Milena* (selection)
- Franz Kafka, *Letter to the Father*

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**WEEK 9: READING KAFKA – J. M. COETZEE’S *ELIZABETH COSTELLO***

**Required reading:**

J. M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, Lesson 1, 3, 4, 6, 8