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PHIL 441.01: Philosophy and Literature

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Philosophy 441/Philosophy and Literature

Professor Deborah Slicer

L.A. 148/243-2527/ds7p@selway.umt.edu (I only enter cyberspace twice a week.)

O.H.: tpa

Our course consists of 3 inter-related projects. (1) We'll assess Martha Nussbaum's claims that (a) there are certain moral truths that only literary prose can articulate, and (b) that the act of carefully reading literature can engage and develop readers' moral capacities, while most (all?) analytic treatments are unable to engage such capacities. (2) We will assess Nussbaum's claims as we work our way slowly and lovingly through one novel (*The Bird Artist*), an autobiography, sort of (*The Woman Warrior*), a play (*Hamlet*), and a film ("A Heart in Winter"). (3) We will discuss our literary characters' struggles to construct/discover a "moral self," pretty much taking as a given Charles Taylor's concept of the moral self. The big question is what can literature help us discover about the moral self (other selves as well as our own) that analytic philosophy misses all together, seriously obscures, or dismisses as irrelevant to moral life? And *how*, very specifically, does literature work its magic? Here's how the semester looks.

9/2 Hello, business, intro. remarks

9/4 Chpt. 1, Introduction, Martha Nussbaum

9/9 Chpt. 4, Flawed Crystals, Nussbaum

9/11 Chpt. 5, Finely Aware, Richly Attuned, Nussbaum

9/16 The Self in Moral Space, Charles Taylor (x)

9/18 *A Poetry Handbook*, Mary Oliver, preferably all, required p. 1-34, 52-57, 60-108. Define terms on our glossary (x) as you read Oliver. We'll focus on reading poems that I'll hand out in class.

9/23 More poems

9/25- 10/14 *The Woman Warrior*, Maxine Hong Kingston

10/16-21 Chpt. 2, The Discernment of Perception..., Nussbaum

10/21 **paper 1 due in class**

10/23-28 no class, read *Hamlet* at least twice!

10/30-11/18 *Hamlet*

11/20 **paper 2 due in class**

11/20-12/11 *The Bird Artist* and the film *A Heart in Winter*, read the novel as we watch the film.

12/15 **final paper due in class during finals time, 10:10-12:10**

Texts

The Woman Warrior, Maxine Hong Kingston

Hamlet, Shakespeare

The Bird Artist, Howard Norman

Love's Knowledge, Martha Nussbaum

A Poetry Handbook, Mary Oliver

(x)—these articles are on e-reserve (secret password: Phil 441), and hard copies available at Mansfield desk.

Requirements

2 papers (5-6 pages)--55%

A final paper that is a revision and expansion of the one of the shorter papers (10 pages)--35%

Presentation of a very focused passage from one of our literary texts--10%

I highly recommend you read each piece of literature at least twice!

This is primarily a discussion class, so attendance and participation are mandatory.