HUM 150: Literature and the Good Life (Fall 2022)
Class Meetings M/W 4:00-5:15

Susan Barile, Ph.D.
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Office: 1207 East Building
Office hours: by appointment on Navigate* & via email (for any time sensitive or private issue, use email; don't hesitate to contact me about an urgent matter).

You are responsible for checking your Hunter College email account and Blackboard* between classes as I will periodically send out and share information.

I look forward to meeting with you at least twice during the semester. Please contact me to schedule the first appointment asap.

Course Description: This is a *reading-intensive course* that highlights philosophical questions presented in works of literature. What can stories tell us about achieving a good life? What are the elements of a good life? How do we build meaning? The course will be divided into the following five sections:

The Great Books Debate - Can we become better people by reading "great books"? What is – and who decides what is – a great book? In grappling with the problems of today's world and in our private lives, can great books be egalitarian?

Our Inheritance: Before we begin to even consider what kind of person we are or want to become, how much of our being in the world comes from what we inherit (biologically, economically, psychologically, sociologically)?

The Other: In our treatment of others – both human and animal – what do we learn about ourselves? What is the value of imaginatively entering into the life of the other?

The Cost of Society: What happens to us when we are emotionally strapped by societal strictures, not to mention our own inability to recognize love or that we may negate it?

Reaching for the Good Life: Mark Twain once said, "I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead." (or was it Pascal? - "I'm sorry this letter is so long; I didn't have time to make it shorter"). How much of living a good life has to do with editing out what is no longer necessary? Can we live authentically in either spiritual isolation or within society?

Grading

Participation: As this is a *reading intensive* course, participation matters. It is imperative that you keep up with the reading. (25%)

In-class participation includes:
-- contributing to class discussion by responding to professor's and classmates' questions, posing questions, and commenting on relevant aspects of the subject
-- attentive listening to classmates and professor
-- contributing to group activities, presentations, and peer review sessions
-- bringing to class discussion questions and sharing those questions with the class
-- undertaking in-class writing assignments and quizzes

Quizzes and in-class writing assignments: Periodic quizzes and in-class writing assignment based on the day's reading assignment will be given during the first 5-10 minutes of class. If you are late, you will not be able to make up these assignments (15%)

Personal Response Paper: One personal response paper (2 pp) (15%) – Due via email, Sept 25 by 6:00 p.m.

In-class essay exam (midterm) (20%)

Final paper (25%)

Attendance

Attending class is required. You cannot participate if you do not attend. Absences will be excused with the submission of a doctor's note or extenuating, non-routine unforeseeable circumstances. Each unexcused absence over two will result in the lowering of your final grade (3 absences – grade will be reduced by ½; 4 absences – reduced by a full grade; 5 absences – you will probably fail the course). If your work or attendance is disrupted by circumstances due to COVID, reach out to me privately – we will work something out.

Classroom policies

This is a no-electronics class (no laptops, ebooks, phones, etc.). Please turn off and put out of sight any/all electronics.

No food, but a drink is fine.

Hunter College Policies

• Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity: Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

• ADA Policy: In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772- 4857 or (212) 650-3230.

• Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct: “In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual
Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

1. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).

2. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.
CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link:
http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf”

Required texts (including the *Course Pack)* available to purchase (beginning Sept 9) from Shakespeare & Co Bookstore:
Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*
Maugham, *The Razor's Edge*
Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
Wharton, *Ethan Frome*

Any additional texts will be distributed or posted on Blackboard as pdf for you to print out. Supplemental materials may be distributed in class, via Blackboard or via email.

CLASS SCHEDULE (subject to modification by the instructor)

On the great books:

M 8/29	NYT "The art of choosing what to do with your life"
W 8/31	The Great Books Debate – Menand & Deresiewicz articles
W 9/7	Aristotle lecture & "On Not Knowing Greek" – Virginia Woolf

Inheritance:

M 9/12	James Baldwin, "Notes of a Native Son" (Course pack)
W 9/14	Gloria Anzaldua, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (Course pack)
M 9/19	Walter Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty" (Course pack)

The Other:

W 9/21	John Berger "Why Look at Animals?" (Course pack)

*Sept 25 personal response paper due via email (*prompt to be distributed 9/19*)*

W 9/28	J.M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* (Lessons 1 & 2)
TH 9/29	as above (Lessons 3 & 4)
M 10/3	as above (Lessons 5 & 6)
W 10/12	as above (Lessons 7 & 8)
M 10/17	as above (Postscript) and Review
W 10/19	*IN CLASS ESSAY*

Societal and self burdens:

M 10/24	Edith Wharton, *Ethan Frome*
W 10/26	as above
M 10/31	James Joyce, "The Dead"
W 11/2	*Research methods* (incorporating skills learned in 120, 220 & this class)

Reaching the good life:

M 11/7	Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act I
W 11/9	as above, Act II
M 11/14	as above, Acts III & IV
W 11/16	as above, Act V
M 11/21	Somerset Maugham, *The Razor's Edge* (Part I)
W 11/23	tbd
M 11/28	continue Maugham (Part II & III)
W 11/30	as above (Part IV)
M 12/5	as above (Part V)
W 12/7	as above (Parts VI & VII)
12/12	final class
TBD	*Final paper due*