

Degenerative Europe: Politics and Modern Art in 20th Century Literature and Culture

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EUS 3930 (12CB)
LIT 3400 (11BB)
Classroom: CSE E119
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Course Description, Objectives, and Outcomes

This course surveys European literature and culture from the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, tracing the parallel developments of degeneration theory, modern art and literature, and fascist political formations. As much as literary modernism and numerous post-impressionist movements in art defined the early twentieth century, this period was also haunted by the specters of war and the rhetoric of degeneracy. This course thus challenges students to contemplate the relationship between the artist and the political establishments and social institutions with which artists are so often in conflict. Our readings will range across various European nations, including England, Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, and Norway, among others. Alongside literature, we will examine the development of fascism throughout the early twentieth century and the ways authoritarian states mobilized culture for the benefit of the nation. To this end, we will study not only art and literature in opposition to authoritarianism, but also art that justified and served totalitarian regimes.

By the early twentieth century, the label of degeneracy had been applied to the mentally ill, the physically handicapped, criminals, political extremists, and most non-European races. In addition, artists, writers, and musicians came to bear this label—often facing imprisonment and exile—as they and their works were branded degenerate. This course considers modern literature that either represents conflict between degenerate artists and political establishments and/or has itself been subject to political antagonism. In addition to literature, this course studies other forms of art considered degenerate such as painting, sculpture, architecture, and music. Lastly, students will review various historical materials grounded in discourses of degeneracy, such as newspaper reports, print propaganda, documentary film, and social and scientific writing.

The primary aims of the course are to educate students on European history, politics, literature, and culture from the early twentieth century; to discuss the intersections of art, politics, gender, literature, and culture; to encourage students to participate in varied forms of historical, political, and aesthetic critique; to help students develop skills in critical reading and writing of literary and cultural texts; and to attempt to address fundamental questions about the role—and possibility—of art in degenerative Europe.

Required Texts

The following texts are required. Students are encouraged to obtain the editions listed below. Texts not listed here will be provided to students via Canvas or through UF library resources.

1. *The Master Builder*, in *Four Major Plays*. Henrik Ibsen. ISBN: 9780199536191
2. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Oscar Wilde. ISBN: 9780199535989
3. *Heart of Darkness*. Joseph Conrad. ISBN: 9780199536016
4. *The Secret Agent*. Joseph Conrad. ISBN: 9780141441580
5. *A Room of One's Own*. Virginia Woolf. ISBN: 9780156787338
6. *Chess Story (or, The Royal Game)*. Stephan Zweig. ISBN: 9781590171691
7. *Doctor Faustus*. Thomas Mann. ISBN: 9780375701160
8. *Nada*. Carmen Laforet. ISBN: 9780812975833

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Assignments and participation equal a 500-point total. Students will be provided with more specific instructions for these assignments in class and on Canvas - below are just brief summaries of what to expect. Be mindful of the course's pace and dedicate sufficient time to readings and assignments.

Close Reading Paper (3-4 pages, 100 points)

This essay will be a short, close reading of a passage or passages of a text of students' choice.

Historical Contextual Research Paper (3-4 pages, 100 points)

In this essay, students will research one facet of historical, social, or political context for a given novel, short story, or work of art and present their research to the class. Students may select from a set of materials provided by the instructor.

Term Paper Proposal (25 points)

This assignment contains both a formal prospectus for students' Researched Critical Essay and an annotated bibliography of at least 5 scholarly peer-reviewed sources.

Term Paper (10-12 pages, 200 points)

This essay will be a sustained, formally researched critical analysis in which students will make an original argument about one or more texts using scholarly, peer-reviewed sources.

Creative Project (25 Points)

For the final day of class, students will present a creative project inspired by the course materials, themes, and discussions.

Attendance and Participation (50 points)

Daily and engaged participation is a priority in this course. All students should participate every day in some fashion by offering points of view, raising questions, asking for clarification, attending office hours, and/or writing when it is required. **Attendance is mandatory.**

General Classroom Policies

Attendance and Absences:

Students are allotted 3 absences without penalty. Each subsequent absence lowers the student's overall course grade by one half-letter grade. After 6 absences, the student fails the course. In addition, 3 tardy arrivals to class will equal 1 absence. Students should therefore make promptness a priority. Absences involving court-mandated events, such as jury duty or court testimony, military service, and university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays are excused, but you must notify me of your absence prior to the date you will miss and provide relevant documentation. **An absence on a double-block day counts as 2 absences.**

Comportment:

Students at the university level are expected to understand and follow basic principles of classroom behavior. Unruly and/or disrespectful behavior in class will not be tolerated, nor will cell phone use, web-browsing, sleeping, talking above others, etc. Be considerate of diverse identities within and outside of the classroom and treat your colleagues with respect.

Assignment Submission:

Students will submit assignments online via Canvas in MLA format. **Assignments that do not fulfill these requirements will not be graded.** For an up-to-date reference on MLA style, visit the Purdue Online Writing Lab or see me in office hours. I will accept late work under my discretion and apply a full-letter grade deduction for every day the assignment is late.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):

1) Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.

2) Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially similar to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

(University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 15 Aug. 2007
<<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php>>)

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code.

Statement on Disability:

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Statement on Harassment:

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

Statement on Student Honor Code:

All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student--honor--code.aspx>

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Week	Day	Material	Due
1	8/22	Course Introduction, Syllabus Review, Q&A, In-class Assignment	
	8/24	Selected readings on “degeneration” (available on Canvas)	
2	8/29	Henrik Ibsen, <i>The Master Builder</i> , acts 1-2; Langston Hughes, “My Adventures as a Social Poet”	
	8/31	Henrik Ibsen, <i>The Master Builder</i> , act 3	
3	9/5	Oscar Wilde, <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> , chapters 1-10; discussion of Nordau (in-class); compositions by Wagner (in-class)	
	9/7	Oscar Wilde, <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> , chapters 11-20	
4	9/12	Joseph Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> , parts 1-2; selections from Hannah Arendt, <i>A Report on the Banality of Evil</i>	
	9/14	Joseph Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> , part 3; Claude Monet, <i>Champ d’avoine</i> (in-class)	
5	9/19	Joseph Conrad, <i>The Secret Agent</i> ; F. W. Murnau, <i>Nosferatu</i> (at-home screening)	
	9/21	Joseph Conrad, <i>The Secret Agent</i>	

6	9/26	Franz Kafka, "The Penal Colony"; Horkheimer and Adorno, "The Concept of Enlightenment," from <i>Dialectic of Enlightenment</i>	
	9/28	Virginia Woolf, <i>A Room of One's Own</i> ; selections from <i>To the Lighthouse</i>	Close Reading
7	10/3	Virginia Woolf, <i>A Room of One's Own</i>	
	10/5	Virginia Woolf, <i>A Room of One's Own</i>	
8	10/10	Stephan Zweig, <i>Amok</i> ; selections from Hannah Arendt, <i>Origins of Totalitarianism</i>	
	10/12	Stephan Zweig, <i>Amok</i>	
9	10/17	Stephan Zweig, <i>Chess Story</i> (or <i>The Royal Game</i>)	
	10/19	Stephan Zweig, <i>Chess Story</i> (or <i>The Royal Game</i>)	
10	10/24	Thomas Mann, <i>Doctor Faustus</i> ; selections from Leni Riefenstahl, <i>Triumph of the Will</i> and <i>Olympia</i> (in-class)	
	10/26	Thomas Mann, <i>Doctor Faustus</i> ; 1936 Berlin Olympic Games (in-class); Degenerate Art Exhibition and compositions by Arnold Schoenberg (in-class)	
11	10/31	Thomas Mann, <i>Doctor Faustus</i> ; selections from Stephanie Barron's <i>Degenerate Art</i>	
	11/2	Thomas Mann, <i>Doctor Faustus</i>	Term Paper Proposal
12	11/7	Carmen Laforet, <i>Nada</i>	
	11/9	Carmen Laforet, <i>Nada</i>	
13	11/14	Carmen Laforet, <i>Nada</i> ; Guillermo del Toro, <i>Pan's Labyrinth</i> (at-home screening)	
	11/16	Guillermo del Toro, <i>Pan's Labyrinth</i> (discussion)	
14	11/21	TBD	
	11/23	Thanksgiving Holiday	
15	11/28	Quentin Tarantino, <i>Inglourious Basterds</i> (in-class screening)	
	11/30	Quentin Tarantino, <i>Inglourious Basterds</i> (discussion)	Term Paper
16	12/5	Course wrap-up	Creative Project