



Course Syllabus

Course Title: Death and Loss in Literature and Film

Term and Year: Spring / Annual

Instructor:

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Hours by arrangement

Catalog Course Description:

This course will survey a number of writers and filmmakers and their respective artworks contending with questions of meaning and the poignancy to be found in life at the limits and the irrepressible passage of time. Art, we may say, is an especially rarified response to the dilemma of time and the inexorable loss that attends it. The poet Rilke put it this way:

. . . *Once*
everything, only *once*. *Once* and no more. And we, too,
once. Never again. But having
been *this once*, even though only *once*:
having been on earth does not seem revocable.

It is precisely this sense of impermanence, of evanescence, of life's ultimate mystery and the potential beauty therein that will serve as our curricular touchstone. "It is not possible," mused the ancient philosopher Heraclitus, "to step twice into the same river." Aeschylus, younger contemporary to Heraclitus, saw suffering as inevitable, with wisdom the hard-won purchase of pain falling "drop by drop upon the heart"—words quoted, movingly, as a matter of fact by Robert F. Kennedy in an extemporaneous eulogy on the night of Martin Luther King's assassination. This course will inquire into these bedrock existential/humanistic/transpersonal themes—life at the limits and the place of aesthetics and creative response, with literature and film, especially, offering protection and remedy.

Textbooks and Readings

Required Texts and Resources:

Achebe, C. (1994). *Things fall apart*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Amenabar, A. (2004). *The sea inside* [Film]. Spain: Sogepac, etc.

Angelopoulos, T. (1999). *Eternity and a day* [Film]. Greece: Theo Angelopoulos Films.

- Bergman, I. (1957). *Wild strawberries* [Film]. Sweden: AB Svensk Filmindustri.
- Coltrane, J. (1964). *Live at Birdland* [Sound recording]. Universal City, CA: Impulse MCA Records.
- Daldry, S. (2003). *The hours* [film]. USA: Paramount Pictures/Miramax Films/Scott Rudin Productions.
- Didion, J. (2012). *Blue Nights*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Kieslowski, K. (1993). *Blue* [Film]. France: MK2 Productions/CED Productions.
- Hrabal, B. (1992). *Too loud a solitude* (M. H. Heim, trans.). New York, NY: Harcourt.
- May, R. (1991). *The cry for myth*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Mendelowitz, E. (2000). The nights and knights of Cabiria: Modern woman in search of a soul. *The Psychotherapy Patient*, 55-91, 11(4).
- Mendelowitz, E. (2011). Pirandello's "Late Mattia Pascal": Inconsistent being and the enigmatic self. *Humanitas/Reflections on psyche and the arts*. Society for Humanistic Psychology Newsletter.
- Nichols, M. (2001). *Wit* [Film]. USA: Avenue Pictures/HBO Films.
- Ozu, Y. (1953). *Tokyo story* [Film]. Japan: Shochiku Ofuna Studio.
- Roth, J. (2003). The legend of the holy drinker (M. Hoffman, trans.). In *Joseph Roth: Three novellas*. New York, NY: Overlook Press.
- Smith, P. (2012). *The coral sea*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Tolstoy, L. (2012). *The death of Ivan Ilyich* (R. Pevear & L. Volokhonsky, trans.). New York, NY: Vintage Books
- Truffaut, F. (1978). *The green room* [Film]. France: Les Films du Carrosse.
- Woolf, V. (1989). *To the lighthouse*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

